GOOD PARENTING LEADS TO GOOD STUDENTS
by Peggy Magee

When VICC mom Linda DeCosta joined the PTO board at Parkway’s Wren Hollow Elementary School last spring, she quickly won the hearts of her fellow board members. The admiration the suburban moms have for Linda made this writer eager to get to know her. What follows will shed some light on DeCosta, a delightful, bright and straight shooting mother of three. Some of her parenting beliefs and practices, described here, were adopted from her own mother and are worth sharing. They are strategies that serve the DeCosta children well.

“I am my children’s first and best advocate. No one has more of a vested interest in my children than I do. If I don’t care, why should anyone else?” This view on parenting was passed along to DeCosta by a parent educator in the St. Louis Public School district when her oldest daughter, Tokarra, was in preschool. DeCosta’s actions center around it and her children’s good parenting.

VICC MOM JOINS PTO BOARD; CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS DEVELOP
by Peggy Magee

What began as an informal gesture to add some diversity to the PTO board at Parkway’s Wren Hollow Elementary School has resulted in genuine friendships among a group of women who, in their words, “hit it off.”

Linda DeCosta, a VICC mom who has always been involved in her children’s education in the Parkway district (see story below), was asked last spring to join the seven-member PTO board at Wren Hollow. Enthusiastically, Linda agreed. She filled one of the vacant vice-presidency seats, a two-year commitment.

The idea to invite Linda to serve came from principal Matt Miller who has always desired more diversity on the board in the hopes of building and improving relationships among his school families. “All of us on the board thought it was a great idea,” reports co-president Deidre Jones. “Linda has been a great addition. We all hit it off with her.”

Co-president Tracy Jumps agrees. “Linda fit right in,” adding that the board members get along great with each other. “We work well together.”

During the summer, the women planned a couple of social gatherings, in addition to their regular board meetings. One was a pot luck to welcome and thank the dozen or so committee chairs, held at the home of Jaime Dix, who shares the vice presidency duties with Linda. Another time, they sat around the suburban Cool Dell Swim Club, soaking up the sun, before heading to school for a board meeting. Jones and Dix took turns transporting Linda, who resides in south St. Louis, to the gatherings.

Linda welcomed the opportunities to get to know her fellow board members. “It’s been fun. We just hit it off. They are amazing.”

Hoping to replicate the connection they have made with Linda, the board plans to host a bar-b-que for VICC families in Tower Grove Park in the city. “Forming this bond with Linda has been awesome,” notes Jones, however Linda represents just one VICC family and the board would like to form relationships with many more. She adds, “We value their input in helping make our school better.” Also, she notes, there’s the “bigger picture” of working to bridge cultures. “Sometimes it’s the smallest things that can have the greatest outcomes.”

VICC mom Linda DeCosta is a new addition to the PTO board at Parkway’s Wren Hollow Elementary School. Standing with Linda are PTO co-presidents Deidre Jones, left, and Tracy Jumps, as well as principal Matt Miller. Close friendships have developed between DeCosta and the other six moms who serve on the board.

(VICC mom Linda DeCosta and VICC mom Linda DeCosta, right, and Deidre Jones had fun attending a pre-game Meet and Greet together.)

(See Good Parenting, page 2)
The ongoing violence in the news and in our community has caused a renewed focus on school safety for all of us. VICC’s role in this regard is primarily related to the safe and prudent transportation of our students to and from school. Strategies that we have implemented, working to ensure that students feel safe, include the following:

- Safety is discussed and is an agenda item at every transportation meeting.
- All transportation employees are subject to stringent background checks to confirm their suitability to transport students.
- An interval reporting system is in place for all of our transportation systems.
- All buses are equipped with GPS tracking systems as well as video cameras.
- All buses are equipped with two-way radios and regular ongoing communication between drivers and their dispatcher, as well as the VICC office.
- Our transportation safety representatives have been trained by the TSA (Transportation Security Administration) and provide yearly training to all bus drivers.

More than these safety measures are the ongoing positive cooperatives that both the city to the county district and also have additional opportunities to develop stronger relationships with your students in a new setting. On average, a VICC student’s ride both to and from school is 54 minutes in length which is obviously much longer than the time it takes for a VICC resident student. During that time, many of our drivers have the opportunity to reinforce the positive character education lessons that students are taught at school such as the three B’s—Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Safe. Certainly those are important lessons that serve as good reminders to all of us.

We take the responsibility of transporting your students very seriously and seek to do so not only in a timely manner but, more importantly, in a safe manner as well.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents/guardians (“parents”) the right to inspect, and to students themselves who are over 18 years of age, the education records of their children maintained by the student’s education records. Although FERPA does not apply to VICC, VICC is a member of the school district and must comply with the provisions of FERPA and to afford parents eligibility to seek access and correction of their children’s education records. VICC may release personally identifiable information contained in a student’s education records in conformity with FERPA.

A child’s right to privacy is protected under FERPA. VICC’s position is entirely consistent with the spirit of this Federal law.

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