

## December 2007 Newsletter

### Recent Events

It wouldn't be November without **Thanksgiving**. Several dinners were held across campus, from the Lewis Children's Center (pictured) to the Dooley School and the Emergency Shelter.

And on Thanksgiving Day, St. Peter Baptist Church provided a dinner for our residents at the Flagler Home, Hollybrook and the Children's Emergency Shelter.

All of us at St. Joseph's Villa hope that you had a wonderful Thanksgiving as well.



Students at **Dooley School at Cherokee Road** had a special Thanksgiving celebration. They prepared a Thanksgiving Skit for their parents, received certificates for their accomplishments during the first nine weeks of school and then had a Thanksgiving dinner with parents and staff. Truly, there were many wonderful things to celebrate!

Right: One of the students in his "Turkey" costume.

Below: Two students display their awards certificates.



Dooley School at Cherokee Road is an elementary-school program for students dealing with behavioral issues. Many of these school's students also have a learning disability. The school operates out of the first floor of the education building at Southampton Baptist Church.

Students from **Brook Road Academy** got into the **Thanksgiving spirit** by providing Thanksgiving dinners to families in Chimborazo Park and Fairfield Court in Downtown Richmond. The students gathered the food, assembled “Turkey Boxes” (left photo) and then personally delivered the dinners.



Congratulations to **Taylor Flemming**, who was recently named to the 2007-08 edition of the *Who's Who Registry of Academic Excellence*. Taylor is an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade student at Dooley Center for Alternative Education. Congratulations, Taylor!

Left: Taylor Flemming with Senior Treatment Specialist Gene Lee.



**Holocaust survivor Alex Lebenstein** met with students from Brook Road Academy and the Dooley Center for Alternative Education to discuss his experiences and the importance of tolerance in today's society.

Students from the Dooley Center also visited the Holocaust Museum in downtown Richmond later that week to gain a deeper perspective.

Thank you for sharing your story with us, Mr. Lebenstein.

Residents at Flagler Home held a **“Spoken Word” event** in early November. Each resident at the Home is on a journey from homelessness to self-sufficiency. The event was a way for the residents to share a poem, story or thought about her experience with the other residents, as a way of building community with each other. Flagler staff attended the event and said that it was an incredibly moving experience.

A poem by Tamoria Epps, one of the Flagler residents, is included at the end of this month's newsletter.

One of the exciting developments this fall has been the addition of several specialists who complement the academic and behavior education we provide in our schools.

**Music Therapist Kim Gilbert** (at right, with guitar, working with students at the Sarah Dooley Center for Autism) is a board certified music therapist with a degree from Radford University, who has been practicing music therapy off and on for 14 years.

Kim works with students at the Sarah Dooley Center, as well as students at Dooley School and Dooley School at Cherokee Road. Each class includes sections when students sing, play instruments and dance. It's a lot of fun!



**Multimedia Specialist David P. Huerbin** (at left in photo, working with students in Career Readiness classes) is a visual artist who works in a variety of media including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, photography and multimedia. David received his BFA at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

David and Matt Kreydatus, head of our Career Readiness Program, have been working with students at Dooley School and the Dooley Center for Alternative Education to translate student life plans into PowerPoint presentations. Students are guided by the Career Choices curriculum and are using the MyTenYearPlan website for creating their vision for their future. The program is designed so that students can continue to use the website for career and life planning even after they have graduated.



**Art Teacher Rebecca Saunders** is an artist from Boston who completed her Masters in Art Education at Massachusetts College of Art. In addition to teaching students at Dooley School, Dooley School at Cherokee Road and the Sarah Dooley Center, Rebecca co-runs a glass blowing business called Solos Glass. ([www.solosglass.com](http://www.solosglass.com))

With the addition of art, music and computer specialists to our athletic program, the Villa's Educational Services program provides a wide variety of activities that allow creative expression (and maybe help create our next superstar!)

Right: Rebecca working with a student at Dooley School.



Last month's newsletter included a story about Travis Braswell, the first student placed into an internship through our new **Career Readiness program**. Matt Kreydatus, the program director, reported several positive steps this month:

- This month, a second student has begun a job here on campus, and a third is expected to start a new job in early December. If you or your company can give a child a break by providing an entry-level job, please contact Matt at 553-3224. Thank you!
- Students from Dooley School and the Dooley Center for Alternative Education visited both the University of Richmond and ECPI to look at post-graduation career options. Each Thursday is "Career Thursday," an opportunity to explore options.
- 2007 Dooley School graduate "Sam" (not his real name) has been working with Matt Kreydatus since graduation and has enrolled at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College for classes beginning in January 2008. Sam's story was told in the June 2007 newsletter.

If you visit the Villa campus early on Tuesday mornings, you might see the "**Dooley Trotters**," a new group of students determined to get out and enjoy the brisk mornings. Students spend a half hour walking (or running!) around the Villa campus with their teachers and getting some fresh air. Come join us!



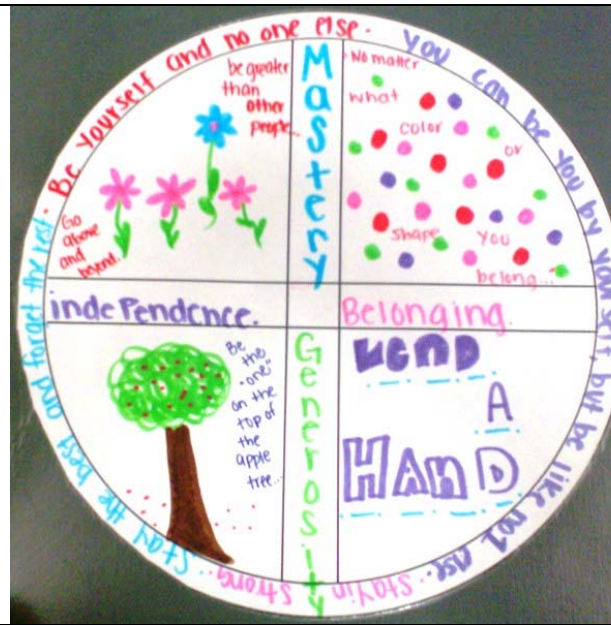
A **delegation from Yangju City, Korea**, visited St. Joseph's Villa with members of Henrico County's Department of Social Services. From what they told us, Korea does not have a foster-care system like the United States'; children needing permanent housing live in orphanages. While at the Villa, the delegation toured the Children's Emergency Shelter and Flagler Home, to understand how emergency shelters and transitional housing programs work.



Virginia's First Lady **Ann Holton** (in green shirt) visited St. Joseph's Villa to meet with the Virginia Coalition of Private Provider Associations. Ms. Holton and VCOPPA discussed Ms. Holton's *For Keeps* initiative, which seeks ways to find and strengthen permanent families for older children who are in foster care or who might enter the foster care system.

Speaking of improvements, schools at St. Joseph's Villa are using "**The Circle of Courage**" to help guide students' behavior.

The Circle of Courage is based on teachings from the Native American Lakota tribe, who believe that each person needs to develop strong senses of Generosity, Independence, Mastery and Belonging. These four senses are typically presented in a drawing such as the one at right.



The schools recently began a nine-week concentration on Generosity. To kick off the new focus area, school staff modeled generous behavior by hosting a "Just Because" breakfast for the students. Staff cooked and served the meal for the students to show how people do nice things for others for no reason other than "just because."

St. Joseph's Villa's **soccer team** reached the championship playoffs for the Richmond Alternative Schools Soccer League for the second year in a row. The Villa's team is comprised of students from Brook Road Academy, Dooley School and the Dooley Center for Alternative Education. Congratulations, team!

Representatives from Flagler Family Services attended the **Project Homeless Connect** event at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in late November. The project, sponsored by local nonprofit organization Homeward, sought to connect the region's homeless with various services and service providers who could assist them.

At right, Flagler Program Manager Cindy Barton listens to a homeless mother describe her needs and situation.



## Upcoming Events

**Wednesday, December 5 (5:30 pm) – Tree Lighting Celebration.** Villa clients, staff and volunteers (and their friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc.) gather for an annual tree lighting and holiday celebration.

**Thursday, December 6 (6:30 pm) – Brook Road Academy Holiday Dinner** for students, faculty and parents.

**Monday, December (6 pm) – Holiday party for Flagler Home** sponsored by St. Gabriel Catholic Church.

**Wednesday, December 12 (8:30 am) – Santa Breakfast at Lewis Children’s Center** sponsored by Cingular Wireless.

**Wednesday, December 12 – Holiday Party at Sarah Dooley Center for Autism** sponsored by Bowman and Burke.

**Wednesday, December 19 (noon) – Winter Holiday begins with Noon dismissal** for Dooley School, Dooley School at Cherokee Road, Dooley Center for Alternative Education and Brook Road Academy.

**Thursday, December 20 (11 am) – Nativity Story Puppet Show for Lewis Children’s Center** sponsored by Bethel Baptist Church.

**Friday, December 21 – Winter Holiday begins at Sarah Dooley Center for Autism.** After dismissal at the end of the day, the Sarah Dooley Center will be closed until January 2.

**Friday, December 21 (6 – 11 pm) – Skalidays#8 at Alleykatz** (10 Walnut Alley) featuring music by several area bands, including Murphy’s Kids (with the Villa’s John Charlet). \$8 (or \$7 plus a canned food donation to benefit Food Not Bombs), with proceeds to benefit St. Joseph’s Villa.

**January 2, 2008 – Classes resume**

### HELP NEEDED!

The Donation Center at St. Joseph’s Villa is in *critical* need of volunteers to assist with operating its center. The donation center collects new and gently used household items for the benefit of Villa clients. Volunteer responsibilities include greeting donors and accepting donations as well as sorting and displaying the donations throughout the center. Volunteers are needed in various shifts Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:00pm. For more information please contact Catherine Stanley, Volunteer Manager at 521-5577 or [cstanley@sjvmail.net](mailto:cstanley@sjvmail.net).

## Spoken Word Poem

This poem was presented at the “Spoken Word” event at Flagler Home by Tamoria Epps, one of the Home’s residents.

Still a Person, Just a person.

Why should I be expected to expect less of myself, of my children...of you?

Is it because currently I don’t have an address to call my “own”

OR

Could it be that you have decided that an address equals or defines the  
Limitations of my expectations?

Why is it that your *worst* should gladly be acceptable for me as my best?

Is it because you’ve had a glimpse into my possibility or better yet my  
probability and it frightens or intimidates *your* best.

Is it my fault that all you can, or wish to see is the here and now?

Should I subject myself or by forcibly subjected to your box...to your fears:

God forbid!

“**No weapon** that is **formed against** thee **shall prosper**; and every tongue that **shall rise against** thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of **me**, saith the LORD.” Isaiah 54:17

Remember, I am still a person

I am not angry. I thank you.

Your tunnel vision and denial to accept the future, **my** future has made and continually makes me strong,  
or better yet...determined.

Determined because “the **joy** of the **LORD** is my **strength**” Neh. 8:10

Determined to do my best and gently open your eyes and heart to see more  
In me than just as “homeless” mother of 3.

...So as I barrel through the barriers set around me and do “**All things through Christ** which  
strengtheneth” Phil.4:13, it may cause some to say, “How can that be?” “How did she escape the box?”...

Remember,

It was the Lord, God in me

For without Him, I am

Just a person.

Ms. Epps added this note to the end of the poem and asked that it be included with her poem:

This is an original poem written and edited by Tamoria Epps. Bible verse inserts are from the King James Version. Any similarities between this original poem and any/all other written, spoken or otherwise communicated literature are absolutely coincidental.

Thank you, Tamoria!