

October 2011 Newsletter

Recent Events



St. Joseph's Villa is
thrilled to have its
students back in school!

We missed you!



Last month, we reported on the opening of the Villa's Culinary Arts Center. Since then, the Center has become a vital part of the Villa campus, serving breakfast and lunch to children in all of the Villa's school programs. At left, some students from Dooley Elementary School are shown enjoying their lunch in the CAC's "Pet Shop" dining area.



Several recent stories have described how children with autism and other developmental disabilities can use iPads to communicate and to learn. Last year, Wal-Mart gave St. Joseph's Villa a grant to be used for newer technology, including iPads.

Many students have benefitted from this new technology. At the Sarah Dooley Center for Autism, students use iPads for games to help them learn and for recreation. At left, Chelsea shows Michael how to use a new iPad application.

Technology is becoming a more important part of helping students develop better communication skills. The Villa is committed to exploring these advances and incorporating them wherever possible to help our students.

Brook Road Academy welcomed parents of its students to a back to school dinner on September 20. 93% of parents attended, making it a wonderful gathering. Brook Road Academy also started its year with 35 students, its highest opening-day enrollment in recent memory.



Spotlight On: Dooley Center for Alternative Education **Written By Carol Mawyer**

There's a fine line between being assertive and determined and acting aggressive and stubborn. The latter traits can be problematic in an educational setting.



For at-risk teens, what often tips the scale from acceptable to unacceptable behavior is an unstable home environment. Teens in broken homes or foster homes, and those who are runaways, often exhibit negative behaviors that result in suspension or expulsion from public schools. But federal law guarantees every child the right to a free and appropriate public education, so learning needs to continue.

So when a teen no longer fits into the public school setting, the Dooley Center for Alternative Education (DCAE) offers another option. DCAE provides academic instruction and behavioral education for at-risk high school students on long-term suspensions (6-months or more) or expulsions from their local school.

Accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities (VAISEF), DCAE enrolls students primarily from Henrico, Hanover and the City of Richmond who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

This Villa program offers a learning environment that prioritizes safety, security, order and structure. The academic segment provides a guaranteed and viable academic curriculum to high school students in grades 9 – 12. Faculty consists of school leaders and educators who not only value learning, but also understand at-risk teens and the challenges they face. Instructional materials are current, age- and grade-level appropriate and aligned with instructional standards of learning.

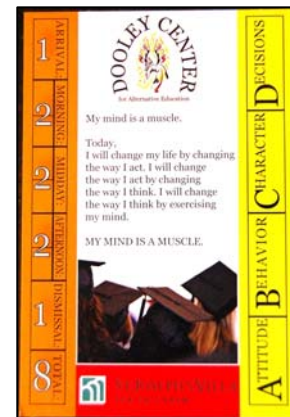
Instructors use a web-based instructional model (E20/20) that provides dynamic, differentiated and individualized instruction in core content as well as elective courses. Students log on to computers and put on headphones to complete modules in math, English and science at their own pace. Additional courses are offered in foreign language, business and music appreciation. DCAE enables students to earn credit recovery, credit restoration and credit accumulation that count towards their high school diploma.

Parental involvement is an important indicator of student success. On a weekly basis, DCAE teachers employ a positive-contact system with parents to proactively encourage desired student behaviors. Welcome events, parent-empowerment workshops and parent/teacher conferences are held each quarter.

A social development curriculum empowers students to effectively manage their personal behaviors and interactions with peers, parents/guardians, and other legitimate figures of authority. Behavioral management specialists provide mental health support and teach students about themselves.

The 41 students enrolled in DCAE wear uniforms and adhere to a structured daily schedule that begins with arrival at 8 a.m. and dismissal at 2:30 p.m. The day includes both breakfast and lunch.

DCAE students follow a school-wide behavior management plan that rewards appropriate behaviors. Students are treated as professionals whose job is learning and behaving appropriately. Following this business model, new students enter DCAE as “interns” and have the opportunity to advance to “staff” and “executive” levels. The professional atmosphere enables students to earn promotions by completing hours at various rates including “time” (for interns), “overtime” (for staff) and “double time” (for executives.) Students may advance to higher levels by complying with attendance, attitude and aptitude expectations. This individualized student plan allows each student to move at his or her own pace.



The annual target goal is 1440 hours of school work (180 school days times 8 hours per day). The total length of the program can range from 1 semester (90 days) to 2 semesters (180 days) depending on each student’s active participation while meeting program expectations. Program director D.D. Hawes says it best, “We’ve got 180 days to go 180 degrees to put these kids on a path to better things.”

Faculty and counselors place an increased emphasis on transition services, with the expectation that students will return to their local school. Positive outcomes of DCAE include high school diplomas and attendance at post-secondary programs. Last year, 56 students attended DCAE, and 84% of students made a successful transition back to their local school after their suspension.

DCAE students may be different from most kids because of their backgrounds and home experiences. By combining the best practices from academic and behavioral management programs, DCAE provides each of them with the tools they need to succeed in school and in life.

Each year, the Villa measures success among its students with developmental disabilities as part of the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP). Students take the Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOL) tests to assess how much academic progress has been made during the past year. Nine students from the Sarah Dooley Center for Autism and Dooley School took the ASOL tests at the end of last year, and the results were amazing! Of the nine students:

- 100% passed their Reading exam
- 100% passed their Science exam
- 89% passed their History exam
- 77% passed their Math exam and
- 66% passed their writing exam.



Congratulations, students (and teachers)! Job well done!

Claudia Perez Speaks at VAHC Conference

Claudia Perez, Housing Specialist at Flagler Community Services, spoke to attendees at the Virginia Association of Housing Counselors' Fall Conference on September 26.

Claudia appeared as part of a panel discussion on the changing face of homelessness. Specifically, the panel revealed that more middle-class professionals have lost their jobs and their homes and now are seeking homeless services. In these cases, it is not uncommon for the professional to feel embarrassed or depressed, and counselors must use extra care to protect the client's situation and to restore self-esteem.



Flagler Community Services helps families transition out of homelessness and into permanent housing. In her capacity as Housing Specialist, Claudia helps families find new homes and start the process of rebuilding their lives. In the past few months, Flagler Community has been working with Homeward, the local services coordinator, on a Rapid Re-Housing project designed to place families in homes as quickly as possible. (In fact, one family was placed in housing in only nine days.)

Claudia spoke about the Rapid Re-Housing program and about how Flagler Services works with the family to build a strong foundation for future success. Flagler Community Services professionals work with the family to develop a budget and a plan for economic self-sufficiency.

St. Joseph's Villa Implements e2020 Instructional Courseware

St. Joseph's Villa has announced that it has implemented the Education 2020 (or "e2020") instructional courseware in support of its educational services programs. The online software system has shown dramatic results in several schools (including schools in Henrico County) by providing individualized educational support to students with a variety of needs.

The e2020 software provides around-the-clock online instruction in core and elective classes. (Almost 50 courses are offered.) Instruction is available around the clock, and students and teachers can monitor how much progress a student has made. The system is especially promising for students struggling with concepts, because work can be done confidentially, avoiding potential embarrassment in a classroom setting.

The e2020 courseware system will be implemented first at the Dooley Center for Alternative Education, the Villa's school for students who have been suspended from local schools in Richmond, Henrico County or Hanover County. Students will work on the e2020 courseware for one class period each day and receive classroom instruction during the remainder of the day. Each student's work on the e2020 system will be monitored by DCAE teachers, who will provide additional support as needed.

"The e2020 system is going to make a tremendous difference for our students," said Dana Hawes, Head of the Dooley Center for Alternative Education. "Each student will see his or her progress and assume personal responsibility for the results. And our teachers will use the e2020 information to address individual needs. We will be able to deliver a better educational service."

"All of us are very excited about the opportunities we see in the e2020 courseware," said Cynthia Faison, the Villa's Chief Operations Officer. "St. Joseph's Villa is dedicated to helping people help themselves, and the e2020 courseware allows us to reach some people who might not have been reached through more conventional methods. Over the next couple of years, I think we all will see much more technology coming into the classrooms at St. Joseph's Villa."

Noted philanthropist E. Claiborne Robins spoke to the Villa's *Believing is Seeing* Campaign Executive Committee at its September 12 meeting. In his comments, Mr. Robins stressed the importance of mission in successful fund raising efforts. At right, Mr. Robins makes a point as Villa CEO Kathleen Burke Barrett looks on.



Work is moving ahead on the Villa's campus redevelopment. At right, the Pedestrian Avenue has "turned the corner" and is coming towards the Villa gymnasium. Below left, work has begun to transform the central courtyard into a new garden area, and below right, a new ramp has been built behind the Administration Building. Stay tuned for future progress reports!



Robert, a Shining Star at Day Treatment Services

By Cherie Rochelle, Treatment Specialist

Robert is a ten year old male client who graduated from the After School Day Treatment program on September 16th. Robert received Day Treatment services for approximately a year and a half to help him with anger management issues, anxiety, impulsivity, social withdrawal, interpersonal relationships, conflicted family relationships and difficulty expressing his thoughts and feelings in an appropriate manner.

While Robert struggled in the beginning to come out of his shell and relate to others, he came to realize he was not alone in his journey and that many of his peers had similar struggles. Our staff met Robert "where he was," unconditionally, and formed a healthy "teaching" relationship, which allowed Robert to become a more confident, autonomous and successful individual.

He was able to work within the therapeutic and behavioral milieu to gain the self esteem he needed to improve his and his family's quality of life. Robert revealed himself to be a caring young man who loves playing outdoors (baseball and football), learning about himself, playing in the snow, playing video games and ultimately, spending quality time with both his mother's and father's families.

Robert took his treatment seriously and worked hard to overcome his shyness and participate in his therapeutic growth, especially in his ability to express his thoughts and feelings. He became a leader among his peers, showing he could be trusted and honest, even when they might not want to hear it. When Robert struggled, his peers were there for him to assist him with what he needed to do. This was a valuable lesson for all in learning that needing help is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of our "human-ness."



Robert learned to use his many supportive services. During the past few years, Robert and his family have benefitted from community-based psychiatric and individual therapy, Intensive In-home, IEP support services in the school and Day Treatment services. He shared that he was no longer embarrassed by the need for help and can now look at these supports as “tools for his tool box of life” as we frequently called it in the group.

We are proud of Robert’s success and look forward to hearing about his future life adventures. We feel honored to have been a part of his and his family’s growth and wellness!

Upcoming Events at St. Joseph’s Villa

October 8 (6:00 pm to ?) - Salsa4Children! On October 8th, Salsa in Richmond (And Sometimes Beyond) will hold an exciting dance event to benefit St. Joseph’s Villa! The event will feature beginner and advanced workshops and a dance social with live music, performances, food, door prizes and much more. Visit [Salsa4Children - A Salsa Benefit Social](#) for more information and to purchase your tickets or visit us on [Facebook](#). Let’s dance the night away for a great cause!

October 29 (8:00 am to ?) – Hands On Greater Richmond
Approximately 50 volunteers from the Richmond community will come to St. Joseph’s Villa to paint the interior of the Donation Center and to refurbish several pieces of furniture. For more information about HandsOn Day, please visit HandsOnRVA.org



Volunteer News from St. Joseph’s Villa

As a result of the construction project, the Donation Center will be **CLOSED Oct. 26th through mid-January 2012.**

NEW Holiday gift donations and coats for children and adults will be accepted at a temporary space here on our campus by appointment only beginning Nov. 29th-Dec.21st. As our construction draws to an end updates will be posted announcing the grand re-opening of the St. Joseph’s Villa Donation Center.



St. Joseph’s Villa would like to thank Jake Wilkes, who raised funds for and led a team to build new furniture for the Donation Center. Jake, an aspiring Eagle Scout with Troop 1829 in Midlothian, and his team built five 6-foot sets of shelves and a new sign (shown at left). Jake also refinished several pieces of furniture in one of the Villa cottages. Thank you, Jake, for your great work to help us out!

Volunteer Notes

One of the best things about St. Joseph's Villa is that we are always buzzing with activity. Special events, field trips, fundraisers, and other newsworthy items keep us on our toes. Fortunately, we have an incredible team of volunteers that works hard to support what we do. We have more than 55 people who serve the campus each week, and more than 750 volunteers have offered their help over the past year.

As the holiday season fast approaches, our need for volunteers continues as we prepare for special events. For those interested in helping, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved.

One opportunity for volunteers is to become a docent. Docents are responsible for answering the phone, greeting visitors, and answering general questions about St. Joseph's Villa. Administrative Assistant positions are also available in several offices on campus for individuals who are interested in volunteering in an office setting. Volunteers will help perform various tasks such as maintaining client files, copying, scanning, answering the phone, and preparing information such as admission packets. All volunteers will receive training for their position. As fall draws closer, we'd like to thank all of our summer volunteers who did such a wonderful job assisting us in our camp classrooms. Stay tuned for more information about volunteer positions throughout the fall.

Also remember that even if you don't have time to volunteer, there are other ways you can help. St. Joseph's Villa accepts donations online as well as donated goods at our donation center. Some items we need include dish sets, serving bowls and platters, eating utensils, floral arrangements, office furniture, framed artwork, and clothing. Every little bit helps, and we thank you for your time and donations.

Join Us in Helping!

The work of St. Joseph's Villa cannot take place without the support of individuals and organizations in the communities we serve. If you would like to contribute to the Villa's success, please visit [our website](#). Thank you!

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