

March 2008 Newsletter

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Recent Events

Villa Video Now on YouTube

“A History of Believing: The St. Joseph’s Villa Story” is a new video which describes the Villa’s rich past and current programs. The video has been posted on YouTube and also is available when you visit the Villa website, www.NeverStopBelieving.org. (It’s at the bottom of our Home page.)

Please take a look and let us know what you think. Also, please share it with others who might want to learn more about the Villa and the great work we do for children with special needs and their families. Thank you!

Administration Building Makeover Continues



You would be hard pressed NOT to notice the wonderful changes that have taken place in the Villa’s Administration Building. The receptionist desk has been relocated into the Rotunda, the former receptionist area is being converted into a conference room, and new carpet has been installed in the main floor hallways. Please stop by to see for yourself how fresh the Administration Building now looks. And be sure to say “Hi!” to Cheryl Edwards, our receptionist!



St. Joseph’s Villa Goes Green!

When you have a campus that supports 300 staff and 600 children and families, you can sure bet one thing – There’s lots to recycle!

With that in mind, students from the Sarah Dooley Center for Autism, Dooley School and the Dooley Center for Alternative Education have joined together to form a new recycling venture at St. Joseph’s Villa.

The program covers all aspects of recycling. Students distributed recycling bins across campus in mid-February. Twice a week, they go to each bin and empty its contents. Then the recycling material is gathered together, put into storage “pens” (constructed by the students, at right) and periodically taken to a recycling center.





“This is part of a campus-wide effort to be more responsible with our environment in terms of recycling glass, plastic and paper,” said Matt Kreydatus, the Villa’s Transition Specialist. “But it also teaches the students important skills they will need later as working adults. They have to manage the business and make sure it all flows smoothly.”

At left, students Taylor Flemming and Tray Wilson in the Villa recycling center.

Black History Month at Dooley School at Cherokee Road

Students in Matt Proffitt and Stacey Roberson’s class presented research projects in celebration of Black History Month. At right is a picture of two students discussing Rosa Parks and her influence on the Civil Rights movement.



Flagler Family Forum

Residents at Flagler Home and families from the Flagler Community program came together in late February for a “**Family Forum.**” The evening featured several area professions who gave participants tips on wardrobe (“Getting the Look That Gets Respect”) and interview skills (“Learn to Relax” and “Present With Confidence”).

Guests for the evening included: Mary Kay Consultants, Upscale Nail and Beauty Salon, Warm Spirits Aromatherapy, Richmond Goodwill Industry, Culinary Services, Phyllis Branch, and Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Society. One of our Beauty Consultants showed our moms how to take simple items from their kitchen such as sugar, salt, and lotion and make a sugar scrub for the body. The Villa’s Culinary Services demonstrated and provided samples of simple one-pot meals on a budget.



The Villa’s Vocational Counselor, Phyllis Branch, gathered clothing items from the donation center and presented interview wear to our clients. Along with a presentation from Richmond Goodwill on “What to Say and What Not to Say During an Interview,” clients got a better idea of the different ways to be neat, professional and ready for an interview opportunity.

Main Street Spa and Wellness Center were on hand to offer shoulder massages and to give information on relieving stress. They also provided tips on pressure points and relieving stress at home.

Child care was provided by staff and their families. The children enjoyed various arts and craft activities including painting and T-Shirt designs.



Flagler Home Posts Impressive Results

Flagler Home recently presented its annual results to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and they were nothing short of fantastic!

- 100% of the families graduating during the program year remained in permanent housing (as evidenced by an absence of services in the Homeless Management Information System's regional database) six months after leaving. In other words, they had not become homeless again.
- Twenty-two families entered the program. The vast majority (18 of 22, or 82%) entered Flagler Home directly from an emergency shelter.
 - At the time of entry, none of the 22 families had monthly incomes above \$1,000. Practically all of the incoming families were receiving Medicaid and food stamps.
- At discharge, seventeen of the twenty-five families had monthly incomes above \$1000, and 19 of the 25 women were employed.
- While at Flagler Home, 94% of the children maintained or improved academic progress and 95% demonstrated acceptable school attendance (as defined by the Henrico County Public Schools Code of Student Conduct).
- Twelve of the 25 families who left went to unsubsidized permanent housing.

While at Flagler, women receive a variety of services to support their journeys toward self-sufficiency, including vocational assessment, job readiness, parenting skills, and financial planning. They have access to health care and mental health counseling, if needed.



One of the current Flagler Home residents, **Tamoria Epps**, also has a lot to be proud of: her children, TaQuan and Tianna, each received a Citizenship Award and an Honor Roll certificate from Holladay Elementary School. Congratulations!

(Left to right: Tianna, Tamoria, Tamon and TaQuan Epps)

Dooley Center for Alternative Education Goes “Off the Chain”

Ron Hansboro, Head of Dooley Center for Alternative Education, has begun a unique program called “Off the Chain.” Designed to show students the connected, cyclical nature of drug abuse, homelessness and crime, the “**Off the Chain**” program gives students first-hand exposure to issues facing low-income families and individuals.

One important element in the program is participation in a feeding program at Greater Mount Moriah Baptist Church just next to Gilpin Court in downtown Richmond. For the past several weeks, Ron and a group of students have gone to the church each Tuesday to help volunteers provide food for homeless men and women in the community. As Ron put it, “This is a great way for our students to see and understand some of the consequences people face when they make bad decisions. Our hope is that activities like this will help our students avoid making some of the same choices.”



At right, RaDre Butler and Arielle Miles from the Dooley Center, along with Chasity, Ron Hansboro's daughter (center.)

Groups Provide Support for St. Joseph's Villa

Recently, several groups stopped by St. Joseph's Villa to make contributions. At right, David Huffine, the Villa's Vice President for Financial Development, accepts a check from Cheryl Waller, representing the **Richmond Parrotheads** ("Parties With a Purpose").



A few weeks later, Sheryl Johnson and Youth Director Everett Cannon (center) from **Trinity Baptist Church** presented Eric Townsend, Director of the Villa's Children's Emergency Shelter, with a donation raised by youth at the church through their "Souper Bowl" fund raising project.

Students at **Poplar Springs Hospital's Daybreak Unit** presented Kimberly Tucker, Senior Director of Flagler Family Services, with a donation of proceeds raised from an art auction at the hospital. Kimberly and Bruce Cauthen are shown at center with Poplar Springs staff.



Brook Road Academy parent **Michael Hawkins**, who recently retired, has made a donation to the school to support its programs. Michael (second from right) is shown with David Huffine, Elisabeth Rigsby (Head of Brook Road Academy) and Michael's daughter, Elizabeth, who will graduate this spring.

Two groups from the **Junior League of Richmond** provided tremendous support during February. One group helped purge files in the Administration Building, and the second group hosted story time and crafts with the school age children at the Lewis Children's Center.

Thank you to all of the individuals and groups who support the Villa's mission!

New Fund Created to Provide Free Respite Care

The Villa has created a special scholarship fund to provide free respite care to families with children with severe developmental disabilities. Families currently on the waiting list for a MR (Mental Retardation) or DD (Developmental Disability) Waiver can apply for a scholarship and, if funding allows, receive free weekend care for their children, many of whom require around-the-clock care.

As you may know, families with children with mental retardation or developmental disabilities may qualify for a MR or DD Waiver. Once the waiver is approved, families receive services at little or no cost. Unfortunately, the demand for waivers greatly exceeds available funding. As a result, families may have to wait several years to receive their waiver. In the meantime, they must "make do" the best they can. Many localities provide funding for services as a stopgap measure, but these funds are limited as well.

Many children with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and/or autism (to name a few disabilities covered by the waivers) require constant care. Even for a family with substantial economic means, the expenses can be staggering. And the emotional cost is also huge; children with these special needs often require care in the middle of the night and on weekends, in addition to the care they receive during the day.

The St. Joseph's Villa Respite Care program was created in 1979 as a way to provide parents and siblings with some valuable "time off" from the care they provide to their family member with special needs. Children come to the Day Support Services building (located at 7700 Brook Road) on Friday evening and return home on Sunday afternoon. For a family constantly dealing with care for a child with severe disabilities, a respite weekend provides a chance to relax and regroup. The cost of the service is \$535 per child per weekend.

"Respite care drastically improves the quality of a family's coping with the strain of providing constant care," said Toosdhi Jackson, Senior Director of Children's Day and Residential Services at St. Joseph's Villa. "We are thrilled that we can establish a fund to provide respite services to families who have not yet received their waiver and who cannot afford to pay for the service on their own."

The first gift, used to establish the fund, was made by parishioners at St. James's Episcopal Church in Richmond. St. Joseph's Villa is encouraging other organizations, foundations and individuals to contribute to the Respite Scholarship Fund. Checks may be made out to "St. Joseph's Villa" (with "Respite Scholarship Fund" in the memo line) and mailed to St. Joseph's Villa, 8000 Brook Road, Richmond VA 23227. For more information, please contact Bruce Cauthen at (804) 553-3318 or bcauthen@sjvmail.net.



Charletta Williams to be Recognized

Charletta Williams, one of the Villa's staff, will be recognized at a ceremony at the American Red Cross in March for her heroic efforts to save a young child this past summer. Congratulations, Charletta!

Upcoming Events

Thursday, March 6 – Poetry Out Loud State Competition at the Library of Virginia. Brook Road Academy student Marshall Gibson will compete against winners from other schools across the Commonwealth.

Friday, March 21 – LCC Easter Egg Hunt

Monday, March 24 – Friday, March 28 – Dooley School, Dooley School at Cherokee Road, Dooley Center for Alternative Education, and Brook Road Academy are all closed for **Spring Break**.

Saturday, April 12 (9:30 – 1:30) – Connections 2008, a free resource fair for parents, family members, caregivers, and any member of the community interested in making a difference in the lives of children and youth with special needs. At the Children's Museum of Richmond, 2626 West Broad Street.

Friday, May 9 (7:00 pm) – Fourteenth Annual Hoedown. Join the Villa's friends and family for bluegrass music, barbecue and fun! Benefits Flagler Home. Contact Katie Chandler at (804) 200-1617 or kchandler@sjvmail.net for more information. Sponsored by SunTrust Bank.

Monday, May 12 (9 am) – Genworth Foundation Golf Tournament. Join PGA Tour professional John Rollins and other PGA Tour pros for a full day of golf and good times. Contact Katie Chandler at (804) 200-1617 or kchandler@sjvmail.net for more information. Sponsored by Genworth Foundation.

HELP NEEDED!

St. Joseph's Villa is seeking volunteers to help with the following activities:

- Assisting with clerical needs in several offices across the campus
- Working in the Villa's Donation Center
- Conducting healthy cooking, building projects, poetry writing and reading circles with preschool children at the Lewis Children's Center
- Providing activities that bring awareness of National Poison Prevention Week (March 16-22) to children at the Lewis Children's Center
- Gardening/planting/hands on experience with Lewis Children's Center children

If you, your friends, your company or your community organization would like to help out, please contact **Catherine Stanley** at (804) 521-5577 or cstanley@sjvmail.net. Thank you!