

Starr News

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STARR COMMONWEALTH SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SINCE 1913



Inside:
Starr expands
services to youth

"No Greater Love"
Palm Sunday Art/Music Event

Erin Gruwell Founder's Day Speaker

M I C H I G A N A N D O H I O ' S P R E M I E R C H I L D R E N ' S C H A R I T Y

Michigan: Albion, Battle Creek, Detroit | Ohio: Van Wert, Columbus Hannah Neil Center

Starr News

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Mission:
**Create positive
environments
where children
flourish.**

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acquires The Advocates
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Palm Sunday
service combines
music and art
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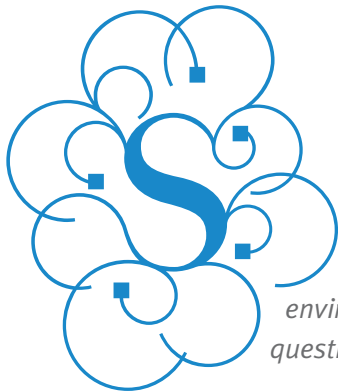


Starr News Summer, 2010 Volume 67, No. 2

Starr Commonwealth is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families & Children. Starr Commonwealth is a non-profit organization serving children and families regardless of race, religion, color, or national origin. Founded in 1913, Starr is licensed by the states of Michigan and Ohio and serves children and families from locations in Albion, Battle Creek, Detroit, MI.; Van Wert, and Columbus, OH. The Albion campus is a Michigan Historic Site. Starr Commonwealth receives funds from social agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Honorable Eugene A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; Martin L. Mitchell, Ed. D., President and Chief Executive Officer; Wm. Chuck Jackson, MA, Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer; Christopher L. Smith, B.B.A., C.P.A., Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Simon P. Bisson, CFRM, Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer; Elizabeth A. Carey, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy & Administrative Services Officer.

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Starr Commonwealth is at a pivotal point in the evolution of the organization, one that requires us to hold steady to our mission of providing positive environments where children flourish, but one that also requires questioning of what strategies will best fulfill that mission.

For almost 100 years now, people have most often thought of those “environments” mentioned in the mission statement as the residential programs operated in Albion, Michigan and Van Wert and Columbus, Ohio. Whereas we’ve taken great strides to ensure that our residential care continues to be a high-quality viable option for the at-risk youth and families who need such services, we also have set out in recent years to expand and diversify by offering alternatives in the way of community-based programs and early intervention trainings for professionals who work with troubled, hurting youth.

At the heart of everything we do – whether it is in training or residential programs, foster care or juvenile justice – ensuring that youth are surrounded by positive relationships and recognizing and developing the strengths of all children and families is our goal. When and where possible, Starr strives to provide hurting families with the tools, interventions and supports necessary to stabilize their lives and harmonize their homes.

In this issue of Starr News, you’ll note the recent addition of Circle of Courage Institute to our Starr Institute for Training as another tool for arming childcare professionals with the appropriate tools for working with challenging youth. Circle of Courage, along with the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC), No Disposable Kids and Glasswing, is helping meet the demands of today’s children, families, schools, professionals and communities where they live, where they learn and where they are.

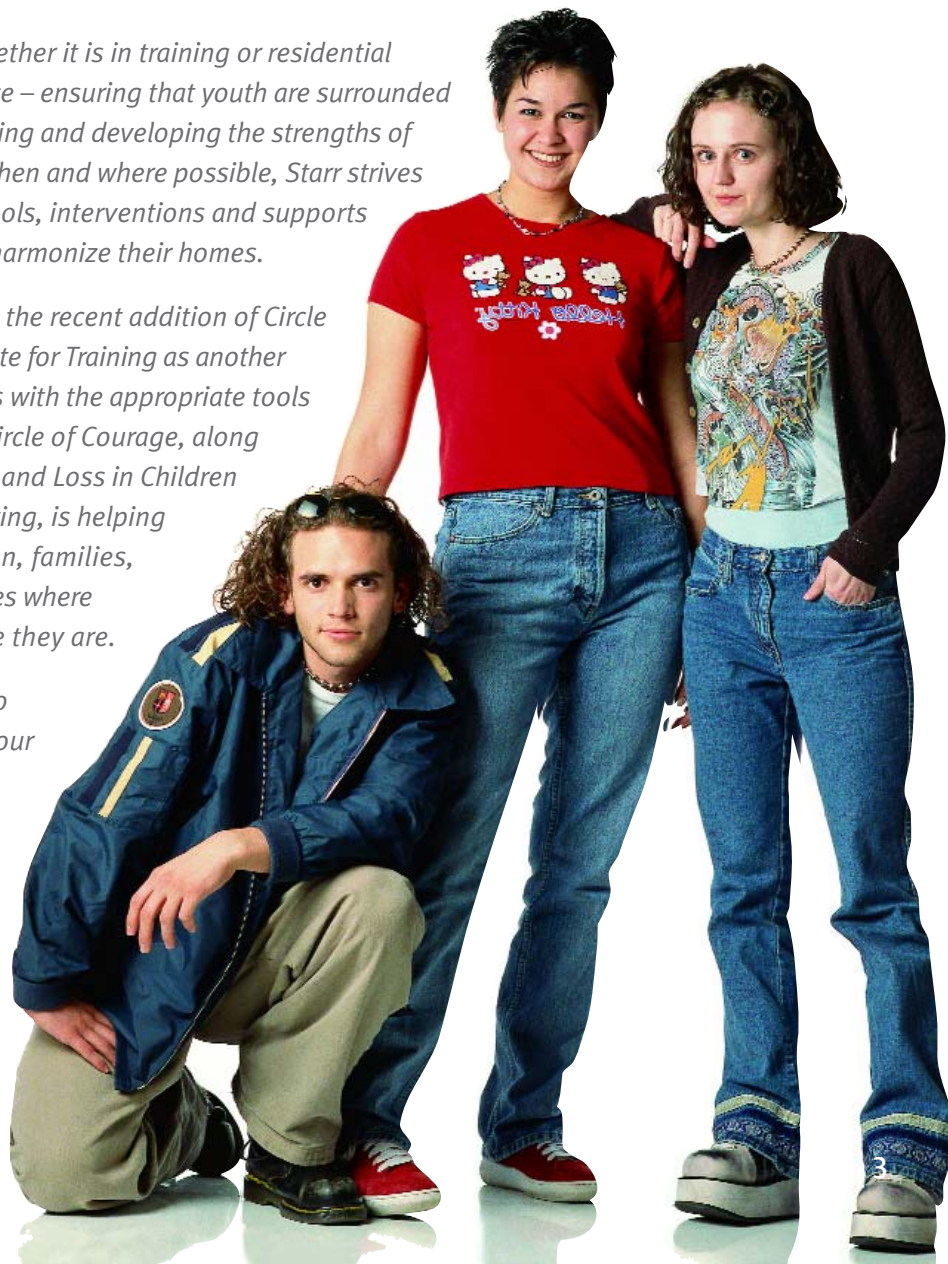
With your support, for which we are so grateful, we will continue to advance our mission for years to come.

Martin L. Mitchell

Martin L. Mitchell, Ed.D., President/CEO

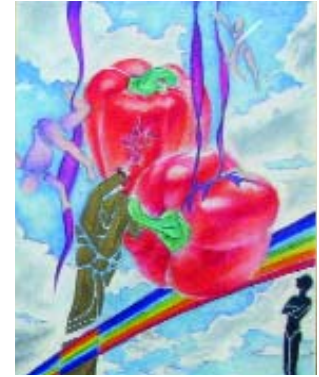


*Martin L. Mitchell, Ed.D.
President/CEO*





Mia, a Montcalm School for Girls student, showcased 12 of her pieces, including the two shown here. She intends to pursue a career in art.



To showcase the many talents and skills of our youth, Starr Commonwealth held a Palm Sunday Service and Student Art Exhibition in late March on the Starr Albion campus.

The Chapel Service included performances by the All Starr Choir as well as dramatic skits by Starr students. The service was followed by a reception at Brueckner Museum where students' art displayed themes of sacrifice, choices and decisions, misunderstanding vs. understanding, and praise and joy.

"I believe that I have potential. I have a new beginning now and am thankful that my family, friends and God reached out to me. I hope they never let go," is the sentiment shared by Mariah, Montcalm School for Girls student during the All Starr Choir performances.

During the weekends leading up to Palm Sunday, students were intent on preparing, practicing and performing together. Jeff Cornhill, Director of Fine Arts said, "The kids felt that this performance and the preparations leading up to it were so much more important with it being on-grounds at the Chapel. With that special significance, it pushed a few students out of their comfort zone and made them realize that they are capable of so much more."

Nathan Cox, Fine Arts Coordinator, worked with students to perform dramatic skits throughout the Service. "I think it was a great event. I think it is important for our students to share their talents. I feel that bringing students together in the Choir and in acting class helps build a sense of community on campus," said Cox.

No Greater & Love



A Palm Sunday Chapel Service wouldn't be complete without the inspiring words of Chaplain Ken Ponds, following with the theme of "No Greater Love." Behind the scenes, students pitched in operating the audio and visual equipment, supporting those in the Choir and performing skits. The coordinated efforts of the staff and students brought the day and the groups together, working as a team.

Following the Chapel Service, students and guests were invited to an art show and reception at Brueckner Museum. Harry Sykora, Wellness Coordinator with a BS in Art Therapy, worked with students displaying artwork at the Museum. "Art for many is an outlet and means of expressing themselves without them having to verbally or visually express their thoughts or feelings. For many students, it provides a very sensible and reliable method for sharing sometimes negative and painful thoughts, giving them a much easier format for communicating various messages," said Sykora. Students worked tirelessly to complete a variety of medium paintings, sculptures and pottery.

Mia, a Montcalm School for Girls student, held her own gallery, showcasing 12 of her pieces, varying from watercolor, color pencil and various media. Mia's artwork reflects what she has been through. Instead of putting her feelings into words – she puts them into her art. She recently sold one of her paintings to a Montcalm parent and two of her paintings to accomplished artist and supporter of Starr Commonwealth, Andrew Freemire of Battle Creek, Michigan. As a result of the gallery, Mia has a newfound confidence in her artistic abilities and potential, and intends to pursue a career in art.



"The students get very excited about pottery; they have become very self-driven with it. I have seen the confidence grow in every student, their excitement is infectious! These art classes provide yet another outlet for engineering success and making the students feel positive about the process and the product."

– Harry Sykora, Wellness Coordinator

We appreciate all who supported the students and staff and made our first Palm Sunday Service and Student Art Exhibition a success.



Painting by Miller



Painting by Harrison

"I used the basis of "beauty is a silent teacher," and sometimes we take the simple things for granted like the beauty of the sky, wildlife and plants. We forget about simple things in our busy lives – even in darkness beauty can shine." – Miller

"It's not how you choose but what you choose. One way or another something will happen, so you might as well make the best decision possible. This character is part of me. My decisions are based on a system of right and wrong. I might not always make the best decisions, but at least I try." – Harrison



In 2007, the UNICEF Tap Project was born in New York City in an effort to bring clean and accessible water to millions of children around the world. The concept: restaurants would ask their patrons to donate \$1 or more for the tap water they usually enjoy for free. Each year there are thousands of participating restaurants around the world.

This powerful national movement takes place each year in April during World Water Week, in which awareness is raised of the world water crisis and funds are raised to help the millions of children it impacts daily.

unicef  TAP PROJECT

Starr boys get involved with the UNICEF Tap Project

This spring, the boys of Reynolds Cottage at Starr's residential campus in Albion, Michigan, were presented the opportunity to help. Flyers, posters, and table tents were made by hand and placed in popular restaurants in downtown Kalamazoo. The handmade advertisements spread awareness of the clean water movement and, without any type of additional funding, the youth were able to raise around \$150. The project was less about the proceeds that could be generated, and more about the process for our youth who participate in service learning projects of this nature in order to understand their potential, develop their strengths and see themselves as contributing members of the community.

Many of the boys were hesitant raising money for a cause so far away when many are from inner-city communities and wanted to fix things back at home. By the end of the experience, however, the youth learned that living in a place like Detroit and living in Haiti, for example, were not comparable. In the beginning they were unaware of how people in other countries actually lived – but this project made them realize that they had it a lot better than many people around the world.

"All in all, the program was a success," said Reynolds Cottage Teacher Kate Schoen. "The boys took what they learned in the classroom and applied it to the real world. The program focused on giving back to the community and that's exactly what they did. When the boys gave back, they realized they can do something that is going to help someone's life, which makes them feel better about themselves."

**JOIN US FOR THE
CHILDHOOD TRAUMA
PRACTITIONERS
ASSEMBLY**

This four-day conference will include 3-hour workshops that focus on practical strategies for those who work with military families. If you don't work with military families, you can attend Level-1 and Level-2 TLC Certification courses or other 3-hour workshops on various trauma and loss subjects.

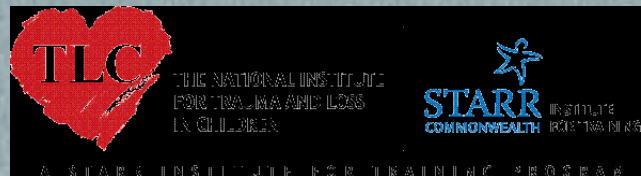
To register call 877.306.5256 or visit www.starrtraining.org/register.

**Childhood Trauma Practitioners Assembly
July 13-16**

Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD)
44001 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, MI 48038

TLC Certified \$140/day
Non-Certified \$165/day

Continuing Education credits available. Free parking.



www.starrtraining.org/tlc

**ON A
WARM DAY
IN JULY**

**YOU CAN HELP HER
OVERCOME A
COLD
REALITY.**





READ TO ME!

This past March, Montcalm School for Boys' Mendelssohn, Norton and Newton Cottages and Structured Transitional Living students recognized March as reading month with twice weekly visits

to ABC Academy in Jackson, Michigan. This marks the third year Montcalm students have celebrated reading month with ABC Academy's preschool classrooms.

Montcalm students sat with groups of 3 to 6 children and read books that the children chose. Many of the children of ABC remember being read to last year by the Montcalm boys and looked forward to the visits again this year.

Upon arrival, the Montcalm boys split between the classrooms and assumed their seats at tables or on the floor with the kids circled around them. In anticipation for the visit, stacks of books were waiting that the children had carefully selected. For many of the Montcalm students, they looked forward to this time just as much as the children.

The experience was positive for all involved. Nick, a Montcalm School for Boys student, stated, "I enjoyed reading to the kids, being with them and getting laughs, and always looked forward to having fun with them."

According to Montcalm Teacher, Matthew Berkemeier, "It allowed our students the opportunity to help children get excited about reading. Seeing an older student read gives them reinforcement to the importance it holds, while at the same time allowing our students to work on their social skills in an outside environment."

Besides social skills, the students also cited building their empathy, tolerance and patience while helping others. The activity also helped with group dynamics. Relations within the group improved, giving them a shared positive experience to discuss and collaborate on for the next visit.

Reading to the children of ABC Academy is already in the works for next year; Montcalm students are already looking forward to it.

"It meant a lot to me to put a smile on their faces when I was reading and helping them. I loved it a lot and I hope we get to go back to ABC Academy because I had fun with the kids and they made me laugh. When I was feeling bad, it felt good to be there because they make my day and it helps me read aloud to others," said Nick.

continued on next page



Thanks to you, more than \$17,470 was contributed to our recent Spring Appeal. Your donations help Starr Commonwealth provide many youth with opportunities they would have never had if it wasn't for your generous gifts.

Our failure to invest to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children in our society today increases the costs in the future. More importantly it decreases the chance that these youth will overcome their obstacles and ever reach their true potential to succeed as independent, productive adults in our communities.

With your help, we can continue our commitment in equipping children with essential tools and skills needed to make a better life for themselves. To change a life, it takes dollars, and it makes sense.

Thank you for your support.



We guard your privacy. Starr Commonwealth does not sell or trade donor contact information. We do recognize and celebrate our donors' contributions by using their names in various publications. If you would like your gift to remain anonymous, please let us know. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Development Office at 800.837.5591, ext. 2436 or info@starr.org.

continued

While reading to the children was the main objective, the students also helped them learn colors, objects in pictures, interaction and imaginary play. For many of Montcalm's students, what they liked most about the experience was "the chance to help others."



Aaron Warren, Associate Dean of Montcalm Schools said, "Any time the students have an opportunity to give back to the community it helps the students. They have a sense of pride and accomplishment when they are able to give back. For our students who have struggled in school, the opportunity to read to younger peers is a great confidence boost."

Reading to the children may have even helped a couple Montcalm students with determining their future educational and career goals. Adam states, "I've always wanted a career as a child clinician," while another student felt that the experience may have encouraged his interest in pursuing a career as an elementary teacher.

For all involved this year and the years prior, this has been a very positive and beneficial experience and opportunity for Montcalm students.



CHANGING LIVES

Featured Friends:

The GUIDO A.
and ELIZABETH H.
BINDA
FOUNDATION



With the help of several area community foundations, Starr Commonwealth continues to grow its programming and expand its reach in Michigan.

Through the generous support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Guido A. and Elizabeth H. Binda Foundation and the Battle Creek Community Foundation, Starr Commonwealth recently was able to



continue providing much-needed programs for youth in Battle Creek, Michigan that were previously offered through St. Philip Catholic Church's outreach program, The Advocates.

In March, 1998, Father William Fitzgerald of St. Philip Catholic Church began The Advocates as an outreach ministry initiative. The program originated as a support to the Juvenile Justice System by providing means to intercede in the 'best interest' of young offenders and assist probation officers whenever possible. The Advocates support and educate youth who enter the system while providing similar services to their parents. In order for youth to be able to exit the system more capable of being responsible, productive members of our community, the program creates a probation plan that is geared toward holding the young offenders accountable for their actions, developing their level of competence, and protecting the needs of the community.

With its funding sources expiring, The Advocates approached Starr Commonwealth about taking over the programs. Because of Starr's current presence in Battle Creek, the organization already knew that youth violence, delinquent behavior and juvenile arrests in Battle Creek are problems receiving heightened awareness in the community. As a result many local agencies and community partnerships have formed in recent years with support from parents, school officials, law enforcement and faith-based groups to provide solutions and services for youth.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded Starr with \$230,000 over two years to fund the programming, which continues to operate from St. Phil's Tiger Room. Also funding the program are The Binda Foundation and the Battle Creek Community Foundation, each granting a one-time award of \$10,000.

"When students are expelled or suspended from school, often as a consequence of their own actions, there are few alternatives that will allow them to continue their education and it is often the case that when these youth are not in school that they fall further into trouble. The credit recovery program, suspension center, daytime curfew and juvenile diversion programs will continue as part of our services to local youth," said Sabrina Corbin, Executive Director of Starr Battle Creek. "When representatives from The Advocates approached Starr Commonwealth asking if we would have an interest in taking over their programs, we immediately saw the connection to our mission."

With the acquisition of The Advocates and because of funding from the local foundations, Starr expanded its footprint in Battle Creek and is now offering:

- *Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP), an alternative to formal court processing for first-time, non-violent offenders;*
- *Daytime Curfew, a safe haven where law enforcement staff can bring youth in violation of Battle Creek's daytime curfew ordinance;*
- *Suspension Center and Credit Recovery, where students who have been suspended or expelled can continue their studies and recover credits in order to graduate, with the assistance of a certified teacher and use of NovaNET Credit Recovery programs.*

"Starr Commonwealth is proud to be among the organizations in Battle Creek that are invested in the future of the community by addressing the needs of our children," Corbin said. "Because of our 97-year history and credibility of serving vulnerable youth, acquiring the programs previously offered by The Advocates is a win-win for all and a natural complement to the community-based services we already provide through Starr Battle Creek."

**THE
ADVOCATES
SUCCESS
STORY**

When Cassandra Goodrich's son, Skylar, was suspended from school, she wanted to make sure he knew that his education was still important.

She learned about Starr Commonwealth's Suspension Center in Battle Creek from the principal of Pennfield Middle School, where her son had been suspended for 10 days for behavioral reasons.



Children who misbehave in the classroom often fall behind. Fortunately, Starr Battle Creek's Suspension Center provides a safe, learning environment where they can stay on track.

Along with student participation, parental involvement is necessary in the process since families are required to interact with the program and school district and must provide transportation to and from the program daily.

"I wanted him to still keep the routine of going to school," Cassandra said. "And then I met Brett and Zach

(program supervisors) and saw how they really care for the kids."

Skylar attended the program from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. weekdays for the duration of his 10-day suspension. In doing so, he kept up with his homework and completed a few tests along the way, too.

"I really think this program is a win-win for everybody," said Christina Feneley, Principal of Pennfield Middle School. "We've been referring students to the program for about three years, but it has taken some time to set up a system of clear expectations. I think we will find that infrastructure with Starr's support."

Principal Feneley also complimented the parents, like Cassandra Goodrich, who are involved in the program and their student's academic success.

"It definitely gives them a way to keep up with their academics. We don't want suspension to be the cause for them not to be able to keep up," she said. "For families, it gives them the option to have children stay on track, be supervised and held accountable."



A Toast for Change

In 1994, Erin Gruwell walked into her first classroom, Room 203, at Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. Little did she know many considered that class a war-zone, and no one advised her to bring any armor.

Many students in her room were written off by the education system and deemed “unteachable.” They were the students no teacher wanted and were the ones who weren’t expected to succeed. Many lived in racially divided urban communities and were hardened by first-hand exposure to gang violence, juvenile detention and drugs.

In a diary entry Gruwell wrote, “Even though a lot of people have given up on them, I refuse to believe they’re a lost cause.” She inspired, motivated and, consequently, gave her students a second chance on life much like Starr Commonwealth has been able to do for so many youth since its founding 97 years ago.

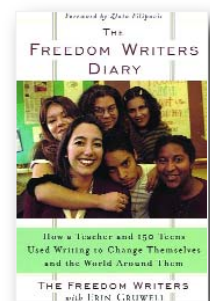
Through assigned readings and field trips, Gruwell’s educational philosophy encouraged and promoted her students to rethink rigid beliefs about themselves and others, reconsider daily decisions and restart their future. Each student made a life-altering “Toast for Change” where they agreed to give themselves a chance to start life over.



Save the Date! Founder’s Day – Sunday, October 3, 2010
Featuring Keynote by Erin Gruwell of The Freedom Writers Foundation

Gruwell believes that “writing about the things that happen to us allows us to look objectively at what’s going on around us and turn a negative experience into something positive and useful.” Therefore, she assigned each student a diary in which they wrote about their daily battles and experiences. These diaries for some were the only place where they felt anyone wanted to hear their stories, for others it was the first safe place to share their stories. They dubbed themselves the “Freedom Writers” in homage to civil rights activists, “the freedom riders.”

As a graduate from University of California, Irvine, where she was awarded the Lauds and Laurels Distinguished Alumni Award, Gruwell currently serves as president of the Freedom Writers Foundation. She raises awareness by traveling nationwide to speak to large corporations, government institutions, community associations, schools and juvenile halls. She earned her Master’s Degree and teaching credentials from California State University, Long Beach, where she was honored as Distinguished Alumna by the School of Education.



Please join us in welcoming Erin Gruwell to Starr Commonwealth as our featured speaker for this year’s Founder’s Day event to be held Sunday, October 3 in Albion, Michigan.

Chaplain's Message

Change is that which we must do, yet, it is what so many of us fight against.

We don't want to change, especially when we're comfortable and know what to expect. Change can make some uneasy and even be frightening. Still, change is both inevitable and necessary for any of us to make progress in our lives.

For many of the youth we serve at Starr, changes in habits, behaviors and values is what is needed in order to become successful, contributing members of the community. One of our core beliefs is that people can change and that in doing so, they will grow by learning from their past.

**In the midst
of change
we ask our
young people
to trust us.**

At Starr, our staff must continue to provide consistent care, guidance and role modeling for our youth. We, the staff, must model confidence and demonstrate that change provides opportunities for growth and development.

In the midst of my reflecting, one of my favorite songs, "Abide with Me", entered my mind. The second verse goes like this, "Swift to the close ebbs out life's little day; earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away; change and decay in all around I see; O thou who changest not, abide with me."

In the words of this song we are given the assurance that while all around us is changing, even to the point of death, we can have the hope that all will be okay, because God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. While all around us changes, God does not! We have the assurance that God will always be there to love us, and to guide us through the most difficult times of our lives. This takes faith!

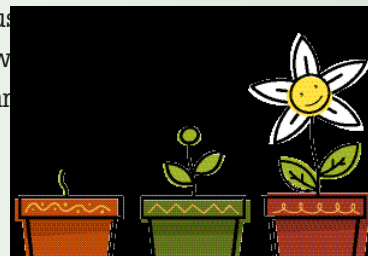
In relationship to Starr, then, what does this mean? We ask our young people to trust us, to listen to our words and actions of guidance and to follow our example; to make the appropriate life changes, thinking changes, value changes which will allow and help them to have a brighter future; to know that they are loved and cared about; that they are cherished. If they believe and accept this, they will be okay. They may feel as if everything around them is changing, but one thing is sure – God does not.



Chaplain Kenneth T. Ponds

Watch your gift grow. Do you work for a company that offers a matching gifts program? Or, are you retired from a matching gifts company? If so, you could double – maybe even triple – your gifts to Starr Commonwealth children simply by letting us know. Contact your current employer or former employer to provide you with the paperwork. Fill it out and send it to Attention: Development Office, Starr Commonwealth, 13725 Starr Commonwealth Road, Albion, MI 49224-9910

Thank you for caring!



Commonwealthia

by Amy Reimann, Director of Archives and Alumni Affairs

The Starr Commonwealth Alumni Association has held countless alumni gatherings on the Albion campus since the organization recognized its first alumnus in 1914. Many times these reunions occurred near "Uncle" Floyd's birthday, May 1, of each year. Many times they happened in conjunction with Founder's Day, the first Sunday of October.

This year we are excited to announce an alumni gathering that will take place on Sunday, July 11, 2010.

All alumni are welcome to travel to the Albion campus and join us for a Chapel service, brunch, meeting and some afternoon time to visit on campus. If you are interested in participating, there will be an invitation that will go out to all alumni this spring. Any former staff or teachers are also invited to visit. Please contact Director of Archives & Alumni Affairs, Amy Reimann, at 800.837.5591 ext. 2317 or reimanna@starr.org for further details.



c. 1988 – Alumni Reunion tree planting
photo courtesy Starr Commonwealth Archives, Reum Collection



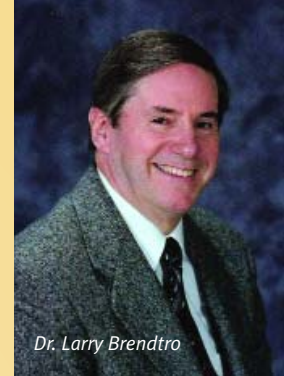
1996 Alumni Gathering group at Founder's Day
photo courtesy Starr Commonwealth Archives, Reum Collection

If you have questions or comments about any Starr historical topics,
please contact Amy Reimann, Director of Archives and Alumni Affairs at 800.837.5591.

PARTNERS IN RESILIENCE

A new partnership was created recently with Dr. Larry Brendtro, a former Starr Commonwealth president, and his Circle of Courage Institute.

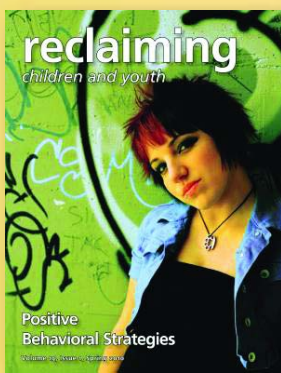
Founded more than 20 years ago and based on the four principles of Generosity, Belonging, Mastery and Independence, Circle of Courage has been successful in developing training materials and seminars based on the very same strength-based principles and interventions in practice at Starr.



Dr. Larry Brendtro

With a circulation of more than 10,000 print editions per quarter, "Reclaiming" is a leading peer-reviewed journal for childcare

professionals and will further promote Starr as an international leader in our field.



In addition to creating and marketing the professional journal "Reclaiming Children and Youth," Brendtro is internationally recognized as a leading expert in therapies and methods for working with emotionally

disturbed and delinquent youth that have been developed and used at Starr Commonwealth for nearly four decades.

Other Circle of Courage products include an extensive library of books and training products, including "Response Ability Pathways (RAP)" and "The Developmental Audit: Strength-Based Assessments with Kids in Conflict."



Circle of Courage, now part of the Starr Institute for Training, has hosted conferences and trainings in 25 nations: United States, Canada, Uruguay, Peru, Ireland, Scotland, England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Israel, Russia, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

“All our dreams can come true...
if we have the courage to pursue them.”

Earlier this summer, youth from Starr programs completed the requirements for graduation – whether it was from high school, college or the program – and were celebrated for their achievements.

At the end of May, Montcalm School for Girls witnessed the graduation of one young lady from high school while three young women had completed the program and were returning home to their families.

On June 19, students from Montcalm School for Boys held their graduation ceremony in Albion, Michigan, during which 14 young men received their high school diplomas. This is the biggest graduating class yet from Montcalm Schools, and we are proud of their accomplishments. Many will go on to attend colleges and universities across the country.

Montcalm Schools for Boys and Girls is a private-referral therapeutic boarding school for youth ages 12-21.

Also in June, a celebration was held in honor of the MyPlace students and their various accomplishments. MyPlace is an independent living program offered at our Starr Columbus site for youth in the Columbus, Ohio area.

MyPlace offers teens who are not ready to live completely on their own, a place to transition from their present home environment, residential care, or foster home. Boys and girls ages 16-18 live in fully furnished, individual apartments and have access to attend school and/or hold a part-time job. The goal of this program is to create self-sufficient adults who can function in the outside world. Goals include maintaining a job, progressing in or graduating from school, opening a bank account, and budgeting.

Congratulations to all of our graduates. We encourage all alumni to stay in contact with Starr, and scholarship opportunities are available to former students to help offset costs of continuing their education.



Graduations

In addition to Montcalm School graduations for boys and girls, MyPlace students at Starr Columbus were recognized for their many accomplishments. >



SPECIAL REMEMBRANCES Honor and Memorial Gifts

HONOR GIFTS are thoughtful ways to remember a special person and/or a special occasion, such as a new birth, birthday, anniversary, graduation, Mother's Day or Father's Day, while also helping Starr children. When sending an honor gift, please provide the

address of the honoree. We will send an acknowledgement card to let them know of your thoughtfulness, but we won't mention the gift amount. You may call in your honor gift for faster acknowledgement at: 800.837.5591. Honor gifts also may be made online at: www.starr.org.

MEMORIAL GIFTS offer an enduring tribute to the memory of a friend or loved one, while extending a helping hand to the children of Starr Commonwealth. When sending a memorial gift, please provide the address of a family member of the deceased to whom we can send an acknowledgement card. We will let them know of your thoughtfulness, but won't mention the gift amount. You may call in your memorial gift for faster acknowledgement at: 800.837.5591. Memorial donations also may be made online at: www.starr.org.

Here is a listing of Honor and Memorial gifts received from 02/07/2010 to 05/21/2010. Givers are listed below the name of the person in whose memory or honor they contributed. Gifts not listed here will appear in a future issue of *Starr News*.

If we missed your name or an error has occurred with your listing, please forgive us and contact us so we may correct it in the next issue.

IN HONOR OF:

ROBIN MCCANNON
Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Olson
BRIDGET KEENAN MCELROY
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Kuban
AIMEE C. O'BRIEN
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My name is Mariah. I came to Montcalm School for Girls because of numerous difficulties in my life. One of the main difficulties was that my mother was not able to care for me properly, and I was not able to live with her because she could not keep me safe in many ways. My father was a stabilizing force in my life, but he died of pancreatic cancer. This left a huge void in my life, and still hurts. The pain my Mom inflicted on me still hurts. I believe that I have potential. I have learned that I don't have to live the same kind of life that my mother did, and I know my Dad is looking on me with pride and the hope that I will live the life I deserve to live.

Please don't get me wrong, I love my mother, I just know that she could not be the mother that I needed her to be. She has not made any changes, but I forgive her. The rest of my family has given up on her, but I have to hang on to the hope that she may change one day.

Prior to coming to Starr, I would worry about when my life would end. But when I think about it, it is more frightening to think that my life would never begin. I have a new beginning now and am thankful that my family, friends, and God reached out to me. I hope they never let go.



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