

Sibling applications for 2012-2013 school year are being mailed later this month to the homes of currently enrolled city students. Check your mail, or your child's book bag, and return your application soon as possible. **Applications must be postmarked by December 22, or received in the VICC office by no later than 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 22.**

parentlink

A newsletter for parents published by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation • Volume 27, Number 1, November 2011

County Education Helps Groom Students for Leadership Positions in Government

by Peggy Magee

The newly-elected Republican chairman of St. Charles County, Eugene Dokes, believes the skills and insight he gained from his school experiences have shaped his leadership style. The same holds true for two other former voluntary transfer students now serving in the Missouri House of Representatives: Democrats Tishaura Jones, of the city's 63rd district, and Clement Smith of the city's 71st district.

Eugene Dokes' Interests/Outlook Broadened at Pattonville

Dokes, 28, traces his interest in government back to the speech and debate team at Pattonville High School when he had the formidable task of researching the Cold War in preparation for a debate about U.S./Russia relations. "I realized that a big, vast world existed out there and I wanted to know more about it," says the 2000 graduate of Pattonville High School.

His involvement in the debate club also introduced him to public speaking and gave him the confidence to talk in front of an audience. One key lesson he says he learned: "Think before you speak." It's a skill he has mastered

over the years managing his own real estate business and running for various elected offices. As volunteer chairman of St. Charles County GOP, he leads the grassroots structure there, presiding over a monthly meeting of 30 township committee heads.

Also standing out in Dokes' mind about Pattonville is that his teachers encouraged him and made a point of telling him how much potential he had. Although he made good grades, he was always getting into trouble until well into his high school years. In the eighth grade, he says his teacher "explained to me that I was throwing away the opportunity I had because I was capable of much more." In his sophomore year, when one of his teachers commended him for his improved behavior, he remembers feeling proud. "It was the influence of my teachers that caused me to change."

And when he did, he was selected as a student mediator, which meant he got to be excused from class to help students work out their differences. "I realized that my good behavior yielded more opportunities for me," he recalls. "That was a great discovery."

As a young teenager from a poor family, Dokes worked at Lee's Chicken, Walmart and other places to afford the clothes and other items he desired. When it came time for college, he enrolled at Fontbonne University but because of his concerns about the cost, he changed directions and enlisted in the Navy. After seeing other men leave at the end of their duty with no education and no job, he knew he "wanted a choice" about what he would do afterward. So he took advantage of the classes offered, securing an associate's degree during his three years of service.

Upon leaving the Navy, he continued his studies while working in real estate sales and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Columbia College-St. Louis with minors in psychology, sociology and management. And he didn't stop there. He received an MBA degree from Lindenwood University and is now pursuing a PhD in organization and management. He would like to do consulting work in the business field and is writing two books on entrepreneurship and local government.

It was slightly more than 10 years ago when Dokes was testing the patience of his Pattonville teachers. But the flame they stoked in him has produced a learned man with good instincts and strong convictions, determined to make his community a better place for all. "The experience of attending Pattonville broadened my outlook and perspectives, preparing me for our diverse and ever-changing society," he says.

Tishaura Jones Cites High Expectations in Affton

Jones, 39, who holds the leadership position of Assistant Minority Floor Leader, gives rave reviews about the Affton school district. "I remember that my fifth-grade teacher Ms. Winkler set a higher bar and I had to work really hard to reach it."

Those practices were helpful to her in middle school at Mackenzie (now Rogers) when she was named "student of the month." At Affton High, she remembers, "All of my teachers expected a lot from me." And Jones responded positively to that, earning above average grades while participating in many extracurriculars.

One administrator who sticks out in her memory is high school guidance counselor Joseph Scoggin, now retired. He took many African-American students under his wing, she says, keeping them abreast of scholarships and grants and encouraging them to attend college fairs. Spurred by Scoggin's encouragement and help, she applied to three prestigious colleges and was accepted to two.

She chose Hampton University in Virginia where she majored in finance. Upon graduation, she worked as an investment bank analyst before making a career change to healthcare administration, which prompted her to earn a master's degree from St. Louis University's School of Public Health. For more than 10 years she worked in hospitals and health centers.

In 2008, Jones changed career directions again and ran for the legislature. Since then, she has risen to the number two post in the House Democratic Caucus, and most recently, worked with Republicans on the issue of school choice.

Last year, she returned to Affton High for her 20-year reunion. "I went because I was a little homesick," she explains. "I made lifelong friends and wanted to reconnect in person with them."

She credits those friendships with how she has developed. "I feel I am well-rounded and able to relate well with all people. And I have Affton to thank for that."



Eugene Dokes, a 2000 graduate of Pattonville High, reports that his involvement in the speech and debate team led to his interest in government and honed his public speaking skills. Here, the Republican chairman of St. Charles County delivers a speech at the National African-American Conservative Convention, held in St. Louis.

Clem Smith Stresses Importance of Exposure which he Received in Clayton

Smith, 34, compares the neighborhood he grew up in -- next to a housing project near Delmar and Union -- to what he encountered in Clayton schools, as, "the difference between night and day."

Starting at Clayton in kindergarten, he reports, "It was my first experience being around children who were not black." However the pluses of attending school in Clayton far outweighed the strain of being in the distinct minority. His classmates and their families were very welcoming and the exposure he gained was invaluable. "My friends had parents who were doctors and lawyers. I saw the possibilities."

He describes the Clayton district as a kind of "melting pot," with students of many different cultures represented. "That was a good thing -- having to learn to respect differences and get along," he says.

He also appreciates the level of education he received in Clayton. "My workload seemed heavier than that of my neighborhood friends and they weren't really familiar with advanced placement or college credit courses." They didn't talk much about college either, while Smith says, "College was just a natural thought for me because 98 percent of Clayton students go on to college."

He started out at Southern Arkansas University but found it was not a good fit, so he returned to St. Louis and landed an assembly line job at Chrysler in Fenton, where he spent the next 13 years, his final ones as an inspector. While working full-time, he completed his degree at Columbia College-St. Louis. He also became a union official at Chrysler. "I was good at talking to both black and white employees because my education in Clayton provided me with that experience," he says. Smith moved to The Boeing Co. about two years ago where he works when he is not performing his legislative duties.

Last January, he entered the State House and was appointed Deputy Minority Whip, another role for which he is well suited. "I work on getting everyone on the same page," he explains. "Being accepting and open-minded toward all people, a skill I developed in Clayton, has served me well," he notes.



This past summer, while attending a policy briefing conference in Washington, D.C., Missouri state representatives Tishaura Jones and Clem Smith were invited to a reception at the White House where they met President Obama, a highlight of their political careers. Both legislators are former voluntary transfer students and credit their county school education with helping them acquire their leadership qualities.

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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.

Actions by Faculty Help Turn Student Around

by Peggy Magee



The faculty at Rockwood's Marquette High School didn't just throw out a life jacket to flailing transfer student D'Autrail Wafford, they swam out as far as they could with it until he grabbed hold. Their efforts, combined with his own desire to make his parents proud, resulted in a complete turn-around for the teen who got caught up in the negative influences of his Walnut Park neighborhood, one of the most crime-ridden in all of St. Louis.

"I didn't care about school," recalls D'Autrail, admitting that his apathy and misbehavior started when he was in fourth grade and continued into high school. He talks about the influence his neighborhood had on him: "I was into stealing, fighting, bad stuff. I didn't know anything else."

Naturally his street life affected his school life. "Let's just say he was a handful, always in a lot of trouble, committing repeated acts of misconduct," reports English teacher Ami

D'Autrail Wafford, now a freshman at Missouri Western State University, says his teachers and principal at Rockwood's Marquette High School cared about him so much that he felt empowered to make changes in his life. Here he stands with teachers Valerie Kamhi, left, Ami Holthouse Meals and principal Greg Mathison. *Photo by Rockwood School District*

Holthouse Meals, who taught D'Autrail for three years. As a result of his misbehavior, D'Autrail says he was suspended twice, with the second one resulting in two failing classes. Even so, the bright teen managed to pull in respectable grade point averages, though not at all reflective of his potential.

But come junior year, he finally allowed himself to be rescued. He saw how many people were trying to save him -- his family, his church, his school. "They cared about me and encouraged me," he reports. And he saw firsthand, in his neighborhood, the kind of life he would have if he didn't get an education. "I didn't want to end up in the streets."

Senior year he really rallied, earning a 3.6 grade point average. He not only graduated, but he is off to college at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, a recipient of academic and athletic (track) scholarships. He is the first among his six siblings to attend a four-year university.

His parents are indeed proud. And the faculty at Marquette is ecstatic that their efforts paid off.

It wasn't easy, to be sure, almost as if they were starting from scratch, according to resource teacher Valerie Kamhi. "We had many serious talks on everything from making good choices, being accountable and choosing a better peer group."

Discussions between D'Autrail and his teachers also centered on setting goals and creating a plan -- both academically and socially. They tracked his grades and behavior, making sure he stayed on course. Close connections were formed. D'Autrail is a talented athlete and Kamhi attended his track meets and football games. "I wanted him to realize that people were invested in him, that we saw his potential and wanted more for him," she explains. But she warned him that it was up to him to change.

Ami Meals also believed there was something special about D'Autrail. "Unfortunately, he had gotten good at negative behavior as a means of survival,"

she points out. "We thought if we could just make him understand that he had a lot of potential, and with this potential comes options, he would turn himself around."

Greg Mathison, D'Autrail's principal, was also dedicated to the teen. "D'Autrail knew he could come to me with any issues that he was facing," reports Dr. Mathison. "I was there to listen and guide him through the good times and the bad." So, according to D'Autrail, when the principal -- whom he liked and respected -- initiated a zero tolerance behavior contract with him, it made him sit up and listen. "Dr. Mathison basically told me that if I didn't change my act, I would not be able to continue at Marquette," explains D'Autrail. "That upset my mother greatly and I didn't want to do that."

Surrounded by caring people whose actions showed how much they wanted him to succeed, D'Autrail began to exhibit drive and focus, according to Meals. "When he earned a 25 on the ACT, that was the crowning moment."

Upon seeing D'Autrail's improvements, Meals wanted to give him a chance to be a leader and work with other students. She arranged for him to serve as a teacher aid in her classroom for an hour each day. "It was a chance for him to demonstrate his maturity and responsibility," she says.

Bolstered by this privilege, D'Autrail became a positive influence on her students. "He worked with them on papers, projects, and even reading with students when they missed school." For those who had behavior issues, "He would talk to them and let them know it is never too late to make an about-turn," she notes. He also took a leadership role in the school's newly-formed Academic and Cultural Club by recruiting new members.

D'Autrail received his school's VICC award for outstanding senior by exhibiting academic excellence, community involvement and high character. Explaining his metamorphosis, he cites the help he received from his teachers and principal. "They wanted me to succeed. They made me realize that getting an education is the most important thing in life."

D'Autrail holds tight to those aspirations while studying mechanical engineering at Missouri Western. "I want to be someone others look up to."

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.



Message from the **CEO**
David S. Glaser

Did you get a chance to hear or read President Obama's recent back to school speech? It could have been headlined, "America's Future Depends on You!"

His comments included several good insights, but one of the things which connected with me and ties into several of the success stories in the current issue of Parent Link was the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities that you are provided. He said, "...but at the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best schools in the world -- and none of it will make a difference, none of it will matter unless all of you fulfill your responsibilities, unless you show up to those schools, unless you pay attention to those teachers, unless you listen to your parents and grandparents and other adults and put in the hard work it takes to succeed."

And that is exactly what transfer student D'Autrail Wafford did. While he was initially reluctant to work hard and make the right decisions, he eventually turned his life around, is now studying mechanical engineering at Missouri Western, and wants to be someone other people look up to. Similarly, Eugene Dokes, Tishaura Jones, and Clem Smith took advantage of the opportunities afforded to them in county schools and are now serving in leadership positions in government.

A common thread runs through all of these stories. Each of these students put forth his or her best effort and each are now or will soon be successfully contributing back to our society. Even when they struggled or became discouraged, they didn't give up on themselves and continued to press on. While they may have had some failures along life's path -- as all of us do -- they did not allow their failures to define them but instead allowed their failures to teach them. They all faced challenges but they refused to give up.

Similarly, each of us have a responsibility to discover our strengths and apply those strengths, talents, and abilities to our lives, to our studies, and ultimately to our careers. Indeed, that is a challenge for all of us. We need to set clear goals for ourselves and focus daily on their achievement. Your teachers, your school leaders, your parents, and your family will never give up on you. Don't ever give up on yourself! As President Obama said, "Not only are all of us counting on you, America's future depends upon you."

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