Teacher’s Passion Unmistakable
Committed to Helping Students Flourish as She Did

By Peggy Wayne

For the last four years, the meetings that Valley Park hosts for its VICC families have been coordinated by the elementary school P.E. teacher Latonya Davis, a former VICC student from the Rockwood district. Her keen understanding of the challenges and opportunities of voluntary transfer students has prompted her to take an active role in communicating with parents. As an educator who has walked in her students’ shoes, Davis feels passionate about sharing with their parents information and advice to make the children’s educational experiences as rewarding as possible.

The parents are always eager to hear what Davis has to say. “They listen to my every word,” the 1997 Eureka High graduate notes. As she works her way around the school cafeteria visiting with families, she chats about her own background, how she grew up in north St. Louis having very few advantages and was the first in her family to attend college. And that, “Even though the chips were stacked against me, I never used that as an excuse.” She tells them how far she’s come—a bachelor’s degree followed by a master’s, her first teaching job being in the Rockwood district, then 10 years at Valley Park, where in 2007 the district recognized her with its ABC award (Above and Beyond for Children). Later, in 2013, Valley Park nominated her for its Teacher of the Year. And this year, she was nominated for Missouri Physical Education Teacher of the Year.

She takes pride in every one of those accomplishments and is quick to credit her Rockwood education with helping her become the successful teacher she is. In fact, it is Davis’ intention to be for her students the kind of teacher she had benefitted from in Rockwood. “I want to provide my students the same level of interest and support that I had in Rockwood.”

Davis believes she benefitted greatly from the diverse school environment in her county district. “I learned to interact with all types of people, most whose culture and background were different from mine. I made friends with people I originally assumed I had nothing in common.”

Another thing that Davis did in Rockwood that surprised her was taking on leadership roles on top of doing what she loved—cheerleading and track. “In her busy routine she thrived, feeling an inner gratification knowing her horizons were being broadened, both intellectually and socially. She points out, ‘‘I tell my students that it’s really important for them to be involved.’” She encourages them to be adventurous, to meet new people and try new things. “Being well rounded is an asset,” she explains. Davis also recommends students develop a close rapport with their teachers, as she did. “It’s good to have someone to turn to for guidance or help.” Sometimes it just takes one teacher to make all the difference in a student’s life, notes Davis, adding, “I want to be that one.”
Lindbergh High School

Team brothers Christian and Kenyon McCoo are both planning on studying pre-med at the University of Missouri Columbia. As members of the student body, the McCoo brothers played football, ran track, participated in show choir, a capella choir, and were members of Tri-M music honor society. They were members of the Link Crew freshman mentoring program and completed 60 hours of As service. Christian and Kenyon were Renaissance award recipients for all four years for their academic and hard work and citizenship. Kenyon was a member of the Future Business Leaders of America. Christian was in DECA, a business career prep organization, and was a keen speaker at the class of 2015 graduation ceremony. Both young men will be enrolling in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC).

MEHLVILLE

Mehlville High School

Demonstrating leadership, good character and a strong work ethic, Victoria Riley participated in the Teen Health Consultants, Special Olympics committee, basketball, track, and the senior executive board. She was an active member in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. She was able to successfully balance extra-curricular activities and academics. Described by her teachers as a mature and motivated individual, Victoria has enlisted in the Navy.

PARKWAY

Parkway North High School

With a keen eye on law and disciplinary impact society, Khaila Jones developed an interest in civics and social justice in high school. She will carry that interest with her to Westminster College where she plans to study pre-law. Khaila credits the VCC program as a secret to her success and appreciates the exposure she had in Parkway to diversity and social justice, as well as the opportunity to develop into a strong peer leader.

Parkway Central High School

Anyaku “Anny” Okpara would be an accomplished student in any social district, but coming to Parkway gave her exposure to different cultures and a chance to step outside of her comfort area. Year after year, she was recognized for her academic achievements at the Spirit of Excellence event. She was accepted to several schools and has enrolled at Missouri State University to study education.

Parkway South High School

Despite being in high school and with the challenges of American-Asian achievement, he has been most satisfied for Tayl Williamson. Taking advanced placement classes, she excelled in academics while being involved in the orchestra, step team, Gay-Straight Alliance, and Empowerment. Taking advantage of her AP program scholarship, Tayl will attend St. Louis Community College for two years and then plans to transfer to Loyola University in Chicago to study physical therapy.

Parkway West High School

Graduating with a cumulative grade point average of 3.93, Loucas Cornos has successfully proven that academics have always been her first priority. Through the VCC program, Loucas believes she has developed grit and perseverance, essential skills for achievement. This tenacity has helped Loucas map out her goals which include studying pre-med at the University of Missouri Columbia.

ROCKWOOD

Eureka High School

While at Eureka High School, LaRon Wood completed the AP Program, was a recipient of the distinguished Glory of Missouri Award, and earned the Gold Standard Award two consecutive years for high academic achievement. LaRonn was recognized as Eureka High School Student of the Month and VCC Student of the Month his senior year. He plans to join the United States Navy.

Lafayette High School

When, in her junior year, Cheyenne Hopgood realized how great her potential is, she bucked down and earned A-4 her final two years. Her schedule included taking several advanced placement classes in the sciences to become better prepared for possible future studies in nursing. While excelling academically, she was heavily involved: National Honor Society, Renaissance Club, book club, chess, library advisory, track and field team, Key Club, plus many church activities. Cheyenne plans to attend Missouri State University.

Marquette High School

Despite having learning challenges, Destem Malique Watkins persevered and found his niche in art, excelling at it. His accomplishments are many as evidenced by the number of awards the student has won, some of his talent in art and others that were teacher recommended for academics, character and overall excellence. He was a member of the National Art Honor Society. Destem plans to study art at the college level and hopes to pursue a career that showcases his love of art.

Rockwood Summit High School

Joy Shibranee Kuebben coupled her rigorous course load (including advanced placement courses and three years of German) with training as a certified nurse assistant at South Tech High School. This honor roll student plans to attend LUMS’s Bachelor of Science nursing program and travel the world helping others. Originally from Nigeria, she is fluent in Kanina and helped choreograph and perform African dance at the annual Renaissance Pop Assembly. She successfully completed the AP Program, served as Link crew leader, maintained a 3.9 grade as well as elementary students, and volunteered at Kingdom House. With her warm and kind spirit, she was a positive and integral part of her school communities.

VALLEY PARK

Valley Park High School

Throughout high school, Christian White took challenging classes, including advanced placement and dual college credit and maintained a 3.5 plus grade point average. Ranked in the top 35 percent of his class, he competed with the Valley Park Academic Competitions Team in the Scholar Bowl, won cross country and gave back to the community as a member of the Inter-Club club. Christian is headed to St. Louis Community College, utilizing his AP Program scholarship, before transferring to Missouri State University to pursue a degree in fine art film studies.

Webster Groves

Webster Groves High School

Stephen Harris played four years of basketball, receiving honors as a scholar athlete and the Renaissance award for academics. He will attend Austin Peay University in Tennessee on a full scholarship and intends to study nursing, possibly pursuing specialties in respiratory therapy.

ST. LOUIS SCHOOLS

Gateway stem High School

Having transferred to Gateway for its specialized robotics curriculum, Miranda Reuther took full advantage of its offerings. As an aviation major, she received dual credits for high school and college, getting two years of college under her belt while in high school, plus she gained on-the-job experience with St. Louis Aviation and Beyond aviation and robotics, Miranda took advantage of the curriculum and literature, as well as being involved in the Air Force ROTC program.

Chelsie Hopkins

Lafayette High School

Destem Malique Watkins

Margaretta High School

Joy Shibranee Kuebben

Rachelle Summer High School

Stephen Harris

Webster Groves High School

Miranda Reuther

Gateway STEM High School

Anyaku “Anny” Okpara

Parkway Central High School

LaRon Cornos

Parkway West High School

Joy Shibranee Kuebben

Rachelle Summer High School

Christian McCoo

Lindbergh High School

Kenyon McCoo

Lindbergh High School

Tayl Williamson

Parkway Central High School

Lexus Carson

Parkway West High School

Joy Shibranee Kuebben

Rachelle Summer High School

Christian McCoo

Lindbergh High School

Kenyon McCoo

Lindbergh High School

Tayl Williamson

Parkway Central High School

LaRonn Woods

Eureka High School

Victoria Riley

Mehlville High School

Khaiia Jones

Parkway North High School

David S. Glaser
CEO
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ext. 3013

The summer issue of the Parent Link is always one of my favorite issues! I thoroughly enjoy reading about the hard work and success of our outstanding graduates throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. I am sure that you are encouraged, just as I am, as you read these inspiring stories. Clearly, the success of these students is the result of their hard work and the support and dedication of their families and teachers.

Studies show that the students with the greatest academic achievement, as well as long-term success in life, come from families in which parents and other family members are involved in their learning in a significant way. I trust that you are making that investment now in your child’s future so that, as they approach graduation, it is possible that their picture will be included in the issue highlighting our outstanding graduates. Investing in the success of our children is the best investment that any of us can make.

What Colleges Look For:

High School Academic Record: cumulative GPA, class rank, standardized tests scores, core courses, and advanced placement and dual (college) credit courses

Special Interests: talents, subjects or activities that students enjoy and perform at a high level (academic, athletic, music, dance, etc.)

Personality and Character: Have motivated are students to learn and do their best in school. How well do they get along with others? What do their teachers and administrators think of them?
The Voluntary Interschool Choice Corporation (VICC) staff includes five counselors/social workers who can assist families with issues related to their school transfers.

Counselors are happy to respond to concerns and/or questions from parents or students regarding any school issue that would affect the success of a child in the school setting, such as attendance, disciplinary issues, curriculum, achievement or other concerns. They can also provide counseling assistance for students and help parents understand their educational rights.

Each of the districts accepting voluntary transfer 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 Interschool Choice Corporation (VICC) and the district.

Contact persons’ responsibilities may include enrolling transfer students, conducting orientation for new students and parents, processing applications and submitting transportation requests.

Contact persons are often the only individual from the district that a new transfer family meets, and they are a valuable resource for transfer families. They can answer specific questions about district policy and procedures and can refer parents to the proper school administrator if necessary.

**CONTACT PERSONS for Voluntary Student Transfer Program Faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affton</td>
<td>Dr. Travis Bracht</td>
<td>314.415.7016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayless</td>
<td>Mrs. Dawn Timman</td>
<td>314.721.8422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>Mr. Senad Hadley</td>
<td>314.721.8422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>Dr. Greg Batenhorst</td>
<td>314.854.6013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock Place</td>
<td>Dr. Timothy M. McInnis</td>
<td>314.389.4000, ext. 4621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindbergh</td>
<td>Ms. Sandi Riley</td>
<td>314.389.4000, ext. 4621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehlville</td>
<td>Dr. Brian Lane</td>
<td>314.389.5897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkway</td>
<td>Ms. Rakhay “Rocky” Talavera</td>
<td>314.389.7100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertwood</td>
<td>Dr. Charlotte Jee</td>
<td>314.415.5061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special School District</td>
<td>Mrs. Mary Bernhardt</td>
<td>314.989.8125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**starting dates for county schools**

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

- Affton: August 19, 2015
- Bayless: August 20, 2015
- Brentwood: August 12, 2015
- Clayton: August 15, 2015
- Hancock Place: August 15, 2015
- Kirkwood: August 18, 2015
- Lindbergh: August 20, 2015
- Mehlville: August 15, 2015
- Parkway: August 12, 2015
- Rockwood: August 13, 2015
- Special/Techn. Valley: August 17, 2015
- Valley Park: August 13, 2015
- Webster Groves: August 17, 2015

**Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Voluntary Interschool 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 rights with respect to the student’s educational records. A copy of the FERPA policy statement is available from VICC student handbooks, which can be requested by calling 314.721.8422, ext. 3012. The handbooks are also available on the VICC website at www.choicecorp.org. Click on the links 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.

To improve communication with parents regarding transportation and their child’s participation in the Voluntary Interschool Choice Corporation (VICC), we have implemented a voice mail system, provided by School Reach, that allows VICC to notify students and parents of important information that cannot be communicated by email. This system allows VICC to notify families about announcements. For the safety of all children, students must obey general safety rules as listed below.

- Do not extend head, arms, legs or hands out of the windows.
- Do not tamper with the emergency door except in the case of a real emergency.
- Do not damage the bus in any way.
- Do not throw objects on the bus/cab or out of the windows.
- Do not extend hands, arms, legs or hands out of the windows.
- Do not tape the emergency door except in the case of a real emergency and under the direction of the instructed driver.
- Fighting, scuffling or creating disturbances are not permitted.
- Avoid the Danger Zones next to the bus where the driver can’t see you.
- Bus drivers do not stop for pedestrians unless it is an emergency.
- All students are expected to board their bus at their assigned stop and arrive on time.
- Students are to board their bus/cab only at their assigned stop. They may not be dropped off at any other bus stop.
- If you must cross the street after you get off the bus, wait for the driver’s signal and check all directions before crossing.
- Students are to board their bus/cab only at their assigned stop.

**General Safety Rules**

- Obey the driver promptly.
- Smoking, eating or drinking are not permitted.
- Refrain from loud or obscene language.
- Do not damage the bus in any way.
- Do not throw objects on the bus/cab or out of the windows.
- Do not extend hands, arms, legs or hands out of the windows.
- Do not tamper with the emergency door except in the case of a real emergency.
- Do not damage the bus in any way.
- Avoid the Danger Zones next to the bus where the driver can’t see you.
- Bus drivers do not stop for pedestrians unless it is an emergency.
- All students are expected to board their bus at their assigned stop and arrive on time.
- Students are to board their bus/cab only at their assigned stop.

**Emergency Communication System**

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- Do not extend head, arms, legs or hands out of the windows.
- Do not tamper with the emergency door except in the case of a real emergency.
- Do not damage the bus in any way.
- Avoid the Danger Zones next to the bus where the driver can’t see you.
- Bus drivers do not stop for pedestrians unless it is an emergency.
- All students are expected to board their bus at their assigned stop and arrive on time.
- Students are to board their bus/cab only at their assigned stop.

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- Obey the driver promptly.
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**Trespass Policy**

To bolster the safety of students riding buses to school, the VICC Board adopted the following trespass policy:

- “Trespass occurs when anyone boards a school bus without prior approval from VICC. Any VICC-designated person (including students, counselor or school staff whose job requires them to be on the school bus) shall be authorized and not be considered trespassing. Only with prior approval and/or special permission from the parent, guardian or member of the public general be allowed on a bus at any time.”

Be sure to review the transportation section in the Voluntary Transfer Program Handbook (pages 8-17) 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.