

# THE P.A.R.K. PROGRESS

Donald W. Reynolds Facility

## POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE REACHES KIDS

### 11th Annual P.A.R.K. Graduation & Recognition Ceremony

By Monique Palmer, Education Outreach Coordinator



As the 2005-2006 school year came to a close, P.A.R.K. was gearing up for its 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduation & Recognition Ceremony! On May 18, 2006, we celebrated 29 seniors as they left the hallowed halls of their respective high schools and the protective folds of Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids.

This year's ceremony started with a spectacular twist; guests had an opportunity to see P.A.R.K. college students proceed into the learning center followed

by four very distinguished guests; our four P.A.R.K. College Graduates! Then they were followed by the graduating class of 2006. What a breathtaking sight to view the parade of lives that are continuing to be touched by P.A.R.K. through the provision of higher education.

But, the fun didn't stop there. We awarded some very deserving individuals as well. Our volunteer of the year award went to Mrs. Faye Albert. "Ms. Faye" is so dedicated to P.A.R.K. that we had to make sure she wasn't around the building helping somewhere when we announced her award! We also honored three educators from the Little Rock School District for their tireless effort and support. They are Ms. Sherri Betton (Mabelvale Magnet Middle

School), Ms. Sandra Carter (Parkview Arts and Science Magnet High School) and Ms. Sophia Parchman (Horace Mann Magnet Middle School).

Mr. Shawn A. Taylor, CEO and President of Family EATs partnership, of Houston, Texas was the speaker for the evening. He delivered an inspiring message and brought home a few basic lessons for all: the importance of positive relationships and their impact in our lives and the value of education.

P.A.R.K.'s largest graduating class to date will be heading off to some fine Arkansas institutions of higher learning in the fall. We have students going off to UALR, UCA, UAPB, Harding University, Henderson State University, the University of Ar-

kansas at Fayetteville, and Pulaski Technical College. One of our students has also chosen to serve his country in the United States Air Force. We also have two students that will be heading out of state as well. They will be attending Connors State College and Northeastern Oklahoma. This year's class brings our total number of graduates from the program to 132!

So, as these young people enter the world seeking to forge their own niche in their communities, we hope that they will continue to carry with them all the memories shared, lessons taught, and seeds planted at Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids!

**CLASS OF 2006 WE LOVE YOU!**

### Bank of the Ozarks Run For Their Lives 5K and Gala

What a year!!

Fifteen years ago Ministry to the Inner City was founded by a wonderful group of dedicated Christians. Our first fund raiser was a car wash that raised \$1,500. This year, the quite dedication of our old friends, the enthusiasm and excitement of

our new friends and the Young Life, and Ministry to the Inner City. We want to extend a very special thanks to the commitment and generosity of our sponsors and volunteers. You are making a difference in many young lives!!

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## Freedom

By Michael Woods

America just finished celebrating Memorial Day. Memorial Day is a day when Americans take the time to honor military veterans who paid the ultimate price for freedom-their lives. Today, Freedom seems to be a word thrown around loosely and taken for granted so easily. Freedom is a word often associated with Democracy, but too many times never coupled with one's faith.

Paul admonishes the Galatians to stand fast (securely) in the liberty (freedom) which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with bondage (oppression)

*Galatians 5:1*

Every student at P.A.R.K. should be encouraged to pursue the freedom that rests in Christ. That freedom is manifested when we accept Christ into our lives and exercise our relationship with Him. Our relationship with Christ calls us into freedom and through that freedom we are to serve each other (*Galatians 5:13*).

Democracy translates into social equality, but equality comes when the children of God, through their relationship with Christ, serve one another and the least of us. In this Democracy, we are free to donate to charitable organizations and to be a part of charitable organizations that benefit youth. However, it is our relationship with Christ that frees us to see needs and examine ourselves to serve others without the acknowledgement or constraints that government or religious organizations may impose.

P.A.R.K. students, through developing a relationship with Christ, will have the opportunity to take advantage of what America's democracy provides with freedom of religious expression and experience the freedom a relationship with Christ brings. We are free to serve, free to worship, free to love, free to improve, free to build relationships, free to do good in school, free to go on to college, free to assist and improve our schools and communities, free to give back to charitable organizations, free to marry and free to live life to its fullest. God gives us Christ. Christ gives us freedom.

***Father, may your love, which so encompasses us, manifest itself in every student who enters the doors of P.A.R.K.; as each student seeks You for himself, may Your grace abound much in his life; as each student strives to make Your Son his savior, may Your mercy increase his faith and keep him safe; and, may each staff person, volunteer and donor find Your light in a darkened world, that each student might see and find direction and freedom through our example in You. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who sets us free, Amen.***



## Monica Ross

By Melanie Jackson



Sharp, talented and outgoing are just a few adjectives used to describe this future leader of tomorrow. However, upon entering P.A.R.K., the aforementioned description would have been replaced with withdrawn and unmotivated. Monica Ross now has students running up to her for advice, a smile or just a quirky joke. Behind this soon to be Junior's smile is a book of poetry just waiting to be written. When asked by a teacher or a P.A.R.K. staff member for one of her poems to read or to be published in a newsletter, Monica has it on paper and in the appropriate hands in a matter of minutes; and it's always amazing how well it is put together.

With such talent, Monica has already received awards for her writing. She placed first in the Military Auxiliary Excellence competition and overall in the state of Arkansas for College U.S. in poetry. Monica has poems published in a book, *God Knows All* and in *Celebration for Young Artists, Poets & Writers* magazine.

Monica is being approached by several higher learning institutes to help encourage her talents. The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, The Coffee Shop Academy in New York, and the Institute in New Jersey are a few on her list.



*Keith's Corner*

**Setting the Bar A Little Higher**

**T**here was a time when a professional athlete would write a check to an organization with the media and board members on hand with cameras flashing and smiles on their faces. People would gather around for the check presentation and the athlete would say, "I just wanted to give back to the community that gave to me." After the press conference everyone would congregate to take pictures and communicate their satisfaction.

Today, we still need professional businessmen and athletes to write checks. The setting of the bar is a little higher. I remember when Derek Fisher and Corliss Williamson had Nice and Nasty basketball camps! Although the partici-

pants loved the attention from the NBA players, Derek and Corliss both came to the same conclusion that I did. We have to do more. *To him much is given much is required. But to him much is committed much more is required.* So, Corliss gave a million dollars to build the Boy's and Girl's club of Russellville that would carry his grandfathers name, (L.V. Williamson). Derek donated around \$700,000 to UALR to set up a program for Fisher Fellows.

Recently in Marion, Arkansas, Ray Brown a twenty year NFL veteran built a community center to help educate the youth of that area. I remember when NBA great Charles Barkley made a statement about not wanting to be a role

model. As I get older I'm learning you don't choose to be a role model; it chooses you. Thus the words, *to him much is given much is required.* In the same sense, I don't believe that you choose to be committed, it chooses you. P.A.R.K. has been a major commitment. I often tell the story of how I was supposed to be watching the yachts go by from a nice condo in Miami Beach, Florida. I'm thankful to God for the vision called P.A.R.K. The commitment that has been made is bringing about life changing, community changing, and state changing experiences. 99 students have gone to colleges out of the 132 P.A.R.K. graduates. P.A.R.K. has 4 college graduates and

more to come. *To him that has been committed, much more is required.*

The professional ranks of sports are creating multi-millionaires every year from the state of Arkansas. It will be interesting to see who is next to go from just giving to being committed. When you come into the revelation of what God has committed unto you, then and only then can you leave a legacy.



Keith Jackson and Corliss Williamson with Mark Leverett and Wes Sutton, P.A.R.K. Board Members

**Bank of America Donation**



Bank of America's John Dominick and Donnie Cook presents a check to Keith for P.A.R.K. Since the beginning of P.A.R.K., Bank of America has played a vital role in the continued growth of

the ministry. With frequent donations, Bank of America shows how strongly they believe in what is being done at P.A.R.K. on a daily basis.

**Giving More Than a Speech**



Shawn Taylor speaks at P.A.R.K. graduation

Shawn Taylor, CEO and President of Family EATs partnership, grew up on the South Side of Chicago. While many would say it's a long way from there to where he is today, Mr. Taylor told everyone at P.A.R.K.'s 11<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony that anyone can do it if he is deter-

mined enough.

A graduate of Perdue University, Taylor talked about the people who encouraged him along the way—a junior high coach and a college professor among others. He challenged P.A.R.K. students to remember what a great country they live in, full of opportunity for those who are willing to do what it takes to get where they want to be.

In closing, Taylor praised P.A.R.K. He stated that he had seen many fine facilities and programs in his travels, but he believed P.A.R.K. offered something special. In fact, Taylor was so impressed by his first visit to P.A.R.K. that he pledged a \$10,000 donation rather than the \$3000 he intended to give! Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

## Welcome Class of 2011!

By Tamra Patterson, Chief Student Life Manager

On June 19<sup>th</sup> our staff will open the doors to 86 new students. These students have already proven their endurance just by completing the recruitment process. It is one designed not only to assess their skill level, but also to determine their dedication. With the start of our recruitment season each January, many hopeful students, parents and educators give P.A.R.K.'s program staff an awesome opportunity to help these teenagers to realize their full potential.

A counselor or teacher in the middle schools nominates 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in whom they see potential. Once notified of their nomination, students are asked to take a reading and math assessment. The process does not end there. They then have to participate in both a written and verbal interview with at least one member of the full-time program staff. All student files are evaluated and the crop is chosen.

Of approximately 300 applicants and 105 interviews, eighty-six students have been invited to attend the summer program. Over the next five years we hope to see these students grow and develop through love, nurturing and discipline into self-reliant leaders of our community.

Welcome to the Class of 2011!

## 3.0 G.P.A. Students

By Melanie Jackson, Community Outreach Coordinator

We congratulate the following 3.0 G.P.A. P.A.R.K. students for their accomplishment. They worked tirelessly the entire school year and proved that hard work and dedication does pay off.

Brandon Amos, Precious Bell, Brandon Boatner, Winnfield Brooks, Samuel Brown, Kenneth Edwards, Matthew Gaines, Lauren Gilmore, Marvin Gilmore, Diamond Harper, Archie Hearne, Jamie Henderson, Jose Holloway, Donald Howard, Ronald Howard, Darria Johnson, Dexter Johnson, Ashten Keaton, Yasimen Lewis, Brit-

tany Lovelace, Ronnie Maxwell, Derrick McGhee, Laquita McPhearson, Freddy Melifonwu, Jazmin Miller, Christopher Morris, Darvin Mosley, Rodney Mosley, Wayne Olive, Treniece Parker, Tara Rainey, Tasha Rainey, Timothy Roddy, Tristal Smith, Timothy Stewart, Jasmine Thomas, Rodney Wade, Brittany Walker, Joshua Williams and Victor Williams.

## Walking for a cause

All packed together at the starting line, students, staff, family members and friends of P.A.R.K. made their way walking and running through down-



town Little Rock for the 2006 Ministry to the Inner City Bank of the Ozarks, Run For Their Lives 5K. It was fun!

Both the 5K race and the gala Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, were well attended and will go in the Ministry to the Inner City's book as huge successes.

## Former P.A.R.K. Students Receive College Degrees



Robert Irby became the 3rd P.A.R.K. graduate to acquire his Bachelor's Degree. On May 6, Robert walked across the stage at the Arkansas State Convocation Center in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to receive his Degree in Sociology.

Robert was one of the original eight P.A.R.K. graduates from the class of 2000 to enter college. It has been an uphill battle for Robert in the six years since he's left P.A.R.K. He made a few detours along the way including enlisting in the military and dropping out of school. Robert did not let those set-backs drown his dream to do what he set out to do in 2000-graduate from college. With hard work and prayer, he has accomplished just that.



With not much vim, vigor or vitality about him, Eddie Hicks was not one you would ask to do anything that involved expressing enthusiasm. However, that changed upon entering Ouachita Baptist University in 2002.

Eddie wanted to make sure he completed his college requirements and earned his degree in four years. Excited at the thought of actually doing just that, he set the wheels in motion.

Four years later, Eddie has become P.A.R.K.'s fourth college graduate and third from OBU. He proudly received his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration/Management on May 13<sup>th</sup>.

Now that Eddie has found excitement within himself and his accomplishments, I'm sure we will see more great things from him.

## Why Contribute to P.A.R.K.?

By Estel Jeffery, P.A.R.K., Inc. Board Chairman

I believe in contributing to P.A.R.K. because your donations contribute to saving many young people's lives. I'm not talking about saving lives medically. We give mental, spiritual and social CPR. P.A.R.K. is a place where we give young people with untapped or misdirected potential the opportunity to grow mentally and spiritually. We put no ceiling on how far they can go. Our goal and hope for the young people in P.A.R.K. is that they are never satisfied with the status quo. When they enter P.A.R.K. in the eighth grade and leave us after high school graduation, we want them to have reached their maximum potential. We want them to be ready to go to college or tech

school and become our state's future movers and shakers.

How does P.A.R.K. help these young people? We have a strict program of education and teaching life skills. Every day after school, our students at P.A.R.K. are working on their academic weaknesses as well as their strengths. Most students come into P.A.R.K. with a GPA of 1.8 or 2.0, and they leave us with a 2.8 to 3.8. We also help by having a college scholarship for every student who qualifies. These scholarships are given to us by the colleges and universities in Arkansas, as well as, by family scholarships. We also have a full-time staff of student life managers, volunteer teachers, administra-

tors and building staff. If you haven't seen or taken a tour of our teaching complex, we encourage you to do so. Just give us a call at (501) 562-5223 and we'll set up an appointment for you.

Over the last 11 years, P.A.R.K. has touched the lives of hundreds of young people. But we need your help. We are completely funded through private donations, so without donors, we cease to exist. If we cease to exist, then countless lives with unlimited potential will be wasted. There is no other program in Arkansas like P.A.R.K., so partner with us by becoming a donor, and help save young people's lives.

## Staff Profile—Cynthia Hall



Cynthia Hall came to P.A.R.K. in October of 2001 as our Office Manager. The title of Office Manager holds several responsibilities such as financial officer, human resources, grant writer, payroll clerk and trouble shooter.

Ms. Hall is the contact person for most of our vendors, so when the things around P.A.R.K. aren't working as they should or someone's machine needs that special attention to make things go a little smoother, we turn to Ms. Hall.

Cynthia can truly identify with the P.A.R.K. experience. When she was in high school she attended a similar program, Upward Bound at Southern Arkansas University. She attributes some of her success in life to Upward Bound. The friendships and opportunities she experience through that program changed her life. Most of the friends she made then are still close to this day. Upward Bound gave her the opportunity to see places she otherwise would not have been able to afford. It gave her hope for unending possibilities.

Cynthia spends her time away from P.A.R.K. with her family: husband Eric, son Michael and daughter Sydney. She also works on her many craft projects which include painting, sewing, wedding decorating and quilting. In her spare time, she works on the Upward Bound reunion her class plans to have bi-annually. She is also an excited new member of Full Council Christian Fellowship.

## 2006 P.A.R.K. Student of the Year

By Monique Palmer, Education Outreach Coordinator



Her future is so bright she's got to wear shades! Remember the name Jasmine Thomas because this is a young lady who's going places. Jasmine, a graduate of Parkview High School, began the P.A.R.K. program five years ago. She was shy and quiet. During her time here at P.A.R.K. she became active in Project Get Fit, an all girls group that

promotes spiritual, emotional, and physical growth and development. Jasmine blossomed! She grew academically, spiritually and emotionally. Senior year Jasmine took P.A.R.K. by storm, being named the Clearpointe Technologies Student of the Year, Miss P.A.R.K. 2006, ALC Student of the Year, and P.A.R.K.'s Most Helpful. She also received a scholarship from the Arkansas Student Loan Authority for

\$1,000.00 Jasmine will head off to Ouachita Baptist University this fall on a P.A.R.K. scholarship where she plans to major in graphic design. Jasmine Good Luck! We love you!

*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."*

*Proverbs 4:7*



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### *Mission Statement*

*Within a positive atmosphere built on love, nurturing and discipline, P.A.R.K. strives to enrich the lives of Central Arkansas's youth. Specifically, P.A.R.K. exists to build the confidence, self-esteem and spiritual awareness in its members, to ensure academic achievement, to expand their horizons, and to instill in them the importance of helping others.*

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