

September 2010

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors®

VOL.4, ISSUE 9

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

PRICELESS

**Kelley
Clark**

**Meghan
Lunsford**

**Andrea
Alley**

Teachers and Mentors

W-JCC 2010 Teachers of the Year

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ENTERTAINMENT**
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This issue barely scratches the surface when it comes to introducing you to those in our community who are good teachers or mentors. Even more than other expressions of giving - teaching and mentoring require time, patience and expertise. Williamsburg is the kind of place where many people have all three.

The folks we did interview are terrific examples of what this theme is all about. Whether they share their knowledge in a classroom setting or on the job, these individuals have a passion for helping others develop and it shows.

I think the only way you can excel as a teacher or mentor is to be able to live your life outside of your own head and find relevance and meaning in service to others. It means you act on opportunities to help someone else's life be a bit better by sharing your knowledge and experience with them when you believe you can make a difference. Perhaps the stories in this issue will inspire you to be more aware of the many ways we can contribute to improving the quality of life of others, and in doing so, ourselves. NDN



Meredith Collins, Publisher

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CORRECTION: In recent issues of *Next Door Neighbors* we have included promotional ads for Business Neighbors Online that list the names of participating businesses. Garden-Flags.com was inadvertently listed incorrectly. We regret the error and any inconvenience this may have caused.

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Teachers to Admire

W-JCC 2010 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

By Rosemary Van Houten

Teaching is the profession that teaches all other professions.

- Author unknown

When you think about it, most everyone we come in contact with has been influenced by a teacher. Whether it was a teacher in the classroom, parents, clergy, or grandparents; a good portion of our foundation has been laid by those who have lent to us their knowledge, wisdom and more importantly, dedication and passion.

We can all remember our school days. Some memories will undoubtedly make us smile. Others may cause us to cringe. It was all part of growing up. Our teachers were always there, even when we may have wished they weren't. They were the constant in our lives. Many of us can remember that one special teacher who undeniably inspired us or made us hunger for something so insatiable that it prompted us to discover our own success and passion. It was those teachers who gave definition to the lessons we learned along the way so that we might become the editors of our own lives.

In March of this year, the call went out for area teachers who are setting strong examples in their profession. An excerpt from the invitation read: "You know the ones. Among all the dedicated teaching professionals in Williamsburg/James City County schools, they are the ones that always seem to be doing the most creative projects, have the most colorful and stimulat-

ANDREA ALLEY



ing displays in their classrooms, and are heavily involved in the community. They also are the ones their fellow teachers turn to most frequently for advice, counsel and inspiration..."

We'd like to introduce you to the three local instructors who were selected 2010 Teachers of the Year for W-JCC Schools:

Andrea Alley

Teacher of the Year for Elementary Schools
Andrea is a Vision Specialist at Matthew Whaley Elementary. She has 27 years of teaching experience and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education and Art Education from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado. She also holds a Masters Degree in Elementary Education from Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

While growing up, Andrea had several people that influenced her and led her to becoming passionate about teaching.

"My grandmother had been a teacher in a one-classroom schoolhouse in the mountains of Colorado in the 1920s," Andrea says. Her grandmother rode a horse to school each morning, lit a potbelly stove, hauled in water and then began to teach her students, ranging in grades from kindergarten to grade 12. "I'm glad we no longer have to do that," Andrea says.

Both of her parents were educators. She remembers helping her mother grade papers and hang bulletin boards.

"I guess it must have been in my blood," Andrea quips. "My father was a P. E. teacher and reading specialist who applied his creativity to designing hands-on activities to help the students learn, teaching me that most children learn best by doing, not listening to a teacher."

Andrea also applies creativity in her classroom and often integrates many subjects into projects. For example, she incorporates a toothpick bridges unit for her 5th graders where the

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students use research skills, drafting, measurement and math computation in order to complete the assignment.

"I also try to integrate art into many of our projects because I'm still an art teacher at heart," Andrea says.

Andrea is also quick to remind everyone of the importance of active participation by the parents and family in a student's education.

"I like to think of a student's education as a three-legged stool; the legs being the student, the parents and the teacher," Andrea says. She explains that if all three are not "engaged and committed," it will be difficult for the student to reach his maximum potential. She encourages teachers to listen to parents and parents to communicate with teachers and support them in word and deed. Andrea also emphasizes to her students that teachers want what's best for them, but in the end, it is the student's personal decision to apply effort which will make the biggest impact on their lives.

Outside of the classroom, Andrea is married to "her biggest supporter", her husband, Ray. He encourages her and also believes education of children is of the highest importance. Andrea also has a small classroom of her own at home. Her husband, three children, ages 29, 19 and 15, along with the two family dogs, complete her day when she is not with her students. Being a parent and a teacher is demanding so when time permits, she pursues solitary activities such as reading, writing, painting, taking walks and listening to music; the music her sons jokingly refer to as 'Mom's yoga music'.

MEGHAN LUNSFORD



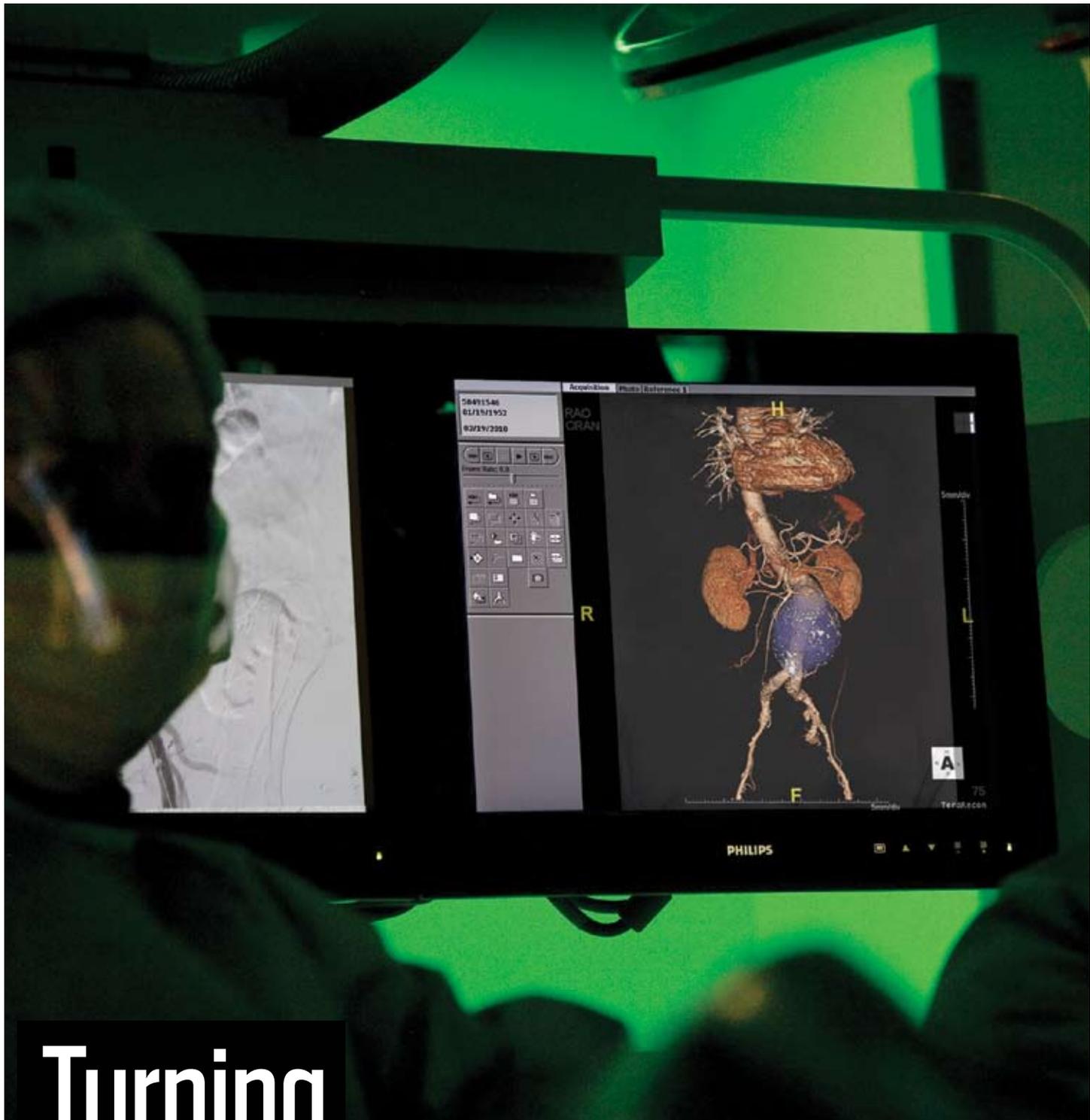
Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Meghan Lunsford

Teacher of the Year for Middle Schools

Meghan is a mathematics instructor at Toano Middle School. She holds Master and Bachelor Degrees in Elementary Education and Interdisciplinary Studies from Old Dominion University, where she achieved the Dean's list three times. In addition, in 2001 she was named Teacher of the Year at Poquoson Elementary School.

"Moments of complete engagement..." That is how Meghan's nominator describes her math classes at Toano Middle School. The nominator describes how Meghan makes the learning atmosphere exciting, youthful, fun and current, noting "...her rapport with each individual child makes them feel they are being heard...allowing them to feel confident and safe when asking for help."



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"I really enjoy being around the young people," Meghan says. "They keep you current and up-to-date. I like to think they will keep me young. Teaching lets me be, forces me to be, creative. The more creative you are as a teacher, the more fun your students will have which in turn leads to interest and learning."

Meghan sees learning as a two-way street. It is not just the students learning.

"I love to learn," Meghan says. "As a teacher you are always learning something new, whether it's from your students or peers. Teaching truly keeps the door open for continuous learning."

Meghan admits that one of the biggest challenges she encounters in the classroom is making learning real and fun. She explains that you are teaching on so many levels, with students coming from diverse backgrounds and all obviously not sharing the same life-experiences.

"A real life example you might use with one student will have no significance to another," Meghan says. This is why Meghan gets to know her students as individuals and determines what is "real" to them.

"Taking the time to connect with students on a personal level goes a long way in helping to

make my instruction more meaningful to each individual," Meghan explains.

Some of Meghan's former teachers from her student days have also influenced her teaching style.

"I remember my all-time favorite teacher was my high school Biology teacher, Mrs. Parker... she was the funniest teacher, making her more endearing and effective," Meghan says.

She doesn't lose sight of the importance of how the classroom is not complete without the parents. Meghan contends that students will be more successful if they see that their teachers and parents are on the same page, working together.

"There needs to be an open line of communication between parents and teachers," Meghan says. "The more parents are involved in their child's education and schooling, the more successful the child will be."

Meghan was pleased when she was recently chosen to participate in a William and Mary project to develop case studies showing how exemplary technology-using teachers plan for and develop the integration of technology in classrooms. The final product is currently being

used at William and Mary to help future teachers understand the importance of planning for technology use within their curricula.

When Meghan is away from the classroom she enjoys being with her family and coveted moments of personal time reading, working out, hiking and listening to one of her favorite artists, Jimmy Buffet.

Kelley C. Clark

Teacher of the Year for High Schools

Kelley is a mathematics instructor at Jamestown High School. She has taught in W-JCC schools for nine years, including stints at all three middle schools (James Blair, Toano and Berkeley.) She holds Master and Bachelor Degrees in Education from the College of William and Mary and Grove City College in Grove City, Pennsylvania respectively. She also took additional math courses from Christopher Newport University to complete her math endorsement.

"I hope all parents know how really great their kids are," Kelley says. "There are many amazing teenagers in the Williamsburg area."

Kelley cannot hide her enthusiasm when she

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expresses how much she loves her job and how honored and fortunate she feels to be able to work with students at Jamestown High School. Kelley may tell you she gains far more from the students than they do from her, but countless pages of comments submitted to nominate her reflect a different view:

One person wrote: *It's teachers like yourself, who truly know children – strengths, weaknesses and as a person – that makes the difference.*

Another submission read: *Over the last semester, Ms. Clark has provided [my student] a motivation to math that has produced profound results...Ms. Clark is responsible for the 'ah-ha' moment.*

Despite the praises, Kelley admits she tries to improve her performance in the classroom. She will "Google" for hours just to uncover different math discussions on a single concept, so she can gain insight into several ways to present it. She also admits that she loves it when her students ask questions in class.

"I get a little nervous if they are too quiet," she admits.

Kelley encourages her students to not be afraid to ask questions, and she is happy to ex-

plain a concept over again until it is fully understood. One of her favorite moments is when she sees a student who is concentrating and not giving up, who suddenly grasps the concept that had eluded him.

When not teaching in the classroom, Kelley enjoys time with her family, which includes her husband and four children.

"My favorite thing to do outside of teaching is to be a mom. I have a great family and spending time with them is a huge priority for me," Kelley says. She attributes some of her teaching success to being a mother. "I truly believe I am a much different high school teacher now that I have high school kids of my own."

Kelley is also an avid reader, and she enjoys cooking, walking and spending time with her friends. She also spends additional time working to benefit children through her involvement with Dream Catchers Therapeutic Riding Center in Toano and has participated in a service trip to Africa. The trip to Ghana deeply impacted the way she teaches, and the experience increased her appreciation for how fortunate our schools here are to have the resources they do. NDN

KELLEY CLARK



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Bobby Knowles

A Good Teacher in Action

By Rachel Sapin

What makes a good teacher? It's a simple question, but one that has remained nebulous despite the country's roiling debate over education reform. Is it a teacher's credentials? Is it a teacher's ability to motivate students to go above and beyond the material? If so, how are the results of a teacher's influence measured? Are they measured in test scores (the short-term influence of a teacher)? Are they measured in the long-term impact a teacher has on a student, including the student's later social and financial success in life?

An article in *The New York Times* recently noted that the value of standout kindergarten teachers has been estimated by economists as being worth about \$320,000 in relation to a longitudinal study demonstrating the long-term, positive effects good kindergarten teachers had on their students, including significantly influencing a student's later

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earnings and life choices as an adult.¹

Policy makers, journalists and teachers alike seem to agree that good teachers are certainly worth something and worth investing in, yet no one can agree on a definition as to what makes a good teacher. One thing that practitioners and experts across the board are sure of, however, is that teachers matter.

A recent study cited in a report put together by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on strategies for empowering effective teachers found that a teacher's effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems, including class size, school size, and the quality of after-school programs.²

Emily Hanford, an education producer for American Public Media's documentary series, *American RadioWorks*, found that while seeking an answer to the above question (What is a good teacher?), she may have been asking the wrong question altogether.

"One of the things I am learning is that 'What is a good teacher?' may not really be quite the right question," she explained in a January 2010 RadioWorks podcast on the subject. "It has been suggested to me that the bet-

ter question is, 'What is good teaching?'"³

Much of Hanford's investigation into what makes a good teacher revealed that most people are not in fact born teachers. This may seem like common sense, but the myth of the teacher as a magical figure, imbued with the innate power to educate and inspire students,

"I always teach to the high, never to the medium, because everybody has the ability to go to the high." - Bobby Knowles

is certainly present. Just look at our movies that mythologize teachers, from *Mr. Holland's Opus* to *Dead Poet's Society* to the more recent *Freedom Writers*. In these films the teacher is an outsider, often using unorthodox methods to engage the students, going it alone despite admonishment from colleagues and administrators.⁴

The reality is that teaching is difficult and many new teachers may not be very good at it at the outset. Teaching is in fact a complex

profession, a craft that is often improved with time and experience, and is also influenced by various factors, including funding, resources, and community demographics.

This is where Berkeley Middle School teacher and Williamsburg resident, Bobby Knowles, comes in. Although it may be difficult to define exactly what makes a good teacher, Bobby is one. He teaches seventh-grade English and has been lauded by the Williamsburg community for his ability to engage and challenge students in the classroom. He has not only been teaching for over a decade, he is also extremely successful at engaging middle school students in learning, something that is a feat in its own right given that middle school is often a time when most things are considered "boring" save for one's social life.

Perhaps what makes Bobby such a good teacher is not only his experience gained through years of teaching, but his ability to look at learning as a complex subject.

"I am a big believer in true differentiated instruction," Bobby explains. "We all have different learning styles." There are currently seven known learning styles - from spatial to linguistic, interpersonal to intrapersonal - and

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that students can often have a combination of these styles. Just as learning styles seem to lie on a continuum, so Bobby's lesson plans are tailored to interest a range of students.

"I'm not a big worksheet kind of person," he says. When Bobby had to teach his seventh-graders the concept of narrative, he didn't just have the students read a novel. He assigned them a TV show of their choice to watch and analyze at home.

"This assignment does several things," he explains. "For my low-level learner, it engages them in a concept that may have once seemed too abstract to them. When the students go home and watch the TV show, they're making connections to plot and antagonist, and they're making those connections through something they're familiar with." Bobby's high-level learners in turn can take a concept a bit further. "My high-level learner who may have an advanced understanding of concepts such as protagonist can then go on to the degree of a dark hero," he explains. "When my low-level learners come back into the classroom, they're on the same playing field as someone who's an advanced reader, and they can engage in the conversation, and they can feel a part of what's going on. Sometimes the low-level learner and the high-level learner have seen the same show, so they're able to discuss it."

Regardless of a student's learning ability, Bobby always has his students aim for excellence. "I always teach to the high," he emphasizes, "never to the medium, because everybody has the ability to go to the high."

Bobby also uses technology as a means to engage students with different learning styles. One of the tools he finds especially helpful in the classroom is a product called a Smart Board.

"A Smart Board is basically an interactive chalkboard," Bobby explains. "Kids can write on it, touch it; I can go on the Internet with it. What I'm really doing is incorporating a technology that they use on TV all of the time. ESPN and most of today's news stations have the Smart Boards. As a matter of fact, the new iPhones and Smart Phones are technically mini-versions of the Smart Board: you can expand the size of them, touch them, and write on them."

When Bobby has to do a lesson on prefixes, he doesn't just have his students write each prefix down on a piece of paper, but will have them actually go up to the board where they can touch the prefixes and their definitions, physically matching the words to their Latin roots. "I have found that the Smart Board is just very engaging to the kids," Bobby says. "It's really neat when I'm up on the [Smart] Board and I have a website up, and I touch the board, and it goes to the next screen, or I hit a play video and it shows a video clip related to what I'm teaching. It gives the visual/spatial learner something to look at and it gives the body/kinesthetic learner the opportunity to touch the material."

Bobby's dedication to engaging students in the classroom is also influenced by his own academic experiences growing up. "When I was in school, I wasn't the most engaged learner," he remembers. Bobby believes most of his former teachers would be very surprised to learn that he is now a part of their profession. Using the knowledge of what he remembers as being "boring" in school, Bobby makes sure to not follow in some of his former teachers' footsteps. "How do you make vocabulary interesting?" he asks. "You don't make students write the definition 20 times. Some kids can learn a definition better by drawing a picture of it, or they may learn it best by acting out the word."

Bobby takes the same creative approach to his role as a swim coach for the Williamsburg-Yorktown/Newport News Coast Guard Blue Dolphins. "Outside of just the physical component, I don't know if there really is much of a difference in my eyes," Bobby remarks of teaching English versus teaching swimming. "For example, with breaststroke you

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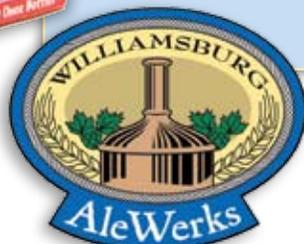
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have to teach kids how to get their arms in the right position. How do I help them understand that I want their elbows to be higher? I put a noodle underneath their armpits and have them swim breaststroke. It's kind of funny, but they get the idea of it. Teaching is the same thing. If a student is having a hard time understanding what the main idea is, I have to figure out how I can break it down. You're just constantly looking for ways to break something down, to make it understandable for the swimmer or the student."

Bobby's ability to successfully break down concepts so that they are understandable and engaging to students of varying learning abilities may also come from the fact that he really takes the time to get to know his students, and is also keenly aware of their cognitive abilities. "You have to recognize you're dealing with a certain way of thinking and feeling that only middle-schoolers have," he says. "The biggest thing I tell parents is that there's less frontal lobe development where reasoning occurs for students at this age. It really doesn't develop and mature in most people until 21 to 24. So what is the one thing that teenagers grab hold of? Their emotions; that is the only thing that's concrete and real to them. They really feel that everybody's watching them when they have acne on their cheek. Regardless of how illogical it is, it's a feeling and you have to understand that. I'm not saying you let that feeling become controlling, but if you use humor, you use a sense of understanding with dealing with things like that, kids are more responsive."

Bobby looks to his colleagues for teaching inspiration.

"James City County has wonderful teachers," he explains. "They bring a lot to the table; I'll bounce ideas off of them and it helps me to see how they do things."

Bobby thinks Americans often feel entitled to the best education without necessarily defining what we want that education to be, or even putting education as a societal priority. "How do we prepare students for the 21st-century? I think we need to have our community and our culture value education, and value those who pursue it and teach it," he emphasizes. "To put it in a simpler text, the country was on edge to see where a 27-year old man would go play basketball, yet would we put that kind of effort and emphasis on our education?"

As the debate continues over how teachers should be evaluated and how they can improve, it is not only necessary to gear our education reforms toward finding a reliable way to evaluate teachers, but also toward a better understanding of what good teaching is, and how it can be taught to others. We can utilize teachers who are already successful in the classroom to help others who are struggling. It's true that not everyone should be a teacher, but it's also true that even teachers who we laud, such as Bobby Knowles, never really go it alone. They derive much of their inspiration from their colleagues, and the benefits of a strong teacher support system are undoubtedly passed on to students. NDN

¹David Leonhardt "The Case for \$320,000 Kindergarten Teachers," *The New York Times* (July 27th, 2010). <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/28/business/economy/28leonhardt.html>.

²Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March 2005), pp. 417-458. Quoted in *Empowering Effective Teachers: Strategies for Implementing Reforms*, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Issue Brief (February 2010).

³"A Good Teacher" (podcast, January 22nd, 2010), *American Radio Works*. <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org>.

⁴"A Good Teacher," *American Radio Works*.



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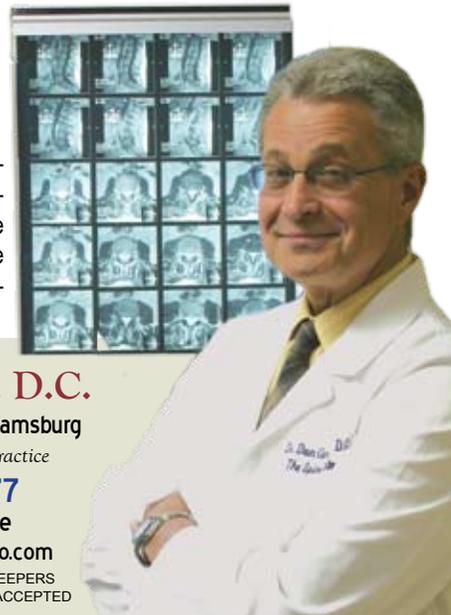
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A Career of Caring



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Sheila McSweeney Teaches Nursing as a Life Well-Lived

By Linda Landreth Phelps

A small percentage of people have always known from the very start just what they want to do for a living - the horse-crazy little girl jumping a stream on her pony grows up to ride professionally, or a child plays soldier and winds up wearing camouflage and commanding troops. More often than not, however, people just drift into a career, led there by the shifting currents of life.

"I never really wanted to be a nurse while I was growing up," Sheila McSweeney says, "but my family was very big on the benefits of continuing education. I decided on a three year

nursing diploma because that was the length of time before my future husband, Denny, would graduate from college and we could be married. He was going into the Army, and I knew as a Registered Nurse I could get work wherever we went."

That decision worked out very well for Sheila throughout her years as a military wife and eventually as an Army officer herself. What began as a purely practical solution has evolved into a love for nursing and teaching that she never envisioned as a young Erie, Pennsylvania high school girl applying to St. Vincent's

School of Nursing.

"After Denny and I married, he soon left for active duty, but when he was posted to Germany I had to stay behind to take a certification exam. When I got on that plane to join him, I had never flown and never owned a passport, and I was three and a half months pregnant. My new husband met me at the airport, dropped me at an apartment in a strange city, and left immediately to rejoin his unit in the field for a week. I soon met the other wives who were in the same boat - young and mostly alone. We got paid once a month, so around

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the end of the third week, we'd all pool whatever food we had left and have communal meals. We took turns babysitting for each other and really became like a family," Sheila recalls.

Sheila had to leave her new friends behind when she returned to Pennsylvania while Denny was serving a tour in Viet Nam.

"After my experiences overseas, it was hard to go back to being just a home town girl with two babies. By the time I met Denny in Hawaii for his R&R break," Sheila remembers, "Denny's ROTC obligation was up and we had to decide whether he would reenlist. I just told him, 'Get me out of Erie!' So that's how the Army became our lives for the next three decades."

Military life is synonymous with moving. Over the years the McSweeneys were transferred often and Sheila has had many different jobs. She's cared for cardiac transplant patients, done a stint in urology and worked in civilian and military hospitals. Sheila has done everything from counseling soldiers and their contacts about sexually transmitted diseases to providing eye exams in elementary schools. During this time, she and Denny welcomed their third child, and Sheila still managed to continue in her profession.

"In 1977 we were posted to Fort Monroe here in Hampton Roads and I knew we would be here for three years," she says. "This was my chance to go back to school for my Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN), so I did a four-year BSN program in three years and graduated in 1980."

The Bachelor of Science program differed from diploma school in that it was more theory and less hands-on, so Sheila had the advantage of 17 years of clinical experience to draw upon. During one stay at Fort Lewis, Washington, she had been assigned to obstetrics, where there were 40 births a day. Her experiences helped her in the classroom.

After she received her BSN, Denny encouraged Sheila to seek her own commission in the Army Reserves. She eventually retired from the Army with the rank of Major.

Still, her passion for learning continued. While living in northern Virginia, Sheila decided to pursue her Master's in Nursing Administration.

"I commuted from Burke, Virginia into the District of Columbia every day to do my apprenticeship at Sibley Memorial Hospital, and then was hired on to develop and set up an Orthopedic Department. Not only was I in charge of the acute care patients, I was in charge of the rehab side also. That was my absolute favorite hospital experience," Sheila says.

In the early '90s it was time to start thinking about where to retire. After so many years of fighting traffic every day, she wanted something different.

"We loved our time at Fort Monroe, so we came back to this area to look around," Sheila says.

Sheila had plans to slow down a bit and take it easy, but it was not to be; there would be no rocking chair on the porch for her quite yet. A week after Sheila and Denny moved to Williamsburg, Sheila saw an ad in the *Virginia Gazette* that advertised that Riverside Hospital's Patriot's Colony retirement and continuing care facility was looking for a Director of Nursing.

"Of course, with the military connection there, I was aware of Patriot's Colony and thought it would be a good fit for me," Sheila says. She was offered the position and after two and a half years as their director, she

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was hired to teach at Riverside School of Professional Nursing in Newport News.

"It was a lateral move for me, with no loss of seniority. I've been there for the last 13 years and I love it," Sheila says. "I teach the senior level courses, so it's basically management, administration and leadership. Among other things, I make sure that my students remember that they are in a service profession and will continue to respect that profession after they graduate."

Sheila's work ethic is remarkable, especially in the face of cancer - a health problem that might have led others to a quick decision to hang up the gloves and let someone else continue the fight for quality nurs-

"I now teach my students never to leave their charge's room without making sure the bed has fresh linen, the water glass is full, and the call bell, telephone and remote controls are within reach." - Sheila McSweeney

ing education. Sheila is now thinking seriously about cutting back her involvement, but feels a sense of responsibility which makes that hard.

"There is a critical shortage of nurses these days," Sheila says, "but there is also a serious shortage of nurse educators. If I leave, who is following behind?"

There will come a day when she will have to trust that someone will be there to fill her shoes. As Sheila knows too well, nobody is indispensable and cancer is a factor she has to contend with now, and possibly in her future.

"I think I'm a healthy person. My only hospitalizations have been for the three babies and for my lung cancer," Sheila says. "In 2005, a routine chest x-ray showed a spot on my right lung which turned out to be small cell carcinoma. I was an ex-smoker, but thirteen years after giving it up, it was a shock to get a diagnosis of the most aggressive kind of lung cancer."

Fortunately, thanks to that x-ray it was caught early enough that the cancer had not penetrated the lining of the lung and surgeons were able to do a wedge resection, a procedure which is much less extensive than the usual removal of a lobe of the lung. Sheila felt like she had dodged a bullet. That is, until the next round was fired.

Sheila had undergone tumor radiation, surgery and four months of chemotherapy when she was told she also needed more radiation to prevent a chance of recurrence down the road. She reluctantly but obediently underwent this additional treatment and lost her hair for a second time. During this difficult period Sheila missed only a few days of work.

"When I went for my follow-up CAT scan, they found another spot, this one on my left lung," Sheila remembers. "It was a different kind of cancer, and not a metastasis. So they did another wedge resection and I then had matching scars on the left and right. I didn't need radiation or

chemo that time, though.”

But the bullets kept coming.

“Three months after the second surgery, this time my follow-up scan showed a fresh spot on my left lung. They did one more wedge resection and took that out to find it was yet another kind of cancer, totally unrelated to the first two. Now I go every three months for CAT scans. I insist upon it even though that’s a lot of radiation. It gives me a sense of security to know that if it’s going to come back, at least we’ll catch it early,” Sheila says.

Sheila’s experience as a patient was priceless to her as a teacher.

“I learned firsthand that sometimes the little things that we can do for our patients mean so much. I now teach my students never to leave their charge’s room without making sure the bed has fresh linen, the water glass is full, and the call bell, telephone and remote controls are within reach.”

“A lot of people don’t realize how difficult nursing is,” Sheila says. “It’s hard on your body and it’s hard emotionally. Our patients are entrusted to our care, and we have to be the best that we can be, because we would want the same thing for our own families. But just the wonder of comforting someone... it’s just fabulous. I’ve become more involved with cancer patients because I’m a survivor myself. Cancer isn’t the death sentence it used to be any more. People are living healthy, good-quality lives with it.”

Her love of nursing as a profession is being passed along to the next generation, through her teaching and encouragement.

“When I worked at Patriot’s Colony, there was a young nursing assistant there, a single mom named Lashika. Lashika was a reliable, hard worker, and she was just wonderful with the residents. We offered a Certified Nursing Assistant program there so she could become certified. When I left, I told her, ‘You have so many great qualities, Lashika. You need to use them.’ Well, a few years ago, I was teaching a class at Riverside,” Sheila remembers, “and I was so excited, because there was Lashika!”

“Mrs. McSweeney’, Lashika told me, ‘I took your advice. I got some student loans and went back to school!’ I am so proud of her. She is now one of the experienced nurses who precept my students,” Sheila says with a smile, her face reflecting pride in her protégée.

Sheila just received an invitation to her high school class’s 50th reunion at Erie’s St. Benedict’s Academy, which naturally brought back memories of her time there and what she learned from the nuns - and one of the nuns in particular.

“Sister Bernardine was such a positive influence on me,” Sheila says. “She exemplified honesty and integrity and taught us how to be a good person and how to live a good and useful life. That’s what nursing is to me. It defines a life well lived.”

For someone whose dream was never to become a nurse, Sheila has certainly become a passionate advocate for the profession. She is dedicating her career to the care of hurting people, both with her own myriad clinical experiences and teaching those skills to the following generations of nurses. Wherever Sister Bernardine is now, surely she would be proud to know that Sheila was not just paying attention in class, but is passing along the lessons she learned from her 50 years ago. NDN

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Suzanne Thoman

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When you become ill, you have the right to make decisions regarding medical treatment options. What occurs if you are unable to make medical decisions yourself? Who would speak for you? Would they know what you want and don’t want? Now is the time to make sure your wishes are known.

The way to make your wishes known is to put them in writing through a Virginia Advanced Medical Directive. Without this document, your health care providers will not know your important medical decisions such as life-support, pain management or hospice choices. An Advanced Medical Directive gives you control over your health care decisions and provides information to the health-care team if you are unable to communicate. It guides the decisions of the health care team and provides comfort to your family, preventing them from guessing what you may want.

What would you do if you only had six months left to live? Would you want to spend any of that precious time with an attorney planning for when you can no longer make decisions for yourself? The best time to create an Advance Directive is before you are sick, when you have clear understanding about your options and can communicate them to your family and doctor.

If you do not have an Advanced Medical Directive, your health care providers will look to your family to help make decisions about your care. If they are unsure or cannot agree, a court appointed Guardian may be requested to make decisions for you. A Guardianship proceeding requires an appearance before a judge and may cause undue delay in treatment.

An Advanced Medical Directive names a person (agent) that can make decisions for you if

you cannot and states your preference for life-support if you are terminally ill or in a “persistent vegetative state.” This person is chosen by you, and named in the document to make certain that your wishes are followed. This new document gives you the opportunity to state your wishes and gives clear instructions to follow based on your specific medical condition.

The new (effective July 2009) Virginia Advanced Directive is not to be confused with a Health Care Power of Attorney and Living Will that were implemented prior to Virginia adopting the Advanced Medical Directive Law. Many individuals ask if they have the previous documents do they need to complete an Advanced Medical Directive as well? No, the law does not require you to create a new Advanced Medical Directive. You need one only if you wish to include specific information about your medical wishes, religious beliefs, or to prevent Court involvement in the case of dementia or mental illness. Instead of simply giving your family the power to make your medical decisions, as the prior documents do, the new Advanced Medical Directive is a set of comprehensive instructions to your family about your health care thereby removing the burden on them.

“If only...” is something we have all said to ourselves. If you are over the age of 18, you owe it to yourself and your family to execute an Advanced Medical Directive. No child, spouse or parent should ever wonder if they made the right decisions for you. For more information on Advanced Medical Directives, please sign up for one of our educational workshops on this topic held in the boardroom of our law office. Please visit www.ferrisandassociates.com for dates and times.



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Nancy Sheffler

An Award Winning Teacher

By Brandy Centolanza

Nancy Sheffler, a preschool teacher at Greenwood Christian Academy was the recipient of the Katherine Beatty Legendary Service Award for 2010. This award was established in 2006 and is given in honor of Katherine Beatty, the Preschool Director and former owner of Greenwood Christian Academy. The award is given to acknowledge outstanding teachers based on experience and superior commitment to educational longevity of service at Greenwood. The private Christian school opened in 1962 and has been operating at its current location at King's Way Church since 2001. The school currently has 14 teachers in its preschool program.

Beatty says that Nancy is very deserving of the award. She states, "She has been the most

versatile teacher I have ever had. She always steps up whenever something needs to be done. She's a real team player. She's a real positive person and the kids all just adore her. She is a super individual."

"I was very honored by it," Nancy says of receiving the award. "It was nice to be recognized, but it certainly is a team effort here."

Nancy began her career working with preschool children more than a decade ago. She was employed as a teaching assistant at St. Anne's Day School in Jacksonville, North Carolina where her two sons attended school. When asked about her first experience working with the preschool children she recalls, "I just felt a real connection with the children there, and it was very cool. To see the changes in them from

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September to May and to see how far they've come was just so rewarding to me."

When Nancy and her family moved to Williamsburg in 1998 she made the decision to continue working with preschool children. Her sons were enrolled in Greenwood Christian Academy and Nancy began substituting there. One year later she was hired as a teacher for the Bunnies, a class for children two and half to three years old. Nancy has continued to work at Greenwood Christian Academy ever since, with the exception of one year off. In 2004, she began working with the Squirrels, a pre-kindergarten class for four year olds. As a Pre-K teacher, Nancy works with her students on writing, learning the alphabet, numbers and counting, and reading.

"There really is an extreme difference I see in them from the beginning of the school year to the end," she says. "I have had students reading books by the time they leave, and that is just amazing for a five year old."

Her favorite time with the kids is when they first arrive in the morning,

"There really is an extreme difference I see in them from the beginning of the school year to the end. I have had students reading books by the time they leave, and that is just amazing for a five year old." - Nancy Sheffler

smiling, full of love and eager to learn. "They always have a hug for me and are always happy to see me, and that just makes me happy," she says. "I really enjoy my students."

Nancy especially enjoys circle time with her students. "They can share anything, whether it's that they rode a roller coaster for the first time, or that they've been collecting sea shells," she says. "You are with them most of their day, so you become quite attached to them, and it's like they are your own children."

As a teacher at Greenwood Christian Academy, Nancy wears many hats: She puts together her class yearbook, prepares lesson plans, coordinates field trips to places such as the local fire stations and Jamestown Settlement, and heads up the school hospitality committee, as well as the teacher prayer group.

Nancy says Greenwood Christian Academy is a perfect fit for her. "It really is like a family here," she says. She considers the preschool teachers she works with among her best friends. She is also close with some of the families who attend the preschool, and has taught multiple children from the same families as students. "I adore them all," she says. "I have met some amazing families over the years. I still keep in touch with some. I have children from Greenwood that will start high school this year. It is so hard to believe I have been there that long."

When Nancy is not in the classroom, she spends as much time as she can with her sons, who are now teenagers. She likes to attend their lacrosse games, and also likes to regroup through solitary activities such as reading and walking.

Nancy's true passion is being in the classroom and she is looking forward to another exciting year at Greenwood Christian Academy.

"They have all been very good to me here," she says. "I cannot imagine teaching anywhere else but here." NDN

COACH JONES

By Alison Johnson



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

At the end of every summer, a different batch of freshmen arrives for girls junior varsity field hockey practice at Lafayette High School. After 38 years of youth coaching, Chris Jones knows basically what to expect: a “deer-in-headlights” look, as he affectionately puts it, and at least some girls exhausted by the physical demands of his practices.

Three summers later, those girls have become seniors – and many of them are confident, physically strong leaders to another group of nervous freshmen. Nothing makes Chris, an assistant coach for Lafayette’s varsity team and head coach of its JV squad, prouder.

“I love watching that transformation,” he says. “I get to see them progress and mature and figure out a lot about who they are both as play-

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ers and as people. To know that I've played a small role in that process is just so rewarding to me."

Coaching and mentoring girls has brought Chris, 53, that kind of joy since 1972, when as a high school student he began working with young teenage softball players on recreational teams. Chris had learned to play ball as a child from Brian Cave, coach of the Apprentice School in Newport News, who lived near his grandparents in Hampton. While he played baseball and football, he found his true passion as a coach after his longtime girlfriend's mother – now his mother-in-law – suggested he try it.

"Right away, I loved being around the kids," he remembers. "They keep me young. They're fun and always on the move. Out of the clear blue, they'll say something to me that I never expected. And now that I'm 53, I have to work hard to keep up with their lingo, but I like that. They keep me on my toes."

In return, Chris has a few basic lessons he aims to pass on to all of his players, which he hopes they carry into their relationships, academics and future careers: work hard, find the positives in life and be respectful of others. He

dislikes social cliques and likes to pair girls who don't know each other well in practice drills. "I want to show kids that we all need to care about each other," he explains.

For Chris, the Williamsburg community is the largest family he has embraced since mov-

"I want to show kids that we all need to care about each other." - Chris Jones

ing here from Hampton as a child. His wife of 32 years, Brenda, has equally strong ties. The two first met at Berkeley Middle School, where both played in band – he, the baritone saxophone and she, the clarinet. The first time Brenda spotted Chris during a practice, she leaned over to her best friend and whispered that she'd marry him someday. The two dated throughout Lafayette High School before tying the knot.

Near the end of Chris' senior year, Lafay-

ette's principal called him and about a dozen other students into his office. Knowing the students had strong work ethics but no college plans, he recommended they interview for a job in the printing department at the *Virginia Gazette*. Chris went home from school, took a shower, put on a suit and landed the job, which he started three days after graduation.

Since then, Chris has worked for the *Gazette*, the *Daily Press* and, beginning in 1991, Printwell Inc., the company he founded with a partner. Based in Norge, Printwell has grown from two to 11 employees and moved from a 900-square-foot office to a 4,900-square-foot space. The company, which produces customized products such as letterhead, envelopes and business cards, is still growing despite the economic downturn. His wife now is the front office manager and his son, Ryan, works there as well.

"It's a very supportive atmosphere," Chris says. "We have a prayer session after every one of our Monday staff meetings."

In fact, Chris credits his wife and business partner with giving him the support and flexibility he has needed to coach. After his start

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with softball teams, including one year with a boys' team, he fell in love with field hockey when his older daughter, Sara, began playing the sport. Sara and her sister, Emily, both played at Lafayette; Emily once was the state's defensive player of the year and played on scholarship at Radford University, while Sara played goalie for a year at Virginia Wesleyan College. (Ryan was more into music, especially piano and singing).

After learning field hockey's rules and coaching girls at James Blair Middle School, Chris switched back to softball when he became head coach at Lafayette. Every weekday, he had to transfer all the equipment – pitching machines, bats, nets and more – from the pickup truck he needed for work to his garage and back. Nine years later, he decided to move to his current position coaching field hockey. He gets an annual stipend but notes, "You don't coach for the money. It's a labor of love."

Chris says he has focused on coaching girls simply because he started out with them. He enjoys figuring out how to best guide each one: some need frequent hugs, some pats on the shoulder and others more tough love. All need to feel their coach cares about them, especially if their parents don't get out to many games.

Chris is honored that some players still call him for advice after they've gone off to college.

"That means more to me than anything we do athletically on the field," he says.

Lafayette's teams begin practicing in early August, and the season runs into mid-November if a team qualifies for postseason games. The 22-member junior varsity practices from 4:30 to 6 p.m., which includes about a half-hour working with the varsity. Girls might run five to seven miles in a single day.

"Most people don't realize how hard these players work," Chris says, whose squad had a 12-2 record last season. "We're careful with them, but we also encourage them to keep going – to get water and take a little break if they need it but then fall right back in. Because it's the team that still has stamina in the second half that will usually win a game."

As for Chris' stamina, he's still going strong after 38 years of coaching. His goal is to make it to at least 40 years. "I have young ladies who used to play for me come up to me and say, 'You know, you're coaching my daughter now,'" he laughs. "One time, it was a granddaughter! I loved that. Coaching has just been such a blessing for me." NDN

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Naomi Marrow

Loves Children ...and Theatre

By Lillian Stevens

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Naomi Marrow loves children and she loves theatre.

"Sometimes, I don't know which I love more!" exclaims the effervescent director and owner of Backstage Productions, a non-profit theatre which has served the Williamsburg community for a dozen years.

Backstage Productions offers free perfor-

mances several times a year at the Williamsburg Regional Library. For those who might wonder how good a free performance can be, Naomi calls to mind a "Best of Williamsburg" poll in the *Virginia Gazette* where her theatre company came in second only to The Williamsburg Players.

In addition to performances, affordable the-

atre classes are available to children from all walks of life who want to learn all about theatre.

"We provide an opportunity for everyone to be involved in the theatre, no matter what their experience level – and we provide a theatre education in a small setting where we work closely with each student for a minimal price," Naomi

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explains.

With approximately 60 actors hailing from Williamsburg, York County, and even Virginia Beach and Richmond, Backstage Productions – which just wrapped up its July production of *The Sound of Music* – has no local counterpart.

The company produces two “open door” plays a year, including *A Christmas Carol* in the winter as well as a summer musical. For these plays, actors do not have to be taking classes – they can just walk in.

Backstage Productions also provides an array of opportunities for children of all ages to engage in year-round theatre and classes, often with a history lesson on the side.

“Recently, my older students were working on *The Crucible* in class because they wanted to study real characters – people who actually existed – through historical research. So we incorporated that into our class,” she says.

“We’ve taken in children with no formal training, handicapped children – children from all demographics and walks of life. We train them and put them on that stage. And they do really well and the audience enjoys what we do, so that is great.”

- Naomi Marrow

Olive Branch Church provides the setting for all classes and rehearsals.

“I believe that the wonderful people at Olive Branch consider this a ministry of sorts because we are working with young children, giving them a place to be on a Friday night – a place where they are safe, secure and loved.”

Naomi’s own theatrical training began in the wake of World War II when she was a young girl living in Essex, England, located about 30 miles south of London.

“I was six years old when the war ended. During the war, we were often shut indoors because of air raids. We didn’t know of luxuries like movies or entertainment, really. We would come home from school and just be happy that our house was still standing,” she says.

With the war over, Naomi says that everyone was at loose ends.

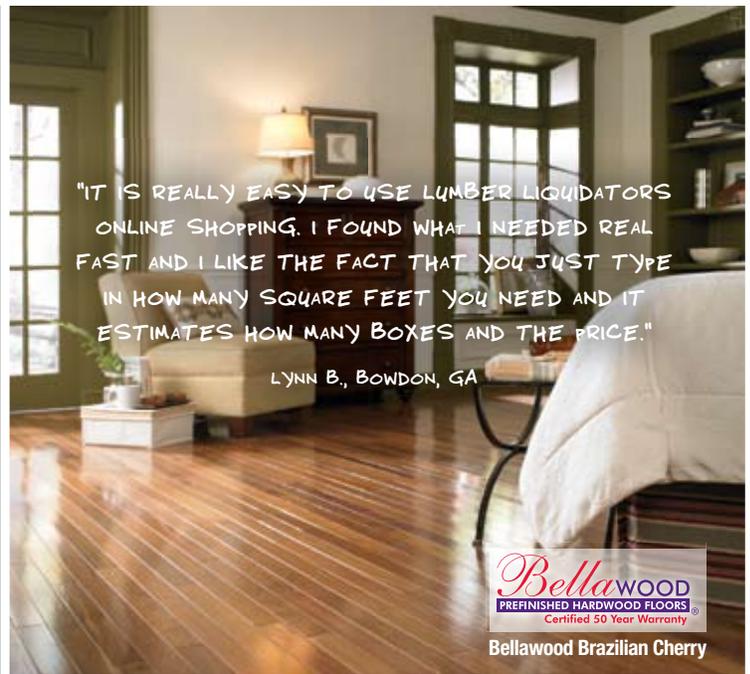
“What were we supposed to do with ourselves? We had no preparation for a social life. All we knew was how to put black curtains on the windows and pray a lot for our safety,” she confides.

Then Naomi, at age six, met the lady who would become her mentor and a life-long friend.

“There was this lady named Thelma House who had been on the London stage prior to the war. So with the war over, she decided to start a little theatre in the local town hall. My mother had heard about her and so off we went to meet her!” exclaims Naomi.

“She was mainly interested in working with older children, but she agreed to take me on. To prove myself, I never missed a rehearsal – not once.”

Thus began Naomi’s love affair with theatre.



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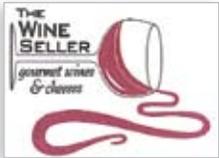


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“Thelma House loved children and produced plays for the community for free. We traveled around doing plays at hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes. These were happy plays, because after the war people really needed to smile. And we needed to learn how to be involved in a community – how to give.”

Naomi calls Ms. House her hero, and worked with her until she was nineteen and a young man swept her off of her feet and brought her to the United States.

“I went to a friend’s engagement party at the U.S. Air Force Base at Weathersfield and a nice young man asked me to dance. That’s how I met my husband! He was a member of the Air Force, stationed in England. I had no plans of leaving England. I loved England! But I guess you could say that I loved him more than my home and country because here I am,” she smiles.

When she first came to Hampton Roads, she and her husband (who has since passed away) made their home in Newport News. They stayed busy raising their family and Naomi eventually discovered a beautiful theatre in Newport News called St Paul’s Dinner Theatre.

She found herself drawn to the little theatre which produced plays like *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Pirates of Penzance*, and the play she calls her “heart” play: *Godspell*.

“I like *Godspell* because it is a joyful play and because it appeals to young people. I want kids to find joy in performing a work of this kind. And I want another cast of kids and another audience to be familiar with it,” she says.

Eventually, Naomi and her husband moved to Williamsburg where she took on a theatre production assignment at Walsingham Academy before heading to The Eastern Virginia School for Performing Arts to teach.

Still, Naomi really wanted to form her own company.

“So I took a deep breath and went to the Williamsburg Library and talked to staff in the Children’s Department there. For a few years we had a cooperative program where I would do plays that dovetailed with books that people could find in the library, for example *Jane Eyre*. We would do the play at the library and they would put out a book display. The only requirement was that we perform free for the public.”

Eventually, however, the library was forced to eliminate several of its programs.

“They cut our program but I continued with Backstage Productions, and we still work in cooperation with the Library,” says Naomi.

At Backstage Productions, the paramount goal is to give young actors confidence and a nurturing place to develop. For some the experience has launched promising careers.

“At the moment we have seven or eight who are performing professionally, either in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles. We have two who are in touring companies, and two who are doing what I do – they worked with me and now they are teaching. One is actually teaching theatre in Spain. And another is in New York taking classes at the University of New York to diversify his theatre training into teaching,” she says proudly.

Naomi is proud that Backstage Productions is all-inclusive and never closes a door.

“We’ve taken in children with no formal training, handicapped children – children from all demographics and walks of life. We train them and put them on that stage. And they do really well and the audience enjoys what we do, so that is great,” says Naomi.

For this special teacher and mentor, however, “the very best part is watching the children laugh and have fun!” NDN

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A Chain of Mentorship

Jon Ritner shares his experiences with the important "links" in his life.

By Linda Landreth Phelps



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Mentoring and teaching - there is a subtle difference between the two. However, there are many similarities. Both types of relationships focus on extending oneself for another and both require a level of trust, cooperation and respect.

Pastor Jon Ritner of Williamsburg Community Chapel has been the recipient of men-

tors who have made a tremendous impact on his life. Jon's mentors are like links in a chain that reach back in time, each one lending its strength to the next.

"I am indebted to the wisdom and knowledge of two very remarkable men: Bill Warrick and Dick Woodward, who were themselves powerfully affected by others," Jon says.

THE LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Dick Woodward

Dick attended a Christian college at the urging of his brother-in-law. Bible study and teaching became a big part of his life. He was in good shape then and continued with good health when he later became a pastor in South Hampton Roads, but that all changed.

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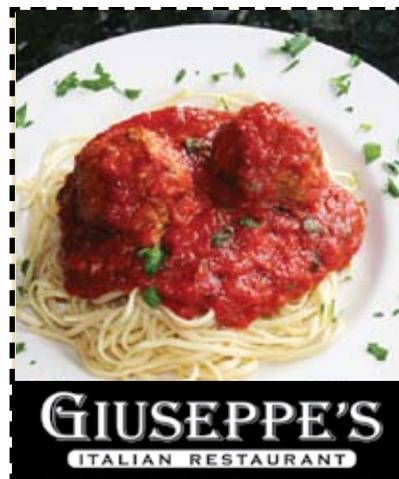


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"In the late 1970's I was a runner who did a quick seven miles every morning, and I was so busy being the pastor of a large church in Virginia Beach that I walked everywhere leaning forward," Dick says. "How could I continue to do what I was called to do if my body was failing me?"

The answer, of course, was that he couldn't. The nature of Dick's calling was changing, and incapacitation was the catalyst of that change. He was diagnosed with a rare and painful neurological disease which has left him a quadriplegic.

"I was angry with God when I was first diagnosed," Dick confesses. He

"I am indebted to the wisdom and knowledge of two very remarkable men: Bill Warrick and Dick Woodward, who were themselves powerfully affected by others." - Jon Ritner

saw his faith in God grow stronger, however, and his productivity in his writing begin to increase as his body gradually declined.

Without the explosive advent of the Internet, the limits of his personal world may have shrunk, but the effects of his work have grown exponentially. Among other projects over the ensuing years, with the assistance of voice-recognition software, Dick has authored several books, including his Mini Bible College (MBC). MBC is a practical and accessible study now published in 26 major languages in over 60 countries. The only part of Dick that is free to roam at will is his mind, and that soars high above his circumstances.

"I wouldn't change a thing," he says. "If my computer is having a good day... well, then, so am I!"

One thing that has stayed constant throughout Dick's life is his commitment to building relationships, a tradition which Bill Warwick and Jon Ritner have carried on in the church and in life.

"A critical part of my ministry since 1980 had been the Men's Community Fellowship Breakfasts, which began before I was called to head a young church here in Williamsburg," Dick says.

Bill Warwick

Bill caught the passion for these breakfasts by shadowing Dick for six years as his assistant while absorbing life lessons along with spiritual teaching. Bill was there for Williamsburg Community Chapel's senior pastorship in 1990 when Dick's deteriorating physical condition made it impossible for him to continue to lead his congregation. Bill stepped up permanently to the pulpit while continuing to mentor small groups of college men and Dick became their Pastor Emeritus.

As an undergrad at Auburn University, Bill expected to become a doctor and hang up his shingle near his dad's hardware store in Blakely, Georgia. But a crisis of faith sent him into spiritual freefall and eventually led to a newly intimate relationship with God, a relationship which rerouted his ambitions. His new life path took him to seminary and a ministry

with Campus Crusade for Christ.

"I'd go to the fraternity houses at Texas Tech and ask if anyone wanted to come to a Bible study on brotherhood," Bill says. "Initially, guys started showing up for meetings with a six-pack and a Bible. Meeting people wherever they are on their spiritual journey has always been a key part of my ministry, so I just told them, 'Pop a top and turn to John!'"

Later, Bill and his bride, Lindy, spent three years at William and Mary serving its students through Campus Crusade. His was a familiar face in the bleachers no matter what the sport, and he loved his close relationships with the teams. But Bill was hungry for something more.

"When I came to Williamsburg, I was a Joshua looking for my Moses," Bill says today, "and I found him in Dick Woodward."

Now that he is a busy pastor himself, Bill has to prioritize time to lead two small college groups and welcomes them into his home as if they were family. Not long ago, some of the alumni of this ever-changing group, 45 men of all ages, gathered in Williamsburg to help celebrate Bill's 25th anniversary at Williamsburg Community Chapel.

Recent health concerns have temporarily prevented Bill from carrying out his regular pastoral duties even though a full recovery is eventually expected. Bill has had a new, personal application for the lessons his own mentor, Dick Woodward, imparts by example in dealing with infirmities of the flesh. One thing Bill didn't have to be concerned about during his recuperation was how his congregation was faring without its senior pastor. There's a lot of depth to the bench at Williamsburg Community Chapel, and thanks to talent and great coaching there was another experienced player, Jon Ritner, already warmed up and ready to go.

Jon Ritner

"In my sophomore year at William and Mary, some of my Sigma Chi brothers were instrumental in my coming to Christ. A good friend, Craig Falwell, invited me to the Chapel and eventually to Bill's [Warwick] Friday afternoon group with college students," Jon says. "I was a new Christian anxious to study the Bible, and with Bill, it was like drinking from a fire hydrant. There was so much I wanted to learn! I'd even take handfuls of the tapes from Bill's Men's Breakfast meetings and listen to them on my Walkman during the week."

Jon related to Bill and to his teachings.

"It wasn't just Bible study," Jon recalls. "Bill's humor, honesty, and transparent authenticity built a relationship, too. I was so young and green that not only was I not looking for a Moses, I didn't even know I needed one. I had a rather unusual family life growing up. My parents were divorced when I was two years old. There was a lot of love for me, but over the years multiple divorces and remarriages meant I was being parented in some degree by five different people, all of whom were ordained clergy."

Bill and his wife, Lindy, have a "Back Door Policy" in effect for their small group where any of their guys could come over at any time, stay for dinner, help the three Warrick girls with homework, or just watch a ball game. Jon recalls that time in his life with affection.

"I learned so much by hanging out at Bill and Lindy's house, seeing what a Christian marriage relationship was supposed to look like. I learned how to resolve conflicts in a Godly way and how to parent by

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their example - all of which is coming in very handy now in my own marriage to Kristyn and with our two children, Addy and Jackson,” Jon says. “Bill didn’t pretend to be perfect, so that made it okay that I wasn’t. I didn’t go there with the idea that I wanted to be a pastor. I’d seen that all my life and wanted no part of it. I was just hungry for the normality of it all. But gradually, through observation, I came to see that maybe being this kind of pastor might be really fun.”

Always a huge sports fan, Jon graduated from William and Mary in 1997 with a Degree in Kinesiology, thinking he might like to be a sports writer or broadcaster. While a student, Jon couldn’t find an internship at any of the professional sports organizations where he applied, so he wound up working as a counselor at a Christian camp. That experience with kids opened his heart to the possibility of becoming a pastor, just like Bill.

In 1998, Jon spent a year as the Chapel’s second pastoral intern, and went on from that experience to graduate from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he met his wife. Jon rejoined the Chapel staff in 2002 and was named Associate Pastor in 2008.

“Bill and I have different strengths. He is an excellent big picture guy, while I’m detail-oriented,” Jon says. “We make a good team and I’m honored to serve him, which I see as my chief function here. One of the advantages of mentorship is familiarity. Bill knowing the pulpit is filled in his absence by somebody whom he mentored is a good thing. I’m just covering his bases. I was joking the other day, telling Bill that he’d better hurry up and get back or he’d have nothing left to say. I was stealing all his best sermon ideas!”

Jon feels privileged to serve the men from the college or community in small group Bible study.

“For me, it’s one of the highlights of my week. But I never teach the Bible with the idea that what I have to say is unique,” Jon says. “The anchor is Christ, who never changes, and all I do is repackage what has been said about him by others, hopefully in a fresh and interesting way. In seminary we learned that if you think you have some new, undiscovered revelation, throw it out because it’s wrong.”

The links in the chain of mentorship don’t just stretch retroactively into the past; the strength and advantage of this deeper kind of relationship will carry on into the future.

“Bill says that his books are written on the hearts of the people he mentors,” Jon recalls. “The model for discipleship at the Chapel has always been this verse, II Timothy 2:2: ‘And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.’ This illustrates four levels of mentoring. Paul teaches Timothy, who passes it on to faithful men, who are themselves called to teach. That is exactly how it has happened here, so whenever I disciple groups of college students, I refer to Dick Woodward as their spiritual great-grandfather. My job here is to see that the legacy continues.”

Jon, like all who mentor, spends his time, energy and talent nurturing the growth of others. Dick Woodward and Bill Warrick would agree with Jon that this expenditure is also a very wise investment, one which will only grow in value with the passing years. NDN

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