

FAMILY MATTERS

RAISING HOPE.

ONE FAMILY AT A TIME. SM ForKids

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Octavia and Dante flash a smile for the camera at our Children's Hollywood Party.

Movin' On Up

Sophia Robinson entered Haven House with her two children Capri, 5, and Dante, 11, in March of 2005. She relocated from Philadelphia to "start a new life" and planned to stay with a friend. Unfortunately, once she arrived, her living arrangements quickly changed. Sophia and her children were forced to stay in a hotel. After a month, she exhausted all of her funds and with the help of New Vision Outreach Ministry in Newport News she found shelter at Haven House.

Once Sophia entered Haven House, she found more than just shelter. She found opportunity; a chance for a second start and the time to make it happen. Sophia quickly found employment and received help from ForKids Children's Services with school enrollment for Dante and registered Capri for day-care. After two months at our emergency shelter, Sophia was ready for the next step. In May of 2005, she applied to our transitional housing program, Morgan Place, and was accepted.



"This Much!" On moving day, Capri and Dante showed us how much they were going to miss ForKids (right). "But don't worry" they said, "we'll see you next week at Hot Meals & Homework!"



While at Morgan Place, Sophia increased her income and found a better paying job, saved over \$4,000, and began divorce proceedings. Sophia was determined to take this opportunity and really make a change for the better. Her children participated in all the Children's Services activities; Capri enrolled in Pre-K at Little Creek Elementary and Dante began Tae Kwon Do lessons. At Tae Kwon Do, Dante learned how to have a positive attitude and become a better big brother. Dante might have been the only one learning how to block and kick, but the whole family was benefiting from his practices!

"Working with this family is a joy. Sophia and the children always have big smiles on their faces when you see them. She is always at the door with her paperwork before I even ask," said LaRhonda McLean, Transitional and Permanent Housing Program Director.

This March, Sophia moved out of Morgan Place into her own apartment. Congratulations Sophia, Capri and Dante and much success with your second start!

From the Desk of the Director



I never believed in miracles till I came to work at ForKids. Frankly, they made me a bit squeamish – I much prefer to believe and work in a world that I can control through hard work and brains. Yet while we work extraordinarily hard and burn through copious brain cells, I find that the business of helping the most fragile among us requires more than sweat and intellect; it demands at least one annual miracle. This year we had two.

After yet another round of public funding cuts we started our fiscal year needing to raise 30% more in community contributions than last year - roughly \$650,000. Over the last few years we've sustained impressive gains in our annual campaign so we plunged into FY 2006 with hope. Two hurricanes later, our contribution were down 42% by the end of November and I absorbed the reality of impending lay-offs.

And then..... YOU contributed more than ever before. What I thought were contributions that were diverted to the beleaguered Gulf Coast were simply delayed. Our wonderful donors gave first to the Gulf and then remembered the families in their own community and gave again at year-end. *December contributions were up 137% over last year* which allowed us to catch up from our lean fall. Nothing short of a miracle.

And yet, while our great December allowed us to catch up to the previous year's contribution level we were short the extra needed to make up for our loss in government grants. On the Monday before Christmas, I cancelled holiday bonuses and grimly identified staffing cuts. Then I got the most wonderful call from my friend Admiral (ret.) Tom Steffens.

Tom was one of our newest volunteers and he was helping us start an after school sports program (more on Tom and the program in the next newsletter). His dear friends, Robert and Kit Howard, were interested in making a year-end contribution to a "good cause" and Tom told them about ForKids. Tom has seen us inside and out, and despite putting him through the controlled chaos of after school hours at every site, he decided that our kids were talented and special and that ForKids was a place worth investing in. When Mr. Howard asked "How much should I give?" Tom said "Well Bob, \$1,000 is good but \$10,000 is better."

Robert and Kit Howard donated \$100,000 in stock the week of Christmas. Because they did, and because all of YOU chose to give to hurricane victims AND families in need in your own community, our work for homeless families and children continues uninterrupted.

What a miracle.

Thaler McCormick

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spotlight books

Books Needed for Job Training Program

ForKids spin-off, Virginia Social Ventures (VSV) needs used books for its nonprofit social enterprise, Spotlight Books, which provides training and employment for homeless and very low-income people. Spotlight Books teaches computer skills and the work habits necessary to acquire and maintain good jobs. Donated books are sold via the Internet and all revenue supports the training and employment program.

Book donations may be dropped off Monday to Friday

between the hours of 9 and 5, at VSV's training facility on the south side of the Foodbank building, 800 Tidewater Drive in Norfolk. Amalfi Ristorante, at 2010 Colley Avenue in Norfolk, also accepts donations for VSV, and is open daily until 10 pm.



Spotlight Books accepts all books from fiction to non-fiction to textbooks. Books are also available for purchase through Alibris or Abebooks online. For more information on donating, purchasing or supporting VSV and Spotlight Books, call 757-623-1119 or visit www.vsvventures.org.



Did you know?

Did you know that the federal minimum wage has not been raised since 1997? The minimum wage today, at \$5.15/hour, is now equal to 1/3 of the average hourly wage and is at the lowest point - relative to average wages - since 1949. The United States Congress has given itself *eight* different pay raises since 1997 totaling over \$31,000 per person!

The average income for a full-time minimum wage worker is \$10,712 (only \$9,893 after taxes) and is well below the poverty line (\$15,219 for a family of three).

Currently, 18 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws to increase their minimum wage, and another 9 states have legislation pending.

To find out more about Virginia's Fair Wage Act please visit www.vahomeless.org or to find out more on minimum wage visit the Economic Policy Institute website at www.epi.org.

Have your Pancakes & Eat Them Too!



In February, Ken Williams of Bootcamp for Women: Body by Ken (*below*) in Ocean View, along with the Tidewater Fit-



ness Clubs for Tots, UPN Channel 27, and the IHOP on Warwick Boulevard in Newport News sponsored a pancake eating contest.

The contest included appearances by WWE Superstar Matt Hardy (top left) and Shaggy of Z-104.5. The participants and sponsors made a huge donation of diapers, baby products and cleaning supplies for the children and families of ForKids. We would like to send a big "thank you" to Ken and his dedicated clients and staff for their generous gift of time, money and much needed supplies.

Donor Spotlight

Chick-fil-A of First Colonial

749 First Colonial, Virginia Beach

Mr. Mike Easmeil, operator of the First Colonial Chick-fil-a, rewarded all our children with FREE ice cream after a long day at EquiKids.

EQUI-KIDS Riding Program

1252 Oceana Blvd, Virginia Beach

EQUI-KIDS invited our kids for a tour of their farm and to spend a day with the horses.

Hell's Kitchen

124 Granby Street, Norfolk

Not only a Hot Meals & Homework sponsor, Hell's Kitchen sponsored a trip to the Air & Space Museum for a 3-D viewing of "Polar Express." Hell's Kitchen also treated the kids to a catered lunch at the end of the day.

Dog -n- Burger

2001 Manteo Street, Norfolk

This locals' favorite was kind enough to make their hot dog specialty available to the children in our Hot Meals & Homework program. An instant favorite for our kids!

MacArthur Center Skating Rink

300 Monticello Ave, Norfolk

Karen Winters of the MacArthur Center, donated skating passes for all our children to spend a day out on the ice. While no triple lutzers were accomplished, the kids did an awesome job making falling look graceful!

Sunset Grill

1525 Bayville St, Norfolk

Cathy DeMartino, owner of Sunset Grill, not only sponsored a portion of our Children's Halloween Party, she has taken on two nights of dinners for Hot Meals & Homework.

Fellini's

3900 Colley Avenue, Norfolk

"On top of spaghetti, all covered with cheese," none of our kids lost their meatballs thanks to Fellini's Restaurant sponsoring a month of Hot Meals & Homework.

San Antonio Sam's

1501 Colley Avenue, Norfolk

Making the "best of the west" available to ForKids, San Antonio Sam's has joined our team as a Hot Meals & Homework Sponsor.

Not A Diamond in the Rough

Name: Diamond

Occupation: Student

Age: 10 years

Accomplishments: Straight A student and Stellar Safety Patrol Representative

Diamond, a fifth grader at Haven House, is defying the laws of gravity. Well, not exactly, but she is impressing everyone with her amazing focus on her school work. Diamond is a straight "A" student and she is also a safety patrol student at her school. In order to become a safety patrol, you must have good grades, good citizenship, as well as good attendance — Diamond is a triple threat student! Before coming to our shelter, Diamond had not missed any days from school this year. Normally, our children struggle with attendance because of the enormous change in lifestyle and, most often, a change of school, but Diamond has managed to maintain *perfect* attendance. Not only is Diamond a model student, but she is talented as well. In February, she tried out for All-County Chorus and made it! She will perform with other students from across the city of Virginia Beach at the end of March. Look out *American Idol*, here comes Diamond!



Called to the Office

Legislation, Geometry and City Council Meetings... It's all in a day's work with Mayor Paul Fraim

Sean Fishgold is becoming quite the man about town. First, Sean and his mother were honored with a cover story in PortFolio Weekly ("*Breaking the Cycle*" 11/22/2005) and now he is hobnobbing with Norfolk city officials. After Sean's story was published in PortFolio Weekly, Mayor Fraim was rather intrigued with Sean's story and contacted ForKids to see if Sean would be interested in "hanging out."

Once we were able to coordinate schedules, Sean was very busy with varsity tennis practice and the Mayor was busy with, well, everything (he is the Mayor of Norfolk!), Sean took a trip down to City Hall. Mayor Fraim gave Sean an inside look at what it takes to be the Mayor and a personal tour of City Hall.

It turns out Mayor Fraim and Sean have more in common than a great appreciation of ForKids, they both love cars—Sean draws them, the Mayor drives them!

Dribble, Shoot, Score!



Old Dominion University's basketball teams partner with ForKids to start a new sports program

January marked the start of the new year, as well as the beginning of the ForKids Sports Program. We launched the first **ForKids Sports Program** with the help of the Old Dominion University's Monarchs basketball teams and Admiral Thomas Steffens, an amazing ForKids volunteer and supporter. The ODU Monarchs donated 15 basketballs to help the fledgling program start out and the kids were absolutely thrilled with them. "These are professional! Like the NBA," one teen boy exclaimed after first dribbling for a few minutes.



Did you know that...

Substance abuse. Violence. Truancy. These are just a few of the problem behaviors that at-risk youth are likely to exhibit.

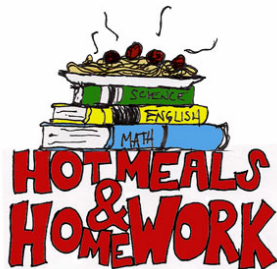
While many strategies for changing these behaviors have been tested, few have proven **as successful as physical health training and organized sports programming.**

-Thomas R. Collingwood, PhD, "Helping At-Risk Youth Through Physical Fitness Programming"

Photo: David (l) and Paige (r) celebrate the Monarch victory with Big Blue the Monarch Mascot.

The partnership with the ODU Monarchs has included more than just equipment, it also led to an on-campus visit to watch the men's team practice. There were many dropped jaws at the sight of so many 3-pointers made in a row. The kids got an inside look at what a team practice ought to look like. Coach Tom pointed out the benefits of each drill with an emphasis on good technique; something that they can carry over into their own practices. The kids were then invited to attend a game at the Ted Constant Convocation Center, courtesy of ODU's Reach Out program. The kids saw the importance of teamwork in action as the Monarch's pulled out a big win against the William & Mary Tribe.

Everyone at ForKids is extremely grateful for this new partnership as it has undoubtedly enriched and inspired the lives of all the children who practice their free throws every Friday with Coach Tom.



That's What Friends Are For...



- Q:** What has four legs, four arms, two heads and laughs like a hyena?
- A:** Well, of course, it's best friends, Nagee and Nate. (Nagee, pictured right, at our Hollywood party)

Nagee and Nate are two five-year-olds in two different ForKids programs that have formed a special bond. Upon entering our program, both children were having difficulty adjusting to their new life and finding friends in their new home. Until, one special day, they met on a field trip to the Air & Space Museum, and they just meshed. "It was the cutest thing to see Nate and Nagee holding hands running from one exhibit to the next. They were inseparable all day long," said Stacey Abbott, Children's Services Coordinator.

Now, Nagee goes over to Nate's house every Wednesday for their play date. Nagee loves his time with Nate, "It makes me happy when I am playing with him. I can't wait to play Spiderman tomorrow."

↑ **27 children served this year**
(compared to 8 served in 2005)

↑ **15 restaurants donating dinners**
(only 7 participated last year)

↑ **2.44 average GPA of all students**
(up from 2.1 last semester)

From the Inside → Out

VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads and ForKids have recently started a monthly volunteer program where members of the community dedicate one Saturday a month to bettering the neighborhoods in which they live. This past Saturday, volunteers were at our emergency shelter, Haven House, where they spent the whole day cleaning, organizing, landscaping and laughing.

To learn more about volunteering with ForKids through VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads, visit www.volunteerhr.org.



Volunteers cleaned every last toy in the Children's Services Room at Haven House (above) and took a moment to admire their hard work (left).



Cari's Bridal Boutique

Cari's Bridal of Virginia Beach will be holding a "Brides Day Out" on April 29th and 30th. Lucy's Day Spa will be in store to style hair and apply makeup, allowing brides-to-be to find that perfect hairstyle for their wedding day.

Tickets to the "Brides Day Out" are \$25 per person (brides and bridesmaids welcome), and will be held on Saturday from 10 to 4pm and Sunday 12 to 4pm at Cari's Bridal Boutique at 1642 Pleasure House Road in Virginia Beach. Please call (757)460-3474 to make your reservation or visit www.carisbridal.com.

Cari's has chosen ForKids to receive a portion of the proceeds. Take the day to celebrate your wedding, or just get your hair and makeup done *ForKids!*

Volunteering with ForKids: A Learning Experience

You all know the main goal of our Hot Meals & Homework tutoring program is to help our students improve their academic grades. However, another outcome of the program that sometimes can be overlooked is the positive mentoring relationship that forms between a child and her volunteer, or in this case, Paige Harrison and Cassandra Thompson.

Each Tuesday, Paige waits impatiently for Cassandra to arrive, asking over and over if she will be coming that evening. When Ms. Thompson does arrive, Paige turns and yells to everyone, "She's here, she's here!"

Cassandra Thompson, a member of the Downtown Norfolk Council's Downtown 100, has dedicated **every** Tuesday to Hot Meals & Homework to work specifically with this feisty 6th grader. Their connection is undeniable, not to mention invaluable. Under the direction of her volunteer, Paige will easily complete one to two hours of schoolwork or read aloud for 30 minutes, all with minimal opposition. These are things that she has never done before at Hot Meals & Homework!

Our biggest thanks go out to Cassandra for building a positive and influential relationship with one of our most energetic kids. The impression left on her will last a lifetime.



Paige Harrison and Cassandra Thompson work together on an assignment at Hot Meals.

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Ronnie Boone
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ForKids provides families with housing and comprehensive services to foster permanent, positive family development leading to self-sufficient futures. We are passionately committed to ending the cycle of homelessness for children in South Hampton Roads.



5th Annual Children's Art Auction

Moving Pictures

at The Granby Theater

What: 5th Annual ForKids Children's Art Auction
When: Friday, May 19th, 2006 6-10 pm
Where: The Granby Theater, 421 Granby Street, Downtown Norfolk
How Much: \$35 in advance and \$40 at the door

Join us for an evening of "*Moving Pictures*" that will bring together more than 400 Tidewater-area art lovers and friends of ForKids for an exciting old Hollywood style evening of delectable cocktails, sumptuous food from Brutti's, the cool tunes of Sonya Lorelle, and the hot swing of Richmond's Chez Roué. As always, the evening will include our signature live and silent auctions with amazing artwork, and exciting travel, entertainment, gift and dining packages. Mark your calendar for May 19th and party with a purpose!



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