

Highlights of the St. Louis
Student Transfer Program

volunteer

IN
THIS ISSUE

1 *Jet Pilot fueled by "can do" attitude acquired in Lindbergh district*

2 *Health Professional credits former Kirkwood teacher with his positive development.*

4 *Message from the CEO*



Efforts "snowballed together" to Spur Lindbergh student

As a voluntary transfer student in the Lindbergh district, Tim Irving showed passion and talent, fueled with a heavy dose of hard work. He explains his early desire to succeed by saying, "I didn't want to let down the people who invested in me."

At age 26, Irving has settled into his career and continues to make those same people proud. Aero Charter Inc., based at Spirit of St. Louis Airport, announced his recent hiring in a press release: "Tim Irving has joined the company as captain in the Baron and as First Officer in the company's Citation jets." An aircraft pilot is what Irving trained for at the University of Central Missouri (UCM) after graduating from Lindbergh High in 2007. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Professional Pilot and a minor in Business Administration, followed by a Master of Science in Aviation Safety.

Those people Irving credits are his grandparents who raised him and his three siblings, his classmate's mother Patti Borghardt and his Lindbergh High band teacher Dan Arana. Each of their efforts "snowballed together," Irving notes, and prompted him to do his absolute best. "When someone believes in you, you don't want to disappoint."

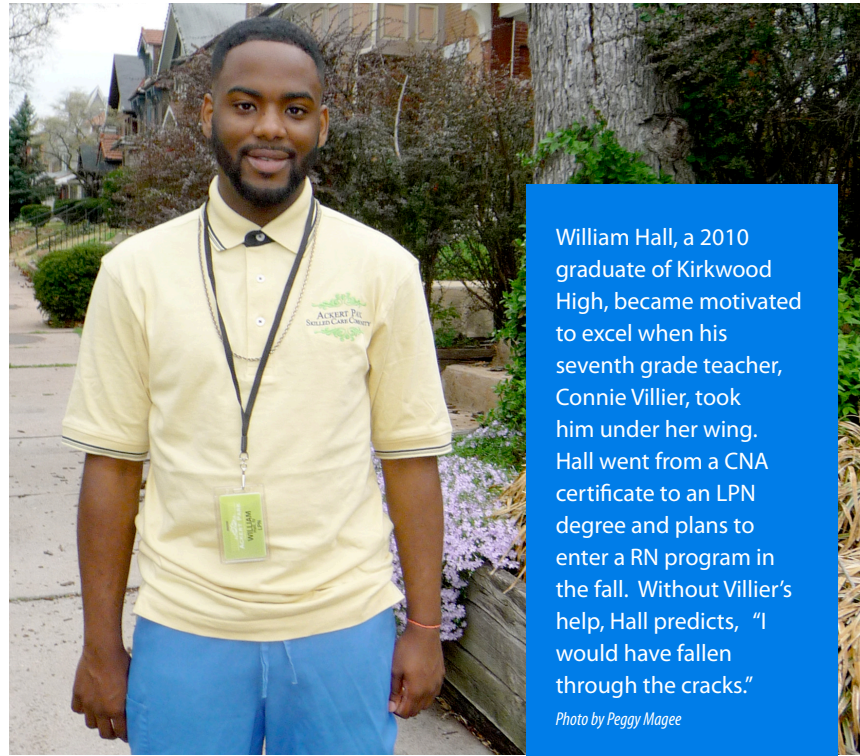
Charles and Verlia Irving parented their four grandchildren, instilling in them respect, manners and a belief that they could

See inside: Efforts "snowballed together"

Tim Irving, right, a 2007 Lindbergh High School graduate, pilots jets out of Spirit of St. Louis Airport. Support from family, friends and faculty made Irving want to succeed because, he says, "When someone believes in you, you don't want to disappoint." Here, he is pictured with the Borghardts—Chris and his mother Patti—who welcomed Irving into their family. *Photo by Laura Green*

Teacher's Influence Transforms Student's Life

William Hall Ascends through Ranks of Nursing Profession



William Hall, a 2010 graduate of Kirkwood High, became motivated to excel when his seventh grade teacher, Connie Villier, took him under her wing. Hall went from a CNA certificate to an LPN degree and plans to enter a RN program in the fall. Without Villier's help, Hall predicts, "I would have fallen through the cracks."

Photo by Peggy Magee

Usually when kids move on to high school, they want nothing more than to leave their middle school years behind, consumed instead with their new freedoms and responsibilities. William Hall, however, would frequently dash out of Kirkwood High School at dismissal and trek more than a mile to North Kirkwood Middle School. To get home from there, he would have to ride a Metro bus to catch the Metrolink and then take another bus to his house in south St. Louis, a journey of nearly two hours.

Visiting with his former teacher and mentor, Connie Villier, was well worth it, according to Hall, 23, a licensed practical nurse who is headed to RN school and now serves as a mentor himself. Convinced that Villier's positive influence made him who he is today, Hall predicts that without her, "I would have fallen through the cracks." To make his point, he talks about witnessing a drive-by shooting in north St. Louis. "That would have been my reality—dead or in jail."

What was it that Villier provided this feisty, undersized youth who struggled academically

and behaviorally in his early years of middle school? "Ms. Villier believed in me, probably more so than anyone else in my life outside of my parents," Hall explains. He admits that he had little confidence when it came to academics. Villier helped him realize he was capable and could be successful. Once he started to believe that, "I began to value education."

Hall was a student in Villier's math seminar class that gives selected students extra help in math and teaches them organizational and self-help skills. She went out of her way to instruct, talk to and guide the young boy whose cute looks and personality did not atone for his exploits: slacking off on homework, talking out in class, disrespecting teachers and starting fights with students who picked on him.

With Villier's help, Hall began to turn himself around. "I didn't want to disappoint her," he recalls. When he did slip up, he would



be sent to Villier to face the consequences of his actions. "I dreaded when that happened," he says, "but I learned from it and vowed to do better." Villier describes the approach she took with Hall: "When he made really rotten choices, I'd come down hard on him. And when he was making good decisions, I praised him all I could." By eighth grade, Hall was performing well in school, demonstrating leadership skills and serving as a positive example for others.

At Kirkwood High, he continued to excel and even made the honor roll his freshman year, "the first time in my life," the 2010 graduate reports. He also played varsity football and made his mark on the rugby team. On his trips back to middle school, he would share with Villier his successes and also talk to her about what might be troubling him. "We would discuss options and outcomes," she says.

In his final two years at Kirkwood, he also



Connie Villier and William Hall: from seventh grade to LPN graduation, she has been there for him.

Photo on left by Marilyn Zimmerman
Photo on right from Hall family

See Page 4: Teacher's Influence Transforms Student's Life

Efforts "snowballed together" continued from page 1

achieve. It was their doing to move Tim from his north St. Louis elementary school to Sappington School in the Lindbergh district upon learning about the voluntary transfer program.

And it was at Sperrung Middle School, in band class, where he met resident student Chris Borghardt. Seated next to each other in the percussion room, they quietly exchanged comments about drumming techniques, feeling connected by their shared challenge. That began a friendship, really a brotherhood, that continues today.

Chris' mom Patti not only encouraged the friendship between the tweens, but opened her heart and home to Irving. She says with a laugh, "At first he came to kill time (to avoid having to go home after school only to return a few hours later for an evening event), then he came for no reason and then he just kept coming." She let it be known how she ran her household and he mindfully followed her rules. "I treated him like my own kids," she points out. In fact, she considers him one of her own. When asked how many children she has, she replied, "Three counting Tim."

Chris and Tim attended UCM in Warrensburg, rooming together, and Patti helped Irving as much as her own son with navigating the college experience. She looks back on purchasing their dormitory essentials and notes amusedly,

"Their towels and sheets were matching."

At Lindbergh High, Chris and Tim not only played band, but were members of the Flyers football team. Patti, a very involved parent, was a dedicated volunteer for both. As the pair scrambled to meet the demands of doing band and football simultaneously, plus staying on top of their studies, she saw to it that they were fed, prepared and where they needed to be. "When I went out of town, I'd have two pages of instructions for my husband," she recalls.

Participating in both band and football all four years is what molded Irving into the strong, focused and determined individual that he is. (He also wrestled and was involved in DECA, an extracurricular focusing on preparing students for business careers.) Most students find it difficult to juggle either football or band with their academic work load. In many schools, scheduling conflicts prohibit them from even trying. However, at Lindbergh High, the band and football departments worked collaboratively to accommodate those students who had the interest, skill and stamina to do both.

It was possible to do both "as long as we could divide our attention and nothing was sacrificed," notes Irving, adding, "We had a lot of eyes on us." At the time it was grueling, but looking back he sees how much he benefitted.

"It was really at the center of how I came to strive so hard."

Imagine heading off to school for band practice at zero hour (6:30 a.m.) and not returning home (sometimes back to the city; other times to the Borghardts) until 12 hours later, after football practice, with homework yet to complete. At home football games, he'd be suited up, making plays on the field, and then have to change out at half time to perform with the marching band. While he and the other few "combo" students caught a break from academics in the summertime, they were still pressed into overdrive with band camp occurring at the same time as "two a day" football practices.

Also contributing to the gumption Irving exhibited were the high expectations of band teacher Dan Arana. "Dan was just a great guy. He always encouraged me and gave me the confidence to stretch myself to the next level," Irving points out. Even outside of band class, the fresh-out-of-college teacher looked out for Irving. Such as when he developed "senioritis" and came painfully close to not passing a required class. "Dan told me, 'You are walking,'" referring to the graduation ceremony. With that, his teacher instructed him to pull up a chair and get cracking on his homework. "I'll look it over when you're done," he told Irving.

Irving was a good student at Central Missouri and credits the time management skills he acquired at Lindbergh with his adapting more easily than other aviation students to the challenges of the intense training. His work ethic did not go unnoticed as he landed coveted part-time jobs within the department—first as a line service technician for almost four years and then as a flight instructor for just under two years. "They were very pleased with him and did not want to lose his service," Patti confirms.

Sometimes life works out particularly well when circumstances gel at just the right time. Irving believes that was the case for him at Lindbergh. His grandparents "provided me with a solid foundation and wanted the best education for me." His band teacher Dan Arana "would never allow an opportunity to slip from my grasp." And Patti Borghardt, he reports, "saw potential in me and gave me emotional and financial support," adding, "I couldn't have achieved what I did without her."

Dan Arana believes that the discipline and perseverance that Irving developed at Lindbergh helped him acquire a "can do" attitude. That "can do" attitude has led to actions with "got it done" results.

Teacher's Influence Transforms Student's Life

continued from page 3

attended South Tech High School to receive career training. He chose the medical science field because, he says with a laugh, "that's the one the girls were gravitating to." Despite the academic challenges he faced mastering the health science classes and clinical labs, Hall successfully completed the program to become a certified nurse assistant (CNA). When he was issued his cap and gown for Kirkwood graduation, he proudly brought them directly to Villier for her to see. At his request, she attended the ceremony.

After graduation, he worked at various nursing homes before enrolling in a LPN (licensed practical nurse) program. The exit exam truly tested him but he maturely points out, "I needed that struggle to show me how tough life can be." At his graduation, there sat Villier, sharing once again another high point in the young man's life. A few months later, he thanked her on Facebook, telling her, "You showed me the importance of an education and that I was capable of doing anything." Armed with an LPN degree, he found work immediately and currently works at two residential/medical facilities, Doorways and Ackert Park.

Concurrently, he attends Forest Park Community College, taking pre-requisite courses for entry into the RN program he plans to

begin in August at Lutheran School of Nursing. The organizational strategies that Villier taught him back in the seventh grade continue to serve him well. "I still use them," he points out, adding that they have helped him tremendously over the years.

At the recreation center where Hall works out, he has gotten to know a group of middle school boys who play basketball together most afternoons. He has offered to pick them up if they need a ride because if they are at the gym, "They're not out getting into trouble," he says, adding, "I see myself in them." Sometimes he helps them with homework. Other times, he just engages in conversation, "trying to give them direction," he explains. "I feel like we're all brothers...that I need to look out for them."

At his jobs, Hall is well liked by the residents and their families. He says that when they praise him, he thanks them for their compliments and tells them, "I am a reflection of the people who raised me." He insists that the credit for his success goes to his parents and also to the teacher from middle school who made it her mission to steer him in positive direction. "Ms. Villier helped raise me," he says. "Thanks to her, I am going places."

Message from the CEO

The research is clear that when students and teachers develop positive relationships, the students desire to please the teachers and make them proud of their accomplishments. When you think about it, all of us desire to be cared for and valued by those that are involved in our lives. When we are valued as an individual and treated with dignity and respect, this causes us to be more likely to desire to please the other person and students are no different. When our boss wants to know more about our family and is understanding when a personal emergency arises or praises us for a job well done, this causes us to want to do our best to please them. Similarly, developing positive relationships with our students will cause them to respect and appreciate us more and be more willing to want to please us and behave appropriately. We can develop these positive relationships by having high expectations of all students and calling on all students equitably.

There are many ways to demonstrate to our students that we care about them. In addition to showing interest in their personal lives, it is also important to greet them warmly, actively listen to their comments and empathize with their situations and challenges. If you remember your favorite teacher, likely your focus would be upon how he or she made you feel as you learned the subject rather than details about the specific subject matter. The confidence that teachers gave us and the sense of value they imparted to us as human beings would likely be near the top of our list. Caring teachers transform the school experience especially for students who face significant difficulties such as being at risk of dropping out or having a challenging life. When the teacher does not give up on the student but believes in them, they are much less likely to give up on themselves. Finally, while carefully listening to our students, it is also important to ask them for feedback on current issues and topics and demonstrate that we value their opinions and experiences.

The students highlighted in this issue of the *Volunteer* succeeded primarily because of the positive relationships that were developed between students and teachers. This led to the students desiring to please their teachers and make them proud of their accomplishments. Secure and supportive relationships are very important for students and can have significant consequences on not only how they function in class but their success in life. So as we go through our day, I would encourage us to seek out the students that do not seem to have any close connections to others at school and make that connection with them, as well as helping them make that connection with others. It could very well be the difference between the student succeeding or not.

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A newsletter published by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation to spread the word about the positive things happening in the voluntary transfer program and to offer educators a glimpse at innovative programs helping students succeed at area schools.

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