Parkway Shapes Life of Transfer Student: Back Then and Now as a Teacher

For Ericka Webb, 28, the Parkway district is a gift that keeps on giving.

The former voluntary transfer student who describes her childhood as "tumultuous," says she was a "terror" at school and always in "lots and lots" of trouble. But thanks to an educational environment that she was drawn to and understanding faculty who helped her take control of her life, Ericka not only graduated from Parkway Central High but headed to college. From Lindenwood University she received a degree in French, a subject she was introduced to at Parkway Central Middle School.

She still uses her French in a volunteer capacity, but now possesses a greater calling as a result of reconnecting with Parkway. In August, 2008 she was hired by the district as a teacher assistant, in charge of the in-school suspension program at Parkway Central Middle. That job, she says, has fulfilled her "in a way that is almost inexplicable." Her purpose in life now is to help struggling youth change the direction of their lives.

Ericka vividly remembers how torn she was moving between her two contrasting worlds—her dysfunctional home life in a "bad news" neighborhood and a far away school life, which presented a nagging reminder of her unlucky lot in life. She draws from those experiences in her work with the VICC students at her school. It is her ability to connect with them that has made her such a valuable staff member, according to assistant principal Randy Eikel. "Ericka can get real with her students because she has walked in their shoes. She doesn't allow them to use their home life as a crutch or an excuse. Instead, she works with them on strategies to improve and does so in such a caring way. She has found great satisfaction in her role of helping turn kids around."

So much so that Ericka hopes at some point to pursue a master's degree in counseling. (Currently she is working on a second bachelor's degree, in secondary education.) Among the school staff who has encouraged her to do so is counselor Mary Alhoff. "Ericka has a gift for developing relationships with students and coaching them through their problems. She would make a remarkable counselor!" In meetings that Alhoff has with her students from the city, she sometimes includes Ericka in the conversation. "Ericka understands their experiences in a way that I can't."

Ericka knows now that as a troubled youth, she needed to separate her home life from her school life and not bring to school the negativity and anger she felt at home. She encourages her own students to open up about their problems and helps them draw that boundary. "I tell them to gravitate to what is good in their lives and use it to their benefit," she explains. "I remind them what an opportunity they have here."

As a student at Parkway Central High, Ericka got involved with the step team. "I was the team captain. I loved it!" Last school year she started a step team at Parkway Central Middle, one of only a couple middle schools in the area to have one. Originally a troupe for females, the buzz about it at school has escalated to the point where some males have expressed an interest, so it may be open to all seventh and eighth graders next year. After joining the club, grade, behavior and citizenship standards must be maintained. About her step team, Ericka notes, "It builds self-confidence and makes the kids want to keep their grades up. It's another way for me to connect with them."

Ericka jokes that she has come "full circle" from when she started her education at Parkway's River Bend Elementary School more than 15 years ago. She is now happily married with a young daughter enrolled in the gifted program of another district. "I love the work I do, helping students create a plan to change their lives," she says. "Parkway blessed me to become the person I am today. I am glad that I help the next generation."

Keys to Success for Parents from Ericka

• Get involved with the school from Day ONE. Attend all orientations and meetings.
• Get to know the teachers, counselors and administrators who work with your child. Putting a face to a name leads to more effective communication.
• Make routine visits to the school, at least one per semester. This will allow you to see a typical day in the school life of your child and equip you with information necessary to offer suggestions to the teacher or address concerns. (Be sure to talk to the school secretary about visiting policies.)
• Communicate with your child. Ask about their daily experiences such as bus ride, social interactions, changes in routine, upcoming tests, future goals, etc. Talk with them about your expectations and what you can do to help them achieve their personal goals. Remember, your child's success is not just the responsibility of the school; YOU share in that responsibility. Your child needs YOU most of all.
• Encourage your children to get involved so that they develop a sense of belonging at the school, critical for a positive experience. If it doesn't appear that your child is interested in any school related activities or programs, ask the school counselor for a copy of the programs offered and make a few suggestions.
• Support your child. Be present at awards ceremonies, athletic competitions, plays and other school programs. When children see you supporting their activities, they feel a sense of pride which causes them to work even harder.
Affton High School
Graduating as the holder of numerous athletic records and honors, as well as the respect of his teachers, coaches and peers, Markus Golden will major in business at the College of the Sequoias in California this fall, with the help of a football scholarship. Named to All-Conference, All-State and All-Placer as both a receiver and running back, he set numerous Affton High records for rushing yards, tackles and career points. Markus was also honored as the Suburban East player of the year, named the U.S. Army Ironman of the Week and one of the St. Louis Rams Top 25 athletes in the area. He maintained a 3.0 grade point average for the last two years and served as a leader both on and off the field.

Brentwood High School
As a result of pursuing a rigorous math and science curriculum in pursuit of her dream to become a forensic pathologist, Dominique Lucas earned a competitive academic scholarship to Avila University in Kansas City. A dynamic student leader at Brentwood, she was involved in many clubs and organizations, including National Honor Society, Student Council, the diversity club, the book club, ArtWorks, Friends of Rachel and theatre. Dominique also served as captain of the softball team and donated countless hours in numerous school and community service projects, while maintaining a 3.5 grade point average. A project she is most proud of was the powerful black history month assembly held this year.

Clayton High School
With plans to major in forensic and bio-medical sciences, Essence Carter will attend Barry University in Miami, Florida this fall. The recipient of an award from the State of Missouri for equality, Essence was involved at Clayton High and in her community as vice president of the Black Student Union, a cheerleader, president of her class during her junior year and she served as homecoming princess.

Alohzie Onwumere plans to attend Cornell University and will major in biological sciences to help him toward his goal of attending medical school. Among his activities at Clayton High are the Impact Leadership Team and both the track and football teams. He received the Scholar-Athlete Award, participated in the 2008 Missouri Scholars Academy and earned the Cornell Book Award.

Hancock Place
Hancock Place High School
Ranking in the top ten percent of her graduating class with a cumulative grade point average of 3.69, Adrienne Thomas plans to join the Marine Corp and then pursue a college degree. She had outstanding attendance and earned an A+ scholarship. Among her high school activities were the National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America and the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

Kirkwood High School
Shynice Ferguson, who attended Kirkwood schools since second grade, is considered a shining star both in and out of the classroom. With a 3.87 grade point average, she challenged herself with numerous advanced placement classes and earned the Gold K Award, which is presented to students who have maintained a 3.5 or better grade point throughout their four years of high school. She was involved in a myriad of activities, serving as a leader in most, including serving as president of Empowering Women and the Black Achievement and Cultural Club. Shynice will attend the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio where she received a major scholarship.

Mehlville High School
An accomplished student both musically and academically, Shawn Bowers sang and performed with multiple groups at Mehlville, including choir for four years, earning recognition in Orlando, Florida, with the Masoro Award during the 2009 Harmony Festival. He was a member of the Missouri All-State Show Choir and earned honors at the district and state level. Other school activities included varsity volleyball, Student Council and volunteering with the Special Olympics and Panther Friends Club. With a cumulative grade point average of 3.5, Shawn followed a college preparatory schedule. He plans to attend a four-year university, majoring in musical theatre with an emphasis in business. He has been accepted to the University of Central Missouri, but has not made a final decision, awaiting acceptance decisions for music performance.

Lindbergh High School
Kristina Daniels has been a leader throughout her four years at Lindbergh High, serving as a corresponding secretary and community service chair for Student Council, as well as a volunteer on Link Crew, an organization that pairs upperclassmen with freshmen to help them transition to high school. She also danced on Lindbergh’s Pigsy dance team for four years and was team captain. Kristina also volunteered in the community for the Mehlville Fire Department Christmas gift wrapping, Lindbergh’s Big Spring Cleanup, cleaning dimes. Homeless for a Night clothing drive and MeadOT road cleanup. Following graduation, she plans to begin her studies in nursing at Forest Park Community College and then transfer to the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

This issue of the Parent Link is dedicated to those transfer students who are members of the Class of 2010—hardworking students who have left behind an enviable record of accomplishments. For each student who is mentioned, there are scores of others also deserving of recognition. Our congratulations go not only to the students; but their parents and teachers as well. You are at the heart of this program and an important part of the success it has achieved.
Beginning something new. Taking our first step. Embarking on a new challenge. For most of us these are frightening events. Since I began my current job about a year ago, I can still remember the fear and uncertainty of change. When we begin walking down a new path, the sky is sometimes dim and the path hard to see. It’s been said that standing on the starting line, we are all equals. At the same time, the first step toward getting somewhere is to decide to not stay where you are. According to W. Clement Stone, “So many fail because they don’t get started. They don’t go. They don’t overcome inertia. They don’t begin.”

As the school year begins, all of us—students, parents, and teachers—are faced with the uncertainty of beginning something new and the fear that often accompanies a new beginning. However, it is only by beginning something new that we can ultimately have success. A baby only makes progress when he or she gathers up the necessary courage to stand up, loosen the grip on Mommy or Daddy’s leg, and take the first step or two across the room. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”

As the school year begins, many students and parents will have new teachers, a new school, and, for some of you, even a new district, riding a new bus with a new driver and new students on the bus. You will arrive at your new school and be faced with meeting new students and new teachers and making new friends. While these new beginnings can certainly be challenging, often times they provide great opportunities for new successes.

Carl Bard has stated, “Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.”

Indeed while you are facing a new beginning, this beginning represents the end of where we have been and the start of something new. In many cases, our new beginnings result in end results which, in turn provide additional opportunities for new beginnings. Certainly that is the case for the former VICC student highlighted in this newsletter who returned to her county district and now works together with students to positively influence their beginnings and their time in the transfer program. This reminds me of a quote from Henry Ford who said, “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

This former student tangibly demonstrates how staying involved in the program and working together with future generations of students can lead to a fulfilling career, giving back for the many benefits she received. She considers herself blessed to have participated in the program and is now returning those blessings to new generations of students.

Let’s all endeavor to follow her example and begin the new school year by giving back to others in response to the many gifts that we have received.
Contact Persons for Voluntary Student Transfer Program Families

Each of the districts accepting transferring students has a designated contact person. Contact persons coordinate the district’s administrative responsibilities for the transfer program, and serve as the liaison between the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) and the district.

Contact persons’ responsibilities may include enrolling transfer students, conducting orientations for new students and parents, processing applications and submitting transportation requests. Contact persons are often the first individual from the district that a transfer family meets, and they are a valuable resource for transfer families. They can answer questions about the district policy and procedures and carry out the district’s procedures.

Affton
Ms. Rose Davis 314.989.8125
Bayless
Ms. Jayne Jackson 314.721.8422, ext. 8045
Brentwood
Ms. Colleen Lobbeck 314.721.8422, ext. 5074
Clayton
Ms. Gayle Hennessey 314.721.8422, ext. 3005
Hancock Place
Ms. Rose Davis 314.721.8422, ext. 5074
Hickory Ridge
Ms. Mary Lee Burlemann 314.721.8422, ext. 3007
Ladue
Ms. Kim Kochevar 314.989.8125
Lindbergh
Ms. Jayne Jackson 314.721.8422, ext. 8045
Parkway
Ms. Jane Bivens 314.989.8125
Rockwood
Ms. Rose Davis 314.721.8422, ext. 5074
Special/Tech
Ms. Jayne Jackson 314.989.8125
Webster Groves
Ms. Jayne Jackson 314.989.8125

Starting Dates for County Schools

Classes will begin soon in your county school. Make plans now to be at school every day, beginning on the very first day. Watch for your mailbox for your bus card about one week prior to the beginning of classes. The first day of school for each district county is listed below:

**Affton**
August 18, 2010

**Bayless**
August 17, 2010

**Brentwood**
August 17, 2010

**Clayton**
August 18, 2010

**Hancock Place**
August 19, 2010

**Kirkwood**
August 18, 2010

**Ladue**
August 18, 2010

**Lindbergh**
August 17, 2010

**Melville**
August 17, 2010

**Parkway**
August 17, 2010

**Pattonville**
August 17, 2010

**Rockwood**
August 17, 2010

**Valley Park**
August 16, 2010

**Webster Groves**
August 16, 2010

Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
The Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) complies fully with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a law that allows parents and students 18 years of age and older with certain disabilities to request the student’s educational records.

A copy of VICC’s FERPA statement is included in the student handbook, which can be requested by calling 314.721.8422, ext. 3017. The handbook is also available on the VICC website: www.choicecorp.org. Click on the link for “City Residents Currently Enrolled in County Schools,” and then click on “Voluntary Transfer Program Handbook.”

The full policy will be published in the next issue of the Parent Link.

Emergency Communication System
To improve communication with parents regarding transportation and their child’s participation in the St. Louis Student Transfer Program, the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation instituted a telephone broadcast system, similar to ones used in many participating school districts.

This system, provided by School Reach, allows VICC to quickly send messages to parents for one or more impacted schools by phone within minutes of a transportation emergency or unplanned event that may significantly delay a child’s pick-up or drop-off from school. These emergencies include traffic jams, bus breakdowns, inclement weather, accidents, etc. The service may also be used for announcements to communicate general program announcements or reminders.

If your child has a home telephone, you will immediately be called to provide a home telephone number for your child. If your child’s home phone is only a cell phone, you will receive a text message with information for obtaining a bus pass. Please include the child’s name, age, school, and transportation stop.

If the transportation route to which your child is assigned does not work during the summer to handle such situations. Please remember, it takes up to 10 working days to make a transportation change. If you are going to move during the academic year, be sure to request that this information be forwarded to the transportation staff.

If You Move
If you move during the summer, the calls of the principal of the county school your child has been or will be attending, or that district’s contact person immediately. All district office personnel work during the summer to handle such situations. Please remember, it takes up to 10 working days to make a transportation change.

Transportation Information
Transportation to and from school is provided by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation so long as your child goes to a school in the correct attendance area. The phone number for the transportation staff is 314.721.8657.

Transportation cards will be issued at the stop location and time are mailed to all transfer families about two weeks before school begins in the fall. If you do not receive your card by one week before the start of school, contact the principal at the school your child attends. Please do not call the transportation staff. After the regular school year begins, new cards will be mailed only if it is necessary to make a change to the bus route list. Please review each card carefully including the effective date, stop location and times and destroy all old cards.

Any day-to-day transportation problems or concerns you may have should be addressed by first calling your child’s school, followed by the counseling staff. These include normal operating issues, such as the following:

- Checking time of bus pick-up or drop-off
- Looking for lost items left on the bus
- Checking on activity bus location
- Checking to see if child is on bus
car or other alternate bus/company bus
- If the contractor is unable to resolve a concern, or if you have one of the following issues, please call the VICC transportation staff at 314.721.8657.
- Routine overall issues or concerns
- Pick-up or drop-off location changes
- On-going concerns with contractor that you could not resolve by working directly with them.

Student Responsibilities
Students are to board their bus only at their assigned stop. They must arrive at their designated pick-up location 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time, and remain at least 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. Students will not be monitored after the 15 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time and they miss the bus, it will be your responsibility to get them to school. The transportation staff does not send alternative transportation in such instances.

For the safety of all children, students must obey general safety rules as well as those established by the school district they are attending. You should obtain a copy of your district’s bus regulations and review them with your child.

Parent Responsibilities
Parents must be on a school bus shall be authorized and not be considered trespassing. Such clothing could become caught in the bus handrail, door or other bus equipment as the child exits the bus. Please take the time to check your child’s clothing for safety rules. Be sure to review the transportation section in the following page.

Be sure to review the transportation section in the Voluntary Transfer Program Handbook (pages 9-10) with your child before the start of school. If you need a handbook, please call 314.721.8422, ext. 3012, or visit our website: www.choicecorp.org