Generations of Families Committed to Transfer Program

Benefits Abound, Then and Now

By Peggy Magoon

For many current voluntary transfer students, there is a lot of family history associated with their county school districts. Parents, uncles, older cousins have pioneered the way before them, setting a positive precedent for the younger relatives. And while each story is unique, the common thread, overwhelmingly, is how beneficial the experience was for those earlier participants and for the family members who now follow in their footsteps.

Tracy Williams Peoples, who resides downtown, describes her family’s affiliation with the Parkway district “generations of family successes.” She and her brother were both impacted in a good way by their family’s involvement. “It allows students to experience new things, meet new people and opens their eyes to all the possibilities for their future,” she says, adding that most inner-city youth are not exposed to enough, she believes. Her dream is to use the degree she is currently pursuing at St. Louis University to operate her own community center.

Angela Hassan, of midtown St. Louis, conveys feelings of nostalgia and pride when she talks about her family’s roots in the Valley Park district. “We have a lot of history in Valley Park,” she notes, naming all the family members who have attended herself – a 1990 graduate, her brother, four nieces and nephews and now two children, enrolled at the elementary school. Angela points out that, physically, much has changed in the district since when she was there 20 years ago. But one important thing has stayed the same, she observes: the quality of the staff. “They have great teachers and administrators who really care about the students.” She cites one such teacher, Mike Nolte, a former P.E. instructor. Angela and Mike attended Valley Park High together and now see each other at parent events. “They are wonderful students,” Mike says about Angela’s children – Angela, in kindergarten, and Clarence, fifth grade. “They remind me of Angela because they have great smiles and are happy kids.”

Lisa Pierce, a 1989 graduate of Ladue High, sums up her reasons for attending school in the county and now having her two children in the Clayton district. “I think that venturing outside our neighborhood gives us more opportunities for success.”

Lisa, of west St. Louis, points to the variety of courses she had in Ladue, including Latin, pottery and accounting, the latter which “steered me toward my career interest.” She studied accounting at the college level, first at UMSL and then through University of Phoenix on-line courses while working full-time in mid-management at AT&T. Her plans are to go back to school for a master’s degree in accounting or business. Even some of the challenges Lisa faced while attending school in the county during the infancy stages of the desegregation program are now viewed by her as positive, in retrospect. “The feeling of separateness that I felt as an inner-city student to deal with it was good preparation for life,” she concedes. Currently, her children – middle schoolers Quincy and Kennedy – don’t feel a chasm between the races. “My son especially has a diverse circle of close friends.”

In addition to providing her children with an accepting school environment, Lisa is pleased with Clayton’s many options for extracurricular involvement and, most of all, its high level of academics. “My children will be well prepared for college,” she notes.

For Maya Washington Pierce, a schoolmate of Lisa’s who remains close friends with the appeal of Ladue High was that, “It had everything I wanted all together – sports, academics, even courses in home economics.” Now a north St. Louis parent, she is pleased with the education her daughter receipts in the Ladue district and is looking forward to next fall when daughter Brooklyn enters kindergarten there. Maya is especially pleased with the great communication between school and home.

The former Maritz travel director, who now serves as community development manager for the Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri, credits Ladue with helping her daughter a degree in telecommunications. “Going to Ladue gave me a lot of confidence and groomed me to be successful outside the familiarity of my hometown.”

Despite Challenges, Rockwood Grad Thanks Mom For Enrolling Her Heeding Teachers’ Advice, She Created a Plan

By Peggy Magoon

After 23 years in the hotel industry, Adrienne Latham, a 1988 graduate of Lafayette High, is now a general manager in training for Lodging Hospitality Management, owner of several Hilton and Sheraton hotels. When her unplanned pregnancy at age 17 revealed hers, with her plans for higher education, she made a decision to get ahead by working her way up in a company. “I said that the teachers in Rockwood had always reminded students that they were in charge of their own destiny.”

Over the years, voluntary transfer students have shared many of the same experiences in their county schools, rising early in the mornings to take on the long days that followed, and trusting that these and other commitments would be worth it in the end.

No one holds those ranges of emotions better than Adrienne Latham, whose education in the Rockwood district was interrupted by an unplanned pregnancy at the age of 17. But even before then, Adrienne’s years in the far west county district were “stressful,” she admits. The year was 1983 and, “We were one of the first families from the city to go out to Rockwood,” she says about herself and her two brothers. She and brother Russell entered Crestview Middle School and brother Benjamin started at Pond Elementary School. “We didn’t know what to expect, there was racial tension. It was difficult.”

The situation did improve, though. She realized that the level of academics she was receiving was “top of the line” and that reassured her. Also, at Lafayette High School she found her niche in the Air Force ROTC. “After performing on its drill team, she says, “We got to wear a uniform and travel.”

But her routine changed dramatically when she became pregnant. “I knew I had to finish high school. I still had my goals, but now I had a different focus. I had to figure it all out.” With the support of her mother and grandma, she did. While pregnant, she stayed focused on her school work and after delivering her baby, Keona Jefferson, she returned to school. “I walked her to the babysitter before catching my bus. When I returned home, I picked her up.” Adrienne says she was

See Generations on reverse side.

The positive experiences of past VICC students, such as Angela Hasson, right, have prompted them to enroll their children in the program. Here, Hassan, a 1980 graduate of Valley Park High School, joins her sons, Angels, kindergartner, and Clarence, fifth grade, in Lois Jacob’s classroom at the former Valley Park Elementary-Now the Valley Park district. Angela says, “They have great teachers and administrators who really care about the students.” She cites one such teacher, Mike Nolte, a former P.E. instructor. Angela and Mike attended Valley Park High together and now see each other at parent events. “They are wonderful students,” Mike says about Angela’s children – Angela, in kindergarten, and Clarence, fifth grade. “They remind me of Angela because they have great smiles and are happy kids.”

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Lafayette Student Shines in Summer Pharmacy Program

Determination and Hard Work Key to Her Success

by Peggy Magee

Last summer, Jaylenn Hopgood, a transfer student from Rockwood's Lafayette High School, was one of the top students in her class of 20 incoming juniors at the selective BEST Pharmacy Institute. The six-week program, sponsored by Express Scripts, Barnes-Jewish Hospital and St. Louis College of Pharmacy, introduces minority students from St. Louis area high schools (sophomores, juniors and seniors) to the pharmacy profession. The goal is to increase diversity in the pharmacy profession and develop future leaders in the community.

Jaylenn says her success in the program is the result of the academic preparation she has received in Rockwood. She admits that initially "it was a struggle" for her to keep up when she transferred to the district in the seventh grade. The change in routine and what was required of her was such that, "I had to use all my resources," she reports, referring to the determination and motivation she mustered from within to be successful. She knuckled down, stayed focused and worked hard. It paid off. By eighth grade, she was taking Algebra (not pre-Algebra) and enrolled in Honors History and Honors Physical Science. In high school, nearly all of her classes have been honor level or advanced placement. She earns A's and B's.

Jaylenn's interest in the medical field prompted her to apply for BEST, which requires two letters of recommendation from teachers, and a personal interview. Last summer, of the 150 applications received, 40 incoming sophomores and juniors were selected. It was a "very valuable experience and enjoyed it a lot," she says about the program, which combines academics, exposure and professional development. Academics focus on improving mathematics, computer, language arts and ACT/SAT skills. Students get exposure to the pharmacy profession through pharmacy lectures and site visits. They receive a $1400 stipend, the majority of which, Jaylenn says, is hers.

Another program at Lafayette that helped her excel in BEST, Jaylenn says, is the Outdoor Skills Education Program (OSEP) in which leadership, communication and decision-making skills are honed through hiking and camping activities. "The program prepares us to take on the challenges of the real world by making us step out of our comfort zone," she says. The qualities she demonstrated in her BEST classes - "a willingness to step forward, talk more freely and offer comments" were shaped as a result of her participation in OSEP; she points out. Jaylenn hopes to return to BEST next summer, feeling that it is good preparation for what she may study in college - either a medical-related field or maybe psychology. "I'd like to go to college out of town so I can explore new places and meet new people," she says, with a hint of maturity and confidence.

Chief Financial Officer for fourteen years prior to assuming my current position with VICC. Our daughter graduated from Lafayette last year and our son currently attends Lafayette. Only time will tell if their children will also attend Rockwood Schools!

Despite Challenges
determined to take care of her baby and complete her high school studies. "I wanted to receive my diploma and walk with my class." That she did and after graduating in 1988, she began the long road of working her way up in the hotel industry, starting as a housekeeper cleaning 20 rooms a day. She had attended Florissant Valley Community College but realized that in order to support her baby, she had to work. So she created a plan. "I figured that if I was going to land a good job, I had better work my butt off," Adrienne says.

Adrienne’s logic was fueled by the preachings of her Rockwood teachers. "They always told us, ‘Don’t complain about your situation; do what you need to do to fix it.’" And so she forged her own path, saving money to attend school in the county, she says, "I loved it and now Jade lives it too.

Generations of Families

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transportation news

Summer school transportation cards should arrive in the mail approximately one week in advance of the start of your student’s summer school sessions.

- If you need any changes for summer school, such as a different daycare address, please let your school office know before May 1.
- Any transportation changes, such as route or time changes, made after the original summer school will be communicated to you by your child’s school. Please be sure that your child’s school has the correct phone number on file for you.
- Anytime temperatures are forecast to be above 95 degrees, your child will be permitted to bring a water bottle to school to be filled with water at the school for the afternoon ride home.

Transportation News

Message from the CEO

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