



Changing Lives "One Child At A Time"

# P.A.R.K. PROGRESS

April 2010

Donald W. Reynolds Facility

## CHRISTMAS PARTIES WITH A PURPOSE!



Joyce Harp purchasing a gift for P.A.R.K. while Stacey Hightower, Assistant to the President at P.A.R.K. looks on.

The very thought of fundraising can make one question whether it is even worth it. However, when you know the budget for the coming year is nearly \$1,000,000, then you also know something has to take place to get it.

That is when the "big guy" gets into action - making calls, thinking of ideas, and using up entire legal pads coordinating his master

plan. At first, Keith considered reviving the Super Pre-game event with the big crowds, big TVs', and of course, the big food. Upon reminiscing on what it took to host an event of that magnitude, he quickly changed his mind.

Little time passed before the light bulb came on and the idea of *PARK A Gift Under The Tree* was born. Since it was getting close to Christmas, Keith thought what better gift could someone give to a friend, or loved one than a needed item or service for the students at P.A.R.K.

With plans sketched out, parties were scheduled and hundreds of gift boxes were wrapped by a number of wonderful ladies, who was eager to help out such a great idea. Thanks to the hospitality of the party hosts; Greg & Dora Jane Flesher, Breck & Anne Speed, Kevin & Dianna Huchingson, Stephen & Wendy LaFrance, Shirley Davis & Bill Miller, Melody & Steve Stanley, Alan & Margie Duncan, Matt & Caroline Duncan, Chip & Cindy Murphy, and Peggy

Flesher, the parties went off without a hitch. They opened their homes and invited guests to shop from P.A.R.K.'s gift boards filled with gift possibilities. With their donation, guests received a present to give to whom-ever they chose.

Thanks to everyone who parked a gift under someone's tree in their honor for P.A.R.K. We'll do it again in 2010!



Janie Hathoot looks at the different gift options on the gift board.

## Community support from Comcast of Arkansas

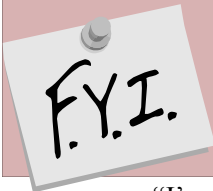
The Comcast Foundation recently awarded a \$9,000 grant to P.A.R.K. for its Learning Center computer replacement project. The project will help students stay on task at P.A.R.K. and in school by supplying them with the proper tools to do homework and other assignments.

"Assisting P.A.R.K. with obtaining a Comcast Foundation grant was a labor of love, because I'm so happy to be a part of P.A.R.K. and its mission and goals of helping high-risk youth obtain their high school diplomas and attend college," said Evangeline Parker, Comcast Public Affairs Coordinator & P.A.R.K. Board Member.

The Comcast Foundation Board said, "This grant from the Comcast Foundation is in recognition of Comcast's commitment to the communities where its customers and employees live and work," Parker added. "Since its founding in 1999, the Comcast Foundation has distributed more than \$65 million in cash support of programs implemented locally in Comcast communities."



Evangeline Parker, Public Affairs Coordinator for Comcast Cable of Arkansas with Mike Wilson, Comcast Vice-President of Government Affairs and Keith Jackson



## Keith's Corner

### *Promise Keeper*

"I've seen the Promise Land," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said. He went on to say, "I might not get there with you, but we as a people will get there someday." In my short life I've seen many promises come to fruition by the trail of blood and tears shed of those before me to make my future bright. I too have made promises and now am moved with compassion to complete my task.

I witnessed through depictions Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. struggle for civil rights, and now see President Barack Obama hold the highest office. I heard of Jackie Robinson's mistreatment as he broke Major League Baseball's color barrier and lived to see the day I received a fair shot to play in the NFL.

So every day in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we fight the battle of a better education for our children - a key to the success of our communities. I've been privy to so many changes brought about because of extraordinary people fulfilling promises to make life better for the generation to come.

So back to my promise! I promised that if a student would be willing to undergo the tough discipline of a 5-year commitment to P.A.R.K. to become academically proficient, P.A.R.K. would send them to college if they so desired. Well, six of the eight students in the first graduating class took us up on the offer. Fast forward to this year's 10th graduating class where many of the 36 graduates will be entering college this fall! I want to say thank you to all the universities, colleges and technical schools that have helped me keep the promise. I want to personally thank Ron & Toni Lazenby and Family for being the latest to help me keep this promise.

It is my prayer these graduates will be able to pay this promise forward by helping someone else achieve their ultimate goal of attending college.

**\*Happy 99th Birthday Aunt Bertha Washington Mazique\***

## The Choice Bus

Several P.A.R.K. students recently had the opportunity to get on The Choice Bus, an experience-based learning tool designed to show young people the power of education, as well as the likely consequences of choosing to drop out of school.



The bus contains a full scale replica of a prison cell which our students were invited into to briefly experience the uncomfortable living conditions. They were given a pledge card upon exiting the bus asking them to make a commitment to finish school and make good choices.

Ninth grader Asjah Wrather said, "The Choice Bus gave me more to think about. It made me ask the question, 'Is that how I want to live my life?'" She added, "I know that I'm the only one who can answer that question, because the choice is mine to make and no one else's including my mother."

"I learned that the choices I make today affect my future," said high school senior Jesse White. "If I choose to sit in school and get an education, I could get a well paying job and support myself and my family," he added.

Overall, The Choice Bus opened the eyes of these P.A.R.K. students as to what awaits them depending on their choices.

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# Lakisa Vaughn, Chief Student Life Manager

## Generating excitement for all at P.A.R.K. for over nine years



### VAUGHN-TASTIC !!

Since day one, the students at P.A.R.K. have fallen in love with energetic LaKisa Vaughn, especially the girls. In fact, the title sums up how they feel about this young lady. They have someone with whom they feel comfortable sharing their innermost feelings without being looked down on.

Kisa began working at P.A.R.K. in 2000 not long after she graduated high school. She left briefly, but returned wiser and more energetic than before. Her spirited personality has rubbed off on other staff members who have given her many new names, such as, Vaughn-tastic, Vaughn-licious, Vaughn-stravagant, etc. With a multitude of talents, Kisa often showcases them at P.A.R.K. by singing, playing basketball, and bejeweling anything that lacks “Vaughn-tastic character.”

Kisa commented, “P.A.R.K. has been such a blessing. I came to P.A.R.K. as a 19-year-old trying to find myself, and I have blossomed into a 29-year-old God fearing, strong, loving, mentoring, caring, accomplished young lady. P.A.R.K. has been so influential to my values and goals in life.” She added, “I am a better mother to my sensational daughter Kearstin as well as an improved daughter, friend, sister, church member, and human being because of what I have gained being a part of P.A.R.K.”

“Kisa’s energy is contagious. Once you get caught up in the “Vaughn-sationalism” you can’t help but join in,” said Melanie Jackson, Community Outreach Coordinator for P.A.R.K. “She cares about every one of the students and is constantly encouraging them to be their best,” Jackson added.

A great asset to P.A.R.K., Vaughn serves as sponsor of Project Get Fit (a club for the girls at P.A.R.K.), and the gospel choir.

VAUGHN-TASTIC!



Terry & Jerry Lynn with painting, “Take me to the water.”

Melody & Steve Stanley, owners of Red Door Gallery in North Little Rock hosted “Southern Heritage,” an art show featuring a collection of new works by renowned Memphis artists, TWIN. The twins painted the above piece, *Take me to the Water* live at the event to the amazement of those in attendance as to how well they worked together. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of their artwork went to P.A.R.K.

## Words of Encouragement

We have always been huge fans of the P.A.R.K. program. As we watched our two children go thru junior high and high school, it was clear that some of their friends had more support than others at home. Some just needed to be reminded that someone else was paying attention to how they were doing in school (it takes a village). We believe that your program provides that for your students - congratulations!

Cristine Slikker - Donor

  
**Reminder!**

P.A.R.K.  
Graduation and  
Recognition  
Ceremony  
May 20th

# LEADERSHIP

## *The Art of following*

by Mancel Linton

For the past three years I've had the opportunity to follow both P.A.R.K . President Keith Jackson and my predecessor, Kareem Moody as P.A.R.K. Program Director. I now have the privilege to lead the P.A.R.K. program in a direction that will allow us to reach new goals. I believe a good follower is like a sponge, soaking up information. The follower is always in training to do great and mighty things. One of my favorite biblical followers was Joshua. He followed Moses without one complaint, and God rewarded him with great responsibility to lead the children of Israel to a place they had not been (Joshua 1). In no way do my responsibilities compare with those of Joshua, but we do have something in common: we are followers.

The art of following can be one of the greatest gifts we possess. In today's society it seems no one wants to follow. Everyone wants to lead, but there must be followers in order to have great leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a follower of Booker T. Washington. He also followed Mohandas Gandhi, and we know the profound impact he had among all races and ethnic groups. If you desire to be a great leader in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century you first have to become a follower...with no strings attached. Here are three simple ways to become a great leader through *The Art of Following*.

1. Whatever you do, do it with all your might. Do it as unto the Lord. Do it as if it was your personal ministry or your very own business. If you're the follower, follow with a passion. Ask questions; take notes; and listen to great leaders on CD, DVD, and in books. Attend leadership conferences in order to see how it's done from those that are great leaders. Begin to create your style of leadership by being a great follower.

2. The second way to become a great leader is Attitude. If you are determined to become a great leader check your attitude. Your attitude can measure your altitude. When it

comes to leadership your attitude is very important to the people you will one day lead. When you're asked to go above and beyond by your place of employment (whether attending meetings, trainings, or a conference) how is your attitude? If your attitude has become negative toward opportunities to better yourself then it's time for an attitude adjustment. Begin by surrounding yourself with people who have positive attitudes toward life. Negative attitudes and negative people lead to complaining which cancels out your opportunity to excel. No matter where you are in life your attitude is the difference maker in becoming the leader you were called to be.

3. Get rid all excuses and get the job done! In the midst of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Todd Beamer decided not to use excuses about the terrorists who hijacked Flight 93. Instead, he decided to take action under extreme circumstances. The phrase that Mr. Beamer used while speaking to the operator was the true sound of a leader, "Let's roll." A true leader has no excuses. When I was younger my grandmother would often give me chores around the house. When I would not complete them I had a good excuse why it was not completed. She told me something I would never forget, "An excuse is nothing but a dressed up lie!" Grandma made it clear: either you do the task or you don't do the task, but there are no excuses. All excuses lead to negative comments that result in bad action.

True leaders are followers first. Are you ready to be a follower?



# Ashleigh Wilson

## Quiet Charm & Bright Future



Ashleigh Wilson is a 14-year-old shy, independent, smart lover of reading and music. She likes to be alone and will stay like that for hours until she is ready to come out. As she puts it, "When the occasion calls for it, I am ready to stand up in front of others and lead them." Her love of reading is impeccable, sometimes reading as many as five books in one week. When and wherever you see her she has a book in her hands. Her iPod is even closer,

with buds in her ears listening to an array of music such as country, rock, pop, and classical.

Ashleigh works hard in all of her classes and has a never-give-up attitude even when the situation seems impossible. She wants to attend Hendrix College after high school graduation, and then go to Dartmouth to study to become a Physicist and a preschool teacher.

Whenever you see Ashleigh she has a smile on her face. "She won't say much, but her smile says it all," says Melanie Jackson, Community Outreach Coordinator.

Ashleigh has a desire for everyone. She would like for everyone to become Earth friendly like her by recycling and becoming "green." "A 'green' Earth would be better for me as I grow up and travel the world," she added.

P.A.R.K.'s Program Director, Mancel Linton said, "We are proud to have Ashleigh as a part of the P.A.R.K. family. Her radiant smile and spirit helps set the atmosphere for students and staff."

With such lofty goals, Ashleigh is a source of pride for P.A.R.K.

# A Look N Tha Mirror

by Ronika Crusterson  
9th grader

I look in the mirror and  
what do I see . . .  
I see a girl, but I'm not sure if  
it's me.  
I see a girl . . .  
who is mad at the world  
I see a girl . . .  
who wants some motherly love  
I see a girl . . .  
who is angry, upset and confused  
I see a girl . . .  
who is willing to make sacrifices  
I see a girl . . .  
who is ready for change and wants to make a  
difference  
I see a girl . . .  
with tears running down her cheeks  
and fire in her eyes  
I see a girl . . .  
that seeks greatness and wants nothing  
but the best  
I see a girl . . .  
that can let go of the past  
I see a girl . . .  
that wants to grow up way too fast.  
I see a girl . . .  
that wants a little bit more  
I see a girl . . .  
that needs a second chance  
I see a girl . . .  
that doesn't know why  
I see a girl . . .  
who is starting to cry  
I see a girl . . .  
that is all alone  
I see a girl  
that need some attention  
I see a girl . . .  
that is sorry  
I see a girl . . .  
that is in pain  
I see a girl . . .  
that pleads guilty  
I see a girl . . .  
who wants to be free  
I see a girl . . .  
Who? Oh wait! That girl is me.

Be the first to receive P.A.R.K.'s  
newsletter, *P.A.R.K. Progress* via  
email by sending your request  
to [mjackson@positivekids.org](mailto:mjackson@positivekids.org).

# P.A.R.K CELEBRATES 15!

by Monique Hickman, Education Outreach Coordinator

“Work hard and it will pay off!” is often heard throughout P.A.R.K. from the staff to the students. It is always an exciting feeling to witness the payoff.

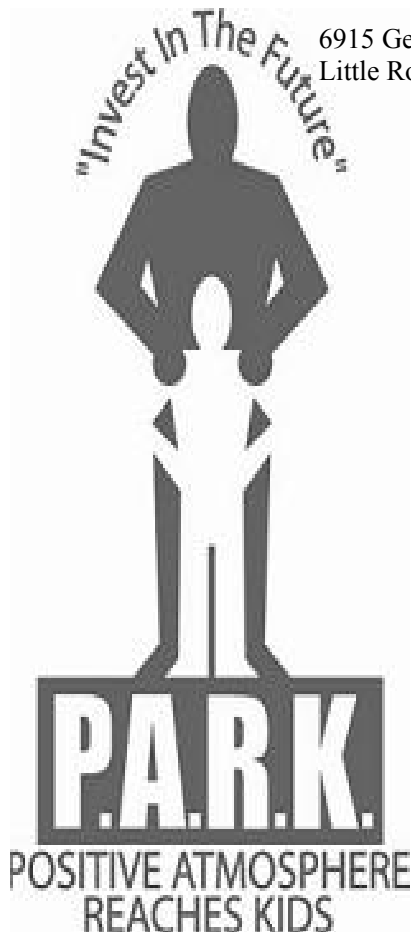
March 5, 2010, P.A.R.K. celebrated its fifteenth college graduate, Deniko Wallace. Deniko graduated from Remington College in November 2009, as a Pharmacy Technician. As with each graduation ceremony, P.A.R.K. staff and guests from Remington witnessed Deniko march into the learning center and place a Remington College flag alongside the flags of eight additional colleges and universities around the state. Whenever a P.A.R.K. grad graduates from college, a flag from that institution of higher learning is displayed in the learning center. These flags serve as a daily reminder to the younger students currently in the program that if they work hard, it will pay off.

P.A.R.K. is also celebrating another big 15. This May, P.A.R.K. will be hosting its fifteenth Graduation and Recognition Ceremony. Staff, Board Members, students, family and friends will come together to honor the graduating class of 2010. So, please join us May 20, 2010, at 6:00 p.m., as we celebrate this milestone with our senior class.



Keith Jackson, Deniko Wallace, former P.A.R.K. graduate with Jerry Barnett, CEO of Remington College

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