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 view, education is what will make the future better for them. “Education is the highway to opportunity. Without it, there is no 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 focus on the humanities and community service) and sports (he lettered in football and track), where he met the best high school friends of his life.

Flewellen knows a thing or two about the future of 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 MIDCS, 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 Mizou, 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 efforts,” 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.

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VICC/Transap 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.

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 Cameron 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 events 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 regular 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 pitch-in to take CPO meetings on the road to a city location several times a year. She secures the meeting space at Cote Braveur Church, contacts the speakers, makes up the flyers 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 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 Clayton Grad on reverse side.

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.”

Bridget’s Tips for VICC Families

Follow VICC on Twitter and win great prizes.
Clayton Grad

Wow! I hope you enjoy reading the three stories in this issue of The Parent's View. It certainly did! A large theme pervades all of the stories – involvement. Whether reading about a parent with two students currently in the programs or a parent who sent her daughter, a graduate, from over twenty years ago making a big difference in her community, or a very recent graduate and driver new 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 shares.

I wonder what Terrence Clark, the freshman computer engineering major at Mizzou, would think about some of the recent technological advancements we have implemented. When we bid out the provision of transportation services last year, two of the top 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 reduce the average age of the buses as well save the program money on the cost of transportation services. Each bus includes 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 were free digital video cameras on all of our buses and we shared electronically with appropriate school administrators.

GPS allows us to track and monitor the location of all buses and maintain a historic record for a week or so related to bus arrival times at stops as well as arrival times at schools. In this way we can make sure student is arrive at school in a timely manner and that buses arrive at bus stops consistent with the scheduled plan. Obviously, when such clear and precise information is made to be improved 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 applicable laws.

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

David S. Glaser

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Bridget is greatly admired by many Rockwood students due to her energetic and creative personality. Bridget J. 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," she says. That is how she is doing, and how fortunate for Kameron and Kristen.

While attending a good school is important, Flowell believes starting a good school is even more so. He decided to do their homework. That is lacking in the academic lives of most African-American males, he believes, and that concerns him. Enough to dream about getting a college degree, let alone a career opportunity. What is missing right now is that young black males, located somewhere out in far west St. Louis county, a school where they would belong.

It’s all taken from the challenges of day-to-day life that they face and give them an opportunity to focus on their education and push themselves. They could go from high school to a selective college and be on their way to a better life. That’s what Vincent Flowell would like to happen.

Get Involved

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), also known as the Education Records Privacy Act, is a federal law which gives students certain rights with respect to their education records while attending a school and or university. VICC, as a matter of policy relates to the providing of FERPA and to the rights of eligible students certain rights set forth in FERPA with respect to education records maintained by VICC.

Three rights, as they pertain to education records maintained by VICC, are outlined in general as follows:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records and make a written request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to VICC’s Chief Executive Officer (or a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. VICC’s CEO or his designee will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. The student’s right to inspect and review the education records of another student is not infringed by allowing the inspection by an eligible student if the record contains information about that student.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records. Parents or eligible students may request that the student’s education records be amended by submitting to VICC’s Chief Executive Officer a request in writing containing an explanation as to why the records should be amended. VICC will notify the parent or eligible student of its decision and of his or her right to file a complaint with the Department of Education concerning alleged violations of FERPA. If VICC refuses to amend the records, the parent or eligible student will be notified and provided with information about how to have the data included in a transcript or report where appropriate.

Annual Notification Regarding Student Records Maintained by VICC

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Annulment