

Sibling applications for 2011-2012 school year are in the mail now to the homes of currently enrolled students. Check your mail, or your child's book bag, and return your application by no later than December 22, 2010.

parentlink

A newsletter for parents published by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation • Volume 26, Number 1, December 2010

Clayton Grad Stresses Need

for Today's Students to Have Educational Options, Desire to Excel

by Peggy Magee

The five years Vincent Flewellen, 39, spent in Clayton schools were, at the time, mainly an extension of the solid foundation he had as a child growing up in the Central West End: strong family unit, surrounded by diversity, parochial school attendance, plans for college. These days, the significance of his Clayton education means more to him as he works to strengthen his community, keenly aware of how much a good education and personal drive affect the future of today's youth.

As director of development for Neighborhood Houses, an agency that provides after-school programs and other support services to St. Louis families, Flewellen networks throughout the metro area, raising money to support its good work and increasing awareness about its mission. He sees families who struggle

come to the food pantries, avail the free health screenings and take advantage of the reduced-fee childcare services, all offered by Neighborhood Houses. The goal is to help these families get on their feet and become self-sufficient. In Flewellen's mind, education is what can make the future better for them. "Education is the highway to opportunity. Without it, there is no solid future." He describes himself as "a true proponent of educational choice," adding "now, more than ever, kids and families need choices."

His own choice to attend Clayton schools allowed him "to continue to explore," he says, through strong academics (the English program, especially, with its

Vincent Flewellen, a Clayton graduate who now works at Neighborhood Houses which helps St. Louis families, stresses the importance of education as the key to a bright future for today's youth. He advocates for school choice and believes a good education must be accompanied by a strong will to succeed. Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

individual writing conferences), leadership opportunities (his involvement in student government), cultural appreciation (the cultural diversity-focused events he planned as founder of the Organization of Black Awareness) and the social aspect (chosen for homecoming court). Wanting other students from the city to have benefit of the choice he had, he rallied in support of extending Clayton's participation in the voluntary transfer program by speaking to the Board of Education at a meeting the

district held on the issue back in 2005.

Flewellen knows a thing or two about education. After graduating from Clayton High in 1989, he received a bachelor's in elementary education from Maryville University. He taught for several years at Ladue Middle School and MICDS, followed by diversity programming at John Burroughs and curriculum consulting at Forsyth School. He revised the social studies curriculum at Forsyth School "to include diversity more naturally," he notes. Because he wished to work in the community, he went back to school and studied nonprofit management. As a Danforth Urban Fellow, he received a master's degree from Washington University's George Warren Brown School of Social Work.

But teaching is still a passion of his and he has not ruled out returning to that profession at some point. What drew him to teaching in the first place was the mentoring work he did while at Mizzou, the first college he attended. As part of a service project of the black student organization, he met with middle school students after school and talked with them about setting goals and working to achieve them. "I always stressed that they put forth their very best effort," he reports. He rather wished he had, admitting that when he was their age, he was more social than academic and didn't really stretch himself.

But now that is more important than ever for students. "They limit their options if they don't," he says. And so, See Clayton Grad on reverse side.

Former VICC Student Wants for Her Children

What She Received in Rockwood Gets Involved to Ensure Their Success

by Peggy Magee

Bridget Royal could not have a more fitting last name. She might as well be wearing a crown given how beloved she is at Rockwood's Crestview Middle School, where her son Kameron attends as part of the VICC program.

Could it be that Bridget, a former VICC student herself, is an active member of the Crestview Parent Organization (CPO) despite being a single mom, working two jobs and having a half hour commute to the school from her home near Kingshighway and Natural Bridge. She also routinely volunteers for field trips and special activities at both Crestview and Green Pines Elementary, where her daughter Kristen is enrolled. Perhaps it's that Bridget, seeing the value of her own involvement, reaches out to other VICC parents, encouraging them to become more closely connected to their children's school. Likely it's all of this, plus her positive outlook and warm personality.

The 1993 Lafayette High graduate, who says she was raised "mostly" by her grandmother because her mom was always working, truly understands how difficult it can be for VICC parents to partner with their county schools. If there is no computer in the home, communication is spotty. Some parents work irregular hours and that makes it especially hard, she notes. "It's a challenge I know, and that's why I want to help."

She does so by pitching in to take CPO meetings on the road to a city location several times a year. She secures the meeting space at Cote Brilliant Church, contacts the speakers, makes up the flyer and calls other parents. She has even driven

nearby parents to and from the meetings. As a part-time financial educator, she herself has served as a speaker, sharing information on investing and saving for college.

Bridget's main job is education manager at Kindred Hospitals of St. Louis where she trains the staff on doing their jobs. She holds a B.S. in nursing from St. Louis University for which she incurred \$40,000 worth of student loans. So who better to talk to other parents about saving for college!

She also has helped get the newly-formed Rockwood African-American parent group off the ground. "It's a way for us to share ideas to help our children be successful and to support and advocate for one another." She has also served

Crestview Middle School parent Bridget Royal, center, is joined for a picture by Principal Jill Schuelen, left, and parent Julie Zamberlan. They were gathered for Crestview Parent Organization's Board and Chairperson Appreciation Luncheon, held in May. Bridget is a former Rockwood VICC student whose two children now attend Rockwood schools. Despite life's challenges, Bridget says, "I did not make any excuses as to why I could not be successful." Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

on various hiring committees for district administrators and on Crestview's school climate committee.

One might naturally ask how she finds time to do all this. The answer is simple: "I have made a commitment to my children." She wants to make certain they are getting the most from their education, making good choices and developing into leaders.

See Gets Involved on reverse side.

Bridget's Tips for VICC Families

Students should:

- Enroll in as many challenging courses as possible. "Taking advanced placement courses would have saved me money in college!"
- Get involved in school activities. "They can be a lot of fun and a way to make friends and feel part of the school community."

Parents should:

- Instill confidence in their children. Tell them over and over that they are going to be successful. Talk to them early on about going to college.
- Tell your children they can achieve anything they want in life. "Even if life takes a turn for your family, don't back away from those dreams and goals. Push toward them, no matter what."

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Follow VICC on Twitter and win great prizes.
twitter.com/VICC_StLouis

- Be follower #100 and win a \$25 gift card to Best Buy.
- Be follower #500 and win an I-Pod Shuffle.
- Be follower #1,000 and win an I-Pod Shuffle and an I-Tunes gift card.

VICC/Transpar employees and their families are not eligible for prizes (but please do follow along to see what's new with VICC.) Anyone found to use multiple accounts to enter will be ineligible.

If your child rides a Missouri Central school bus to Affton, Bayless, Brentwood, Clayton, Kirkwood, Hancock Place, Lindbergh, Pattonville, Special School District/Tech, Valley Park or Webster Groves, please note the following new phone number when calling the bus terminal:

Missouri Central • 314.762.0318

You can always call the VICC Transportation Office between 6:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Before or after hours, use the new number above to speak with the terminal.

Annual Notification Regarding Student Records Maintained by VICC

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords to parents/guardians ("parents") of students, and to students themselves who are over 18 years of age ("eligible students"), certain rights with respect to the student's education records. Although FERPA does not apply to VICC, VICC as a matter of policy intends to comply with the provisions of FERPA and to afford parents and eligible students certain rights set forth in FERPA with respect to education records maintained by VICC.

These rights, as they pertain to education records maintained by VICC, are outlined below:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day VICC receives a written request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to VICC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. VICC's CEO or his/her designee will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask VICC to amend a record should write VICC's CEO, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If VICC decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, VICC will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school or VICC officials with legitimate educational interests. A school or VICC official includes a person employed by VICC as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, counselor or support staff member; a person serving on VICC's Board; a person or company with whom VICC has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, transportation contractor or transportation manager); any of the member school districts participating in VICC and the school officials, employees and agents of such districts; or a parent, student or other person serving on an official VICC committee or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school or VICC official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her responsibilities for VICC with respect to transfer students and the transfer program. Upon request, VICC discloses education records without consent to officials of a school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

4. Although not applicable to VICC, FERPA generally affords the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged violations of FERPA by school districts receiving federal funds. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

**Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that schools receiving Federal funds, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, VICC may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised VICC to the contrary in accordance with VICC procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow VICC to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school or VICC publications. Examples include:

- VICC newsletters;
- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks.

If you do not want VICC to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify VICC in writing within 20 days after this notice has first been disseminated in the school year. VICC has designated the following information as directory information:

1. Name
2. Date and Place of Birth
3. Grade Level
4. Dates of Attendance
5. Degrees and Awards Received
6. Photograph
7. Participation in Officially Recognized Activities and Sports
8. Weight and Height of Members of Athletic Teams
9. The Most Recent Previous Educational Institution Attended by the Student

Any claims or disputes arising under or relating to the matters set forth in this notification are subject to the binding arbitration provisions and remedial limitations contained in paragraphs 23 and 24 of Appendix C of the 1999 Settlement Agreement.

Webster Student Earns Multiple College Scholarships

Still wishes he had pushed himself more

By Peggy Magee

At Webster Groves High School, VICC student Tarrence Clark was among the best and the brightest. He carried a 3.8 GPA with a schedule full of challenging classes. In his final year at Webster, when many seniors typically arrange a lighter work load for themselves, he took all honors or advanced placement classes.

That's the same year the varsity Statesmen football team clinched the state championship with Tarrence playing at left guard and serving as captain. Also at Webster, he played percussion in the marching band and did a good amount of volunteer work. He was the recipient of the coveted Eagle Award, the top award given to a senior from the staff.

As a result of his success in and out of the classroom, Tarrence shined as a Mizzou applicant and was one of only 30 students to receive a George C. Brooks scholarship (a renewal, partial tuition award) from among the nearly 280 who applied. In addition, he received a total of \$5000 from the Parent Club and Latta Scholarship Foundation of Webster Groves High School, which are one-time stipends. And yet the freshman computer engineering major reflects on his academic record and notes, "I could have done more. I wish I had."

He explains that good grades in advanced classes translate into college credits (he entered Mizzou with 11), thereby making the cost of college less expensive and saving the family money. His hindsight observations should be food for thought for all students – that their effort can almost always be bumped up a notch, even if it's already pretty great.

From the time Tarrence entered first grade, he always felt part of the Webster Groves community despite the distance, both geographic and cultural between school and his home, in the Union/Delmar area of St. Louis city. The only child of Corneisha Williams, the 18-year-old lost his father at the age of five and now wears a tattoo on his left upper arm in his honor. He describes the Webster school environment as "very supportive," adding, "it made me feel at home." He says he

VICC student Tarrence Clark, a stand-out at Webster Groves High School who now studies computer engineering at Mizzou, chats with his counselor, Karen Verstraete, who nominated him for the school's top award, which he won. The young achiever says he was fueled by the atmosphere in Webster schools. He especially appreciates Verstraete, "my strongest supporter." Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

took to its atmosphere of academic excellence and leadership, pointing out, "it wasn't just one person but a bunch of people who set that tone: students, teachers, counselors, principals."

Tarrence clearly thrived in that environment, applying his strong work ethic and respectful demeanor and putting forth his best effort. "He was always focused and determined," notes his mother. "His education is important to him, so he was motivated to do well in school."

His college counselor, Karen Verstraete, recommended him for the Eagle award and he was selected from among six nominees. In her nomination essay, which she read to faculty and staff, she wrote, "Tarrence Clark is by far one of the most exceptional students I've had the pleasure of knowing during my 15 years in education."

The young collegiate speaks highly of his counselor as well. "Mrs. Verstraete made me aware of different programs and opportunities. Every time I needed her, she was there for me. She would always stop what she was doing to help."

Tarrence takes what he calls a "common sense" approach when it comes to his education. "I want to do the best I can and get the most from it so that when I enter the workforce, I'll be that much closer to being successful." He advises other VICC students to take full advantage of all the great opportunities available in their schools. "If you look at the big picture of where you want to be in 10 years, it only makes sense to make the most of high school."



Message from the CEO

David S. Glaser

Wow! I hope you enjoy reading the three stories in this issue of the *Parent Link* as much as I did. A common theme permeates all of the stories – involvement. Whether reading about a parent with two students currently in the program who is a former VICC student herself, a graduate from over twenty years ago making a big difference in his community, or a recent very successful graduate now attending Mizzou as a freshman computer engineering major, you can't help but be impressed by not only the benefits they have received from participating in the VICC program but also how the VICC program benefited from their involvement.

I wonder what Tarrence Clark, the freshman computer engineering major at Mizzou, would think about some of the recent technological enhancements we have implemented. When we bid out the provision of transportation services last year, two of the technological improvements which we required to be provided by the successful bidders was the inclusion of digital video cameras on all of our buses as well as GPS. Not only were we provided these technological advances, we were also able to shorten the average age of the buses as well as save the program money on the cost of transportation services. Each bus includes three digital cameras – one at the front of the bus, one at the rear of the bus, and a third camera with a door entrance and driver view. The video cameras allow us to better monitor what

occurs on the average fifty minute bus ride and clearly determine if there are behavioral or other issues which need to be addressed. Since all of the video recordings are fully digital, they can be stored electronically in a secure file and shared electronically with appropriate school administrators.

GPS allows us to track and monitor the location of all buses and maintain a historical record for a week or so related to bus arrival times at stops as well as arrival times at schools. In this manner, we can make sure all students arrive at school in a timely manner and that buses arrive at bus stops consistent with the planned schedule. Obviously, when such goals are not achieved, adjustments can be made to improve on time performance. The GPS system will even allow us to monitor how long buses are idling in an effort to reduce emissions and keep our planet green and monitor the speed of the bus to ensure compliance with all appropriate laws.

Best wishes to you and your family for a relaxing and blessed holiday season. I hope you are able to enjoy the time off and spend some additional quality time together as a family.

David S. Glaser
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Clayton Grad (from page 1)

while attending a good school is important, Flewellen believes students must also possess a strong desire to do their best. That is lacking in the academic lives of lots of African-American males, he believes, and that concerns him. Enough to dream about opening his own school, just for African-American males, located somewhere out in far west St. Louis county, a school where they would board.

"I'd like to get them away from the challenges of day-to-day life that they face and give them an opportunity to focus on their education and push themselves."

That way they could move from there to a selective college and be on their way to a better life. That's what Vincent Flewellen would like to happen.

Gets Involved (from page 1)

Bridget is greatly admired by many Rockwood administrators and staff including Crestview principal Jill Scheulen. She notes, "Bridget is a wonderful voice for representing different ideas and suggestions on ways to make our school a better place for all students. It is a pleasure to work with her on a regular basis. I consider Bridget a dear friend."

Bridget appreciates what she gained from attending Rockwood schools and wants the same advantages for her own children. "I received life-long friends, a well rounded education, cultural diversity and an opportunity to lead my children by example."

That she is doing, and how fortunate for Kameron and Kristen.