

The Scholarsheet

Newsletter of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund

Summer 2003 ~ Volume 9, Issue 2

TRACKING A FUTURE COURSE

Affiliate Services: Realigning to Meet Current Needs

Since January of this year, the ASPSF staff, board and county affiliate representatives have engaged in a planning process focusing on affiliate needs and what ASPSF can do to meet them. Since 1990, when it became a statewide organization, the ASPSF has been extremely successful in fulfilling its mission: *to enable single parents to attain self-sufficiency through post-secondary education.* The current study is designed to focus on the variety of needs at the grass roots level and tailor the services offered by the state organization to meet these needs.

BACKGROUND. A 2002 evaluation of the effectiveness of SPSF programs

commissioned by the Walton Family Foundation, (a major supporter of ASPSF) was examined by the ASPSF Board at a retreat in October of 2002. At this meeting, it was decided that the Leadership Development Conference would be cancelled for 2003 and that several Focus Group meetings would take place around the state instead. The basic outline of this plan was further developed by Acting Director Cindy Webb who wrote a "Business Planning



Grant" proposal funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the Willard & Pat Walker Charitable Foundation. In addition to statewide Focus Group meetings, information has been gathered through interviews and surveys completed by county affiliate representatives.

PROGRESS TO DATE. By June, all of the needed affiliate input had been gathered. On June 27th at a special meeting, Cindy presented a summary and analysis to the ASPSF Board. In a serendipitous turn of events, Executive Director Ralph Nesson had just returned from his year-long leave of absence and was able to attend.

Challenges identified at this meeting are summarized as follows:

- sustainable funding/demand for scholarships outweighing availability
- reaching areas of the state currently without scholarship programs
- strengthening weak affiliates
- image development and promotion of the ASPSF program
- communication with affiliates & encouragement of a holistic approach to awardees
- leadership development on local boards

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GRADUATE STORIES: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

The stories of two recent SPSF graduates, Kathleen Miles and Sandra Bailey, are very different yet they demonstrate two important truths: 1) educational goals can be achieved through perseverance and 2) life opportunities can be increased when these goals are achieved.

Kathleen Miles, a Desha County SPSF recipient and mom with three children, graduated in May '03 after earning a BS in Accounting from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Despite a 15-year hiatus from school, Kathleen maintained a 3.24 GPA and still managed to volunteer at the Dumas Literacy Council and as a mentor coordinator at DHS. Kathleen states: "The Single Parent Scholarships I received for three years enabled me to commute to school without having to worry about money for transportation and basic car care, and it helped with utilities and

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News & Cues!

News:

► **Keshia Valley**, ASPSF Delta Field Organizer, has resigned her post effective August '03 in order to attend law school. Keshia has been with the Delta project since it began in '01 and has done a terrific job. She will be sorely missed by the county affiliates with whom she has worked and also by the staff of ASPSF. Goodbye and good luck, Keshia!

► **Charles Cunningham** (Benton) has agreed to fill a vacancy on the ASPSF Board of Directors. Mr. Cunningham recently retired as Executive Director of the Central Arkansas Development Council.

Cues:

► Affiliates: Please submit Spring and Summer '03 Scholarship Award reports if you have not already done so.

► Groovy Website. Check it out: www.singleparentcentral.com contains all sorts of helpful resources for parents, and kids too!

► Another great resource for affiliate lending libraries: [50 Wonderful Ways to be a Single Parent Family](#), by Barry G. Ginsberg, PH.D.
Order at www.newharbinger.com

The Scholarsheet is published quarterly by the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Comments & suggestions can be addressed to: Lani Froelich, Editor, 614 E. Emma, Ste. 119, Springdale, AR 72764. Phone (479) 927-1402, FAX (479)751-1110, Email: lfroelic@jtlshop.jonesnet.org

Musings From The Executive Director

I returned to the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund on June 2nd, one year to the day from when I left on a journey of self-exploration and travel. During my time away, I learned some valuable lessons which I now consider simple, vital rules of living. Perhaps the one most essential to emotional well-being is to be *mindfully present*. This may not seem as if it has much to do with administering Single Parent Scholarship Funds, given the fact that so much of what we do concerns planning, expectations, the future of the program, and what we hope to accomplish in any number of tasks and goals. Yet it is quite a powerful strength to be able to focus entirely on what one is doing *right now* without worrying about what has already happened or what might happen next, what might go wrong or did the day before. Whether I am looking someone squarely in the eye while speaking with her, or concentrating on writing a letter, or organizing myself for each day's tasks, it is so helpful to be clearly and fully conscious of that one thing I am doing now rather than drifting off into the past or future.

Another lesson I would like to share is openness to meeting others on their terms, not my own. While traveling, I had the wonderful experience of conversing with Spanish-speaking people in their language, learning from them about their country, and entering into the ebb and flow of community life without imposing my own set of cultural values on my temporary home. This resulted in a sense of being part of the community, of being welcomed into new friendships, and being able to learn from others about their families and their lives in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance. What a joyous way to experience life far away from that which I have been so used to!

*.....I am so grateful to all who are joined
in spirit, friendship and
determination to help others*

Renewal: a fresh outlook, an inspired dimension, a powerful energy to expend in the work of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund. I so look forward to further developing our affiliates, to bringing new resources and ideas to bear upon our work with single parents, and to sharing in the successes of those who are making the most of their lives through education. In addition, I am so grateful to all who are joined in spirit, friendship and determination to help others help themselves.

—Ralph H. Nesson

SNIPPETS

Stories of Successful Fundraisers

The Scott Co. SPSF raised \$2,600 for scholarships at their 3rd Annual Tasting Treat held at Waldron Church of the Nazarene. In the true spirit of generosity which characterizes so many communities in Arkansas, local employees of the banks and court house, Cooperative Extension groups and others contributed special dishes to accompany the barbecue brisket, pork, and chicken donated by Tyson Foods. Scholarship recipients were on hand to help with cooking and delivering food, selling tickets and cleaning-up afterwards.

A springtime carnival fundraiser

brought in \$500 for the **Columbia Co.** SPSF. Yvette Wyrick made all arrangements such as contacting the carnival owner, providing local media with press releases and organizing students to assist with the event. She reports it was a successful event that provided everyone with some "good old family fun." If you are interested in having a carnival fundraiser in your area, please contact: Mike Phillips, All American Amusements: 612-839-9622.

Pulaski Co. SPSF raised \$11,000 from a gala "Roast Bonnie Nickol", held at the Pleasant Valley Country Club. Bonnie has been an enthusiastic advo-

cate for the single parent scholarship program and served as board president for several years. When she retired as president, her friends and family decided to host a fundraiser for her favorite charity. Due to the hard work of supporters like Bonnie, the Pulaski program awarded ninety-four scholarships worth \$61,000 last year.

Sharp/Fulton Co's. SPSF reported a successful letter writing campaign - thirty-three letters mailed to former donors and contacts brought in \$1,070 for scholarships!



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tuition fees." Kathleen is presently working on her Masters in Accounting at Barton School of Business, Wichita State University.



Kathleen Miles, May 2003 graduate, UofA at Pine Bluff

Sandra Bailey, Newton Co. SPSF recipient, and mother of a teenage son, also graduated in May '03. She received a Heavy Equipment Operation Certificate and CDL Certificate and License from North Arkansas Community College. Prior to completing her program, Sandra was employed for 13 years with R & D Drilling and Tapping/Harrison as a driver and crew supervisor. While in school she assisted with scholarship fundraising efforts. In recognition of her hard work, Sandra was nominated to be an Entergy Scholar in 2002.

In a thank-you note, Sandra says: "Because of Newton Co. SPSF, I was able to go to NACC, graduate and get a job with Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. My goal when I started to school was to finish and

go to work for the State. I had my job May 1, 2003, nine days before I graduated! I have insurance now for the first time in 13 years!"



Sandra Bailey, May 2003 graduate, North Arkansas Community College, Harrison



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- negative perception of single parent status
- Insuring that bylaws/constitution are aligned with strategic plan

A final report of the business planning process will be completed in the fall as part of a strategic plan for the future of the ASPSF.

AN EXCELLENT BOARD MEMBER

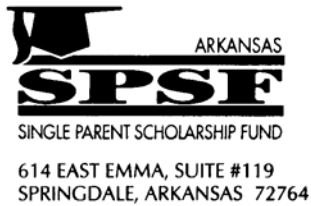
We frequently salute SPSF graduates in our newsletter, but it's also important to sing the praises of the backbone of many county affiliates—

the individual who volunteers her or his time and talent to serve on a local board of directors. This story came to us from our **Cross Co.** affiliate.

Linda Speer was an active SPSF volunteer prior to becoming a board member. Noteworthy services since joining the board include: scholarship selection committee work; providing expertise on programs available through DHS; drafting grant requests; development of printed materials such as brochures and flyers; and creation of a board member profile book. WOW!

We salute you, Linda!

HELP WANTED
Delta Project Field Organizer:
 Position involves provision of technical assistance and training to scholarship programs for impoverished single parents in the Delta region. Minimum requirements include: Bachelor's degree in related field, proven fundraising ability, excellent communications skills, and nonprofit organization experience. Must be a resident of the south Delta area— Starting salary is \$30,000 annually. Please submit resume, references, and writing sample by August 1st to: Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, 614 East Emma, Suite, 119 Springdale, AR 72764.



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MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund is to enable single parents to attain self-sufficiency through post-secondary education