

Steppin' Out With Perry...A Night with Our Stars

IT WAS AS IF THE IMPOSING, lighted wreaths outside Union Station were hung just for our stars. With all their dynamic skills, it would not be surprising if **Susan Baron, Rondi Pillette, or Jill Minneman**, our talented and tireless gala chairs, made that happen!

Bustling travelers and a lot full of cars swarmed the building, flowing into the quaint extravagance that is Union Station's lobby. Off to the right, excitement was growing as more and more guests followed the red carpet past a sign describing Perry Center, Inc.'s services and another thanking our generous event sponsors **Northrop**

Grumman, The Bennett Group, Clark Construction, the Zients family, the Stewart family, a friend of Perry, Akridge & Co., Sunny & Bill Alsup, Katherine & David Bradley, Brookfield Properties/ING Clarion, CareFirst, Abe Pollin, Horning Brothers, Kelley Drye Collier Shannon, the family of Judith Oldham, Studley, Inc., PEPCO, Charles Baron, Boston Properties, Fannie Mae, Greenebaum & Rose, the Keffer family, Sharon Marcil & Thomas Monahan, Monument Reality, Safeway Foundation, and Ruth & Raymond Uhalde, all of whom made the evening possible.

After guests picked up program and bidder packets, they gradually filled the upper level of the Columbus Club. The soft oranges and browns accented the room that was enveloped in a warm light, illuminating the unique silent auction items, frames filled with some of Perry's moments in time, and the striking centerpiece, the Perry tree, gracefully dangling wishes and needs. Many generous wish-granters, plucked the leaves, inscribed their bidder number, and toasted drinks that glistened in hue to the dazzling decorations. Too soon, it was time for dinner and the chatter followed guests as they found their tables in the downstairs dining room.

The program was filled with stories, stories of achievement by our community members, stories of hard work by our volunteers, and stories of commitment by our staff. The story of the night began from the person who has initiated many amazing stories in the North Capitol Street Neighborhood and within the historic Perry School building, Executive Director **Paul McElligott**. He started by thanking all of the people who worked so long and hard for the spectacular and successful event. Then, with very real pleasure, he introduced **Ellen van Bever**, who for over a decade has advanced the direction and growth of Perry Center, Inc. and exemplified a commitment to the North Capitol Community in many diverse ways. Paul went on to explain how she linked faculty and student resources at Georgetown with Perry; created a university/community day that addressed problems to influence our programs; was the real force behind our strategic plan for the direction and expansion of Perry Center, Inc. bringing us from 300 people with 4 programs in 1999 to over 2,500 people in 21 programs in 2007; and with her husband Derek, being a repeated supporter of our work.

Then Paul handed the microphone to Board Chair, **Felecia Jones**, whose personal connection with Perry is quite a story in and of itself. **Ellen van Bever** can cer-



Photos: Bethy Adler

LEFT: Mistress of Ceremonies, JC Hayward, with HIPPY alum, Reagan Lewis.

TOP: Board Chair, Felecia Jones, and Executive Director, Paul McElligott, honor Gala Chairs, Susan Baron, Rondi Pillette, and Jill Minneman.

BOTTOM: Wishgranters picking leaves off of the Perry tree.

tainly take pride in having such a big hand in setting Perry in motion thereby enabling Felecia and her daughter's successful use of the program to embody a shining example of how a family has changed their future with the resources Perry provides. Felecia's touching words credited Ellen's work in helping her daughter achieve her goals through Perry Center, Inc.'s Youth Development program. Felecia explains, "There are really no words to describe how I felt being able to honor such a wonderful and caring person who blessed my child with Perry to protect her as one of God's angels."

When the honoree of the night took the stage, her graceful words described what Perry means to her,

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Message from the Executive Director Perry's People

THE FEATURE OF THIS EDITION of our newsletter is people – our dedicated staff and volunteers, our clients. You will come to know them, their work, and their aspirations, through this newsletter. People are our work – helping people out of poverty, preventing people, especially young people, from living in poverty as adults. People have asked me at various times over the years what I considered the main measure of success of Perry Center, Inc. My response has not been the number of people placed in living-wage jobs or the number of people going to and graduating from college. Rather my answer has been “the quality of human relationships.” I am referring to all the human relationships we encounter – Board, staff, clients, volunteers, supporters, other Perry Center and collaborating organizations, the community, etc. “People who need people” is more than a song by Barbra Streisand. It is a fact of life.

One of the elements often cited in lower-income communities is isolation. Several years ago I was speaking with a person involved with an adult literacy program in the community. On one evening a week, adults came to Georgetown University for the class. Georgetown, for 25% of the adults, was as far as they had been out of the community. More recently, our young people were given a tour of the U.S. Capitol, about one-half mile from the Perry Center, through the office of the Architect of the Capitol. Most youth had never been to the Capitol. Isolation is not confined to less affluent areas. We read rather regularly about gated communities, about the lack or the loss of community, neighbors not knowing each other, not watching out for each other or each other's children. Sometimes tragedies have occurred because the proper relationships were not created or maintained.

Building good human relationships is a challenge for all of us. It is also the key to our success and effectiveness as an organization. ♦

Thank You For Your Support

We thank all donors whose generosity sustains our youth and family programs and allows us to respond to those in need. We note the following additional foundation, church, corporation, and organization donors, which have contributed to Perry Center, Inc. since our last newsletter.

- Anonymous Foundation
- Capitol Area Assets Building Corp.
- Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington
- Clark Charitable Foundation
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- Derek & Ellen van Bever Foundation of The Alexandria Community Trust
- Tiger Woods Foundation

A Warm Welcome and A Helping Hand

BRENDA WOOD WARMLY WELCOMES all visitors to Perry Center, Inc.'s Social Services Department. In addition to assisting the staff with various office needs and directing clients to the appropriate professionals through intake, Brenda spends her day encouraging and helping clients understand and navigate the various resources available for meeting their needs. Brenda's experience with Perry has made her a resource guide to services provided by Perry Center, Inc.; by the other organizations sharing space in the Perry School building; and by outside organizations that provide services to the Perry and D.C. communities. Referrals include accessing resources like food and clothing from programs that do not take walk-in clients. Brenda explains, “I always take the time to help each client who is in need of services, in house or not. I help with job searches, or for example, I frequently set up child care referrals with Bright Beginnings.”

New Computers in the NLC

Yvette Mitchell's Network Learning Center has been recently enhanced with three new Mac Computers. This enables the Perry youth to create movies and websites as well as learn about and practice graphic design, thereby cultivating marketable skills for the working world. Ten year old **Jamica** has used one of the new computers and says she likes Photobooth and iTunes best. Jamica exclaims, “I like it and learning about it. It's exciting to use and fun!” ♦

Stepping Out With Perry, continued from page 1

a reflection of the mutual benefit of Perry's relationship with our star, Ellen van Bever. "It is humbling to receive this honor from Paul, a man I have often referred to as an angel. He is one of the most dedicated and committed individuals I have ever met. It has been 11 or 12 years since I first met Paul while I was working at Georgetown University. One day he gave me a tour of the neighborhood, and I was impressed by two things that day. The first was the chronic poverty and its effects on those who live in this neighborhood in the shadow of the nation's capital. Secondly, I was impressed with the strength of this community and their desire to help themselves and each other. At the time Perry was an idea in progress and a boarded up building covered in ivy, but just two years later the Perry Center opened its doors. I admire Perry because it is community driven and we worked hard to maintain that; because of the center's collaborative approach in providing many services that address the complex problems that clients face just to meet basic needs; and because of the enduring mission to eradicate poverty in the Perry neighborhood. Simple in words, but complex in reality. Times have changed and methods and programs have changed to meet these changes, but the mission remains the same.

For every story told, there are so many others. It may be the story of one, but at Perry, it becomes the story of thousands. For example, it was proudly announced that **Reagan Lewis**, a 2005 HIPPIY graduate, is performing above grade level as are more than 90% of Perry Center, Inc.'s HIPPIY alums. Reagan then dazzled us with her powerful version of "This Little Light of Mine." **Karina Scott** is another example of the possibilities that exist when children are given a real chance at success. Karina's mother used the Perry Center as a support system, and Karina was actively enrolled in after-school programs as well as College Bound. She is currently on scholarship at George Mason University where she is majoring in journalism, but she took time away from her studies to grace us with her beautiful voice singing a Karina original.

The evening sparkled and not just the decorations. The moving stories and fun festivities were made possible by too many dedicated people to name, includ-



LEFT: Karina Scott and her mother looking at Perry pictures provided by staff, Yvette Mitchell and Kuroji Patrick.

TOP: Board Chair, Felecia Jones, and Executive Director, Paul McElligott, present honoree, Ellen van Bever, with gifts of appreciation for her dedication to Perry Center, Inc.

BOTTOM: Gala guests enjoying dinner.



Photos: Bethy Adler

ing **JC Hayward**, Mistress of Ceremonies; Honorary Chairs **Kate and Bruce Baschuk**, **Barbara Lang**, **Debbi Jarvis**, and **Marie C. Johns**; and indispensable volunteers, **Ellen Barth**, **Donna Berry**, **Evelyn Devlin**, **Lynne Kaplan**, **Stephanie Lewin**, **George and Liz Rebh**, **Kay Rickles**, **Roberta Scallet**, **Rhonda Schwartz**, and **Arnetta Wright** among many others. We appreciate the attendance of such notable figures as **Congressman Jim Moran**, **Councilmember Kwame Brown**, and Councilmember **Tommy Wells**. Most of all, the event was a success because of the overwhelming support from each donor and auction purchaser. It was a shining success that only a force of human relationships can accomplish when working together for a worthy cause. ♦

Welcome to Our New Employees

Join Us in Welcoming Our New Economic Empowerment Professionals

The Economic Empowerment Department has taken on two new employees that bring their skills and passion to Perry Center, Inc.'s mission of eradicating poverty by assisting people in securing employment.

Robert Mann, Employment Specialist, shares, "It has been a pleasure being here with this outstanding team of professionals. I only hope that I can bring many years of serving to this community to make it greater. My heart's desire is to empower, enlighten, and enrich the lives that come across my path on this journey of life. Thank you all at Perry School Community Services Center for that opportunity."

Keith Campbell, a DOES contracted Job Readiness Trainer, instructs a daily Job Skills Class for all prospective employment hunters from 9:30am to 1:30pm. The class covers all aspects of preparing for a job or career search, including professionalism, punctuality, attitude, appearance, mock interviewing, and CASAS English and math skills testing. Mr. Campbell has been work-

ing with Perry Center, Inc. since October and proclaims, "The best part of my day is coming here."

A New Addition to Perry Center, Inc's Social Services Department

Kia Gilchrist, Tenant Based Rental Assistance Case Manager, is originally from Washington, D.C. but resides in Maryland. Before coming to Perry School, she worked for a company called Labor Ready as a customer service representative/dispatcher. This is her first time working for a non-profit organization, and she is "looking forward to all the new experiences at Perry School." Welcome Kia! ♦

Community Based Partnership Initiative

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY is the foundation of healthy relationships, effective involvement in our neighborhoods, and the upward mobility of individuals who realize that positive outcomes can only come about through the help of others. It is this community spirit in action that takes in the elderly, supports students in college, and brings the homeless off the streets. The helping hand of the community comforts mothers who have children out of wedlock, supports previously incarcerated men and women by empowering them to seek employment, even if they heard the word "no" repeatedly. Community is the hope and facilitator that motivates leaders, activists, governments, and the common person to help their brother or sister to realize that life can be as good as their dreams and the goals they set.

My name is **Saquaria Chaney**. I started working at Perry Center, Inc. Social Services in November 2007, and I am excited about coordinating the Community Based Partnership Initiative program. I have worked with at-risk youth in various capacities and facilitated HIV/AIDS workshops and conferences that featured high level DC government officials. My professional experience has prepared and excited me about the vision for the Community Based Partnership Grant, funded by the DC Department of Human Services. That vision is to be the light that shines upon the resources that will illuminate and inspire the citizens in Ward 6 to move from a place of potential to power. As the Coordinator of the Community Based Partnership Initiative Program, I am here to empower, motivate, and encourage individuals and provide resources they will need to enrich their lives by providing: Support groups; Emergency assistance; Self-esteem building; Case management; Referrals; Housing; Employment Readiness and Job training.

With the resources at Perry, the will of the people, and my motivation, we will fight to eliminate poverty in our community. ♦

HIPPY Holiday Party

Sponsored by the HIPPY Advisory Board and their families.



Photos: Susan Baron

Reaching Out

DIANE HUNTER WORKS WITH EACH PROGRAM staff to ensure that clients find the right services to match their needs. Diane likes her job because of "The way all of the staff works together for the community's benefit." As Outreach Coordinator, Diane is an integral piece in propelling that teamwork. She says that she is rewarded from her job because "Everyday there is something at Perry to make you feel special." Diane hopes, "That everyone in our service area will become aware of what Perry Center, Inc. can do to change their lives for the better." ♦

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I would like to host a Perry Center, Inc. information session.

For online donations, go to www.perryschool.org.

Mail form and payment to: The Perry School Community Services Center, Inc 128 M Street, NW, Suite 100 Washington, DC 20001

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Adult Computer Training Classes

Debbie Stevens runs our Adult Computer Training Classes and would like you to know that Perry Center, Inc. offers computer training in its state of the art computer lab. This class is recommended to the young as well as the old. Students will be well pleased with the comfortable surrounding as they take a journey into the world of computers. The classes are instructor led and the experience is hands on. Classes include Introduction to Computers, Windows XP, Internet, MS Outlook E-mail, and MS Office 2003. We also offer advanced classes. For more information please contact the Perry School Career and Training Center at 202-204-0174 or stop by our department located on the 3rd floor of Perry School, Suite 335.

New Year's Resolution Can Be Fulfilled!

Our JVC Volunteer, **Sara Reinjtes**, invites you to come join us, lose weight, and tone your muscles! Exercise classes are open to all community members. Sarah will be teaching the exercise classes to help others achieve their fitness goals. She has a background in Health and Exercise Sciences and is very excited to meet more people in the community. Exercise classes will be offered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11am-12pm at the Boys and Girls Club, east of the Perry School. If you have questions about the exercise classes, please call Sarah at 202-312-7157.

A Program to Ease the Transition of the New Communities Redevelopment

Senior Case Manager, **LaShone Norwood** is working with **Carlton Brown**, Youth Counselor, and **Diane Hunter**, Outreach Coordinator, on the New Communities Case Management Program, an effort to provide services to assist individuals in returning to the community once it's redeveloped. Carlton explains that the purpose of the program is to "empower people through using our services so that they no longer need public assistance." LaShone's major goal for the program is to increase client outreach and she encourages all residents of 76 M St., NW, Sibley Plaza Townhouses, Turnkey, and former residents of Golden Rule Garden Apartments to contact her at 202-312-2443, Diane at 202-312-7161, or Carlton at 202-312-2440 for assistance during this transition. As Carlton encourages, "We can't help you unless you come."

Georgetown U Peacemakers Stir the Pot with Perry Kids

by M.J. Park, Co-Director of LFFP

GHANDI SAID, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Three vibrant, committed, and heart-filled Georgetown undergrad students came faithfully once a week last semester to work with the children in the Peace Room and fulfill the spirit of Gandhi's words. They were members of **Ms. Kathleen Maas Weigert's**, Perry Center, Inc. Board Member, Introduction to Justice and Peace class. With their example of peace in action, they helped the children 'hop on the Peace Train' to solve their problems non-violently. Because of their loving, disarming, and positive spirits, the children were able to bond with them and believe in what they taught and stood for.

Kelsey said, "I learned the power of teamwork, the good within people, and the roots of problems." **Sarah** said, "I learned the value of peace and nonviolence through Little Friends for Peace, and I learned the effects of structural violence." **Katie** said, "We helped the kids talk to each other instead of using physical violence to solve problems. Showing compassion and teaching peace to a small group of people can have an impact on society at large."

The New Year, 2008, has brought two teams of Georgetown medical students to the Peace Room. They will be working with the students who come into the Peace Room at Perry as part of their service-learning project. They too, are filled with energy, ideas, and commitment to the children and peacemaking, and they believe in a holistic approach to wellness. They will be working on topics such as self esteem, conflict resolution, healthy eating, care of one's body, and inner peace.

The Peace Room has also had many volunteers helping on a project to serve a "Peace Meal" once a week to the students at Perry. The Peace Kids get an opportunity to help prepare, serve, and clean up the meal. Before Christmas we had spaghetti, tacos, and chicken. Thank you to the many helping hands and hearts who are making this happen for the children. As Franklin Roosevelt said, "The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world."

Thank you to all the volunteers who come to the Peace Room and help **Jerry** and I teach peace to the children, help them experience peace, and solve their problems in a peaceful, non-violent way. We invite you to come and share your gifts with the children and delight in the ways of peace. We can build a culture of peace and spread the germ of peace when we are working together in a peaceful manner.

The Peace Room is on the second floor of Perry School and welcomes you to share an hour or two or whatever fits with your schedule. You will surely receive the gift of peace and go home feeling that you have answered John F. Kennedy's call, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." ♦



Photos: M.J. Park

TOP: The Peace Kids enjoying a Peace Meal with LFFP Co-Director, Jerry Park.

BOTTOM: Georgetown students working with the Peace Kids.

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Send-A-Kid to Camp...Details Inside!

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Up for the Challenge

MICHELLE GEORGE has been with Perry longer than any other staff member. Over the past 13 years, she's "seen a lot and learned a lot." As the Executive Assistant, she is quite literally Paul's write hand in typing and formatting all the documents that come out of the Executive Director's office. In her words, she "makes sure needed information is in place and professionally distributed to the proper entity."

Through her role at Perry, she has "learned the meaning of giving: that giving comes in all aspects." In addition to the very generous donors and foundations that keep Perry's programs running, there are also the people, like herself, who prepare the pitch and the people, whom she works with, that carry out the programs. Being in the Executive Office, she is one of the first to meet prospective staff, and with each eager applicant, she wonders that because "this is not the average task, if they are up for the challenge of reaching goals and achieving the seemingly impossible?" At times she even asks herself if she is up for the challenge. Her answer is that "It's worth it, because I've seen people progress into different people." As a self-identified "behind the scenes person," Michelle explains that "It's definitely worth it when all is said and done, when you see people in the street that exclaim with gratitude and respect 'Oh you work at the Perry center!?' and you are reminded why we're on this block."

Michelle not only contributes to, but has taken lessons from Perry, in "learning consistent follow through on many levels at the same time. People don't understand the commitment put into a non-profit. When you take a job for a non-profit you have to understand clients and respect them, and you're there for them to do everything possible to meet their needs and in the end, you actually get a profit because you see people's lives change and the program grow." ♦

Recognition of Services

MY NAME IS CALVIN FORD, and I recently graduated from your job readiness program. I would like to thank you and your staff for the excellent help that I received at Perry Center, Inc. I obtained more self confidence and better self-esteem in your program. Every member of your staff participated in finding employment for me. I thank you and all that has helped me. I also would recommend this program to anyone who wants to improve his life. I thank you so much, Calvin Ford, Sr.



HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE...

Meeting the needs addressed by Perry Center, Inc. requires the help of supporters like you. Private contributions are a main source of our funds. You can make a tax-deductible donation:

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www.perryschool.org

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