



# Johnson County Success Story

(Please note: A pseudonym has been used in this story for confidentiality purposes)

**A**s a single mother of a very young child, Melanie Stewart returned to Arkansas Tech University in the late 1990's without a career goal. She knew she wanted to eventually work in a hospital but did not have the vaguest idea of what type of health-related job would be appealing. Having grown up in a rural area of western Arkansas, Melanie had always done well in high school science courses, yet felt she was a bit weak in her math skills. Undaunted, she enrolled at ATU as a nontraditional student and began to explore her options. Through wise course selections, she developed an interest in computer technology, which helped focus her career choice. That choice became clear: health information management, a growing field within hospitals and health clinics.

An algebra instructor suggested to Melanie that she apply to the Single Parent Scholarship Fund, which had just been developed in Johnson County. Following up on this advice, she became one of

the Fund's first awardees and used her several scholarships to buy automobile tires and to maintain her vehicle, enabling her to drive the 50-mile daily roundtrip between Clarksville and Russellville. The SPSF board was supportive and encouraging, she asserts.

Melanie earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Arkansas Tech in 2002. With very little hands-on experience but a lot of desire, she obtained a position in health information management at a hospital licensed for 25 beds near her home in Clarksville. She has now worked at the hospital for three years and is a credentialed health information administrator. She is earning over \$30,000 annually and has just purchased her first home. For the past two years, Melanie has served as a member of the board of directors of the Johnson County Single Parent Scholarship Fund and is mentoring young mothers and fathers who most assuredly benefit from her experience and guidance.

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## ASPSF HONORS BOARD MEMBERS

**D**ecember, 2005 marked the completion of service for two highly dedicated members of the ASPSF Board of Directors. Marjorie Wolfe a founding member, serving multiple terms since 1990. She has dedicated over twenty years of her time and energy in a passionate effort to assist single parents to achieve economic self-sufficiency. She has been honored with numerous awards throughout her life related to education and volunteerism, most recently the 2005 Community Service Award given by the Arkansas Department of Human Services and the Governor's office. In 2001 Marjorie was also awarded the President's Community Volunteer Award by the Points of Light Foundation. Alice Abson has been a very active and dedicated member of the ASPSF Board of Directors since 2000. She served as President in 2004 and 2005 and held other offices previously, as well as serving on several committees.

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## News & Cues

-  Donations by credit card can now be accepted through the ASPSF website. Contact Chris Womack for more information at 479-927-1402.
-  Follow-up report forms for the 2005 award year will be mailed soon. The deadline to submit them is April 15, 2006.
-  Spring 2006 Scholarship Award Reports need to be submitted as soon as possible.
-  Have suggestions for the 2006 Leadership Development Conference? Contact Kelley Bradley at 479-957-1770.
-  Copies of Dr. Lori Holyfield's book "Moving Up and Out: Poverty, Education and the Single Parent Family" are available for \$20 each. Call 479-927-1402 to order.
-  All SPSF affiliates that receive the maximum amount of matching funds in 2006 will have the opportunity to split an additional \$50,000 at the end of 2006.
-  Refer your applicants to [ArkansasScholarshipConnection.org](http://ArkansasScholarshipConnection.org) for additional scholarship information.

## Musings By Ralph Nesson

Travel back with me in time, if you will, to the humble beginnings of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund. In late 1989, the idea of taking the concept of Single Parent Scholarships statewide seemed like a great uphill struggle. Benton and Washington Counties' SPSF's had been operating for six years, but all funding to that point was strictly support in the form of small contributions from local sources. We had limited loaned staff time from community action agencies and the borrowed use of computers and telephones, and not much else. But pardon me, we did have something more: the will to share an excellent concept with the rest of the state of Arkansas! We also had the interest of Bernice Jones, a woman of vision and generosity who wanted, in her words, "to give the young girls a chance to go to college."

Bernice offered a seed grant to get us started in 1990. This grant, soon complemented by support from other philanthropies, enabled us to begin the work of

developing affiliates across the length and breadth of Arkansas. It propelled us forward on a fifteen year trajectory which resulted in a remarkable achievement in 2005: the provision of 1,898 scholarships by sixty-four Single Parent Scholarship Funds worth just over \$1.1 million.

If you ever wonder how things like this happen, consider the following: nearly 1,000 volunteers serve on boards of directors of Single Parent Scholarship Funds. All are giving of their time, effort and money to something in which they believe. Their commitment to offering scholarships to deserving single parent students has attracted the support of hundreds of foundations, civic organizations, churches, businesses and individuals. The spirit of believing, the commitment of doing and the generosity of giving are the undergirding of our scholarships. And it all begins with you.

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Alice has been very involved in her community; she is currently serving on the advisory board of the United Negro College Fund, the Arkansas Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, the American Parole and Probation Association, and is a Trustee of the St. Vestal CME Church in El Dorado. On behalf of all Single Parent Scholarship Funds and single parents throughout Arkansas:

***Thank you, Marjorie and Alice!***

## 2005 HONOR ROLL 2005 HONOR ROLL

### Top 10 Affiliates with the Greatest Growth\*

1. Columbia County SPSF
2. Phillips County SPSF
3. Conway County SPSF
4. Desha County SPSF
5. Pulaski County SPSF
6. Washington County SPSF
7. White County SPSF
8. Faulkner County SPSF
9. Independence County SPSF
10. Monroe County SPSF

\* Based on statistics reported from 2002-2005

### Top 10 Scholarship Providers

1. Benton County - \$ 414, 050
2. Washington County - \$ 202, 400
3. Pulaski County - \$ 74, 750
4. Boone County - \$ 16, 000
5. Union County - \$ 15, 450
6. Craighead County - \$ 15, 250
7. Conway County - \$ 14, 725
8. Saline - \$ 13, 875
9. Crawford/ Sebastian Counties \$ 27, 500
10. Faulkner County - \$ 13, 725

\*average of \$13,750 per county

NOTE: Total value of scholarships awarded per county based on 2005 statistics.

## SPSF Member Profile

In this issue of the *ScholarSheet* we are highlighting **Cathy Williams**, Chairman of the Crawford/Sebastian Co. SPSF.

**Q. When did you join the board and what is your term?**

A. I was on the original re-organization of the Crawford/Sebastian County affiliate in 2004. My term expires in 2007.

**Q. As a board member, what was your most thrilling moment with SPSF?**

A. There have been several. Certainly, when our fundraisers do well ranks at the top of my list of thrills. Also, when we finally received our 501(c)3 almost a year after we applied, I was thrilled. And, finally, I was thrilled when we were able to supplement a regular award with a special "named" scholarship to one of our deserving, unsuspecting students.

**Q. How have you changed in the course of your term?**

A. I have developed a great admiration of our applicants and appreciation of our donors. I have also come to see that when we help these parents, we are helping at least three generations of a family: the recipient, his/her children, and even the children's children. I know it's a cliché that I've heard a million times, but I agree completely that education is the ONLY way we can hope to overcome the poverty cycle in families.

**Q. What do you see the future holds for recipients?**

A. I believe with education, a good work ethic, and a good attitude,



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the recipients can fly to the moon! Lori Holyfield is a good example of what can be accomplished.

As a single mother who was fortunate enough to have an education when I became a divorce statistic with a kindergartner and first grader, I cannot imagine how our recipients can do all that they do and maintain their outstanding grade points.

**Q. Tell us something about you.**

A. Probably my proudest achievement is having been able to educate two beautiful daughters. Both daughters are graduates of UA in Fayetteville. Elizabeth lives in Fayetteville and is a speech pathologist with a master's degree from Texas A&M. Emily lives and works in Washington, DC, where she completed her master's degree in Political Management from George Washington University. Education gives people many more options in life, and I think everyone [wants her] children to have those options. So I'm really happy that my daughters have life options.

**Q. What is your background?**

A. I have worked at all levels of education from Head Start to Adult Employability. I spent several years working in higher education at Mississippi County Community College and Memphis State University. For the last several years, I have worked for the Fort Smith Public Schools as the Supervisor of Community Partnerships and Career Orientation

### 2006 Leadership Development Conference

**T**ake out your calendar and mark **April 28th & 29th** as not-to-miss dates. The annual ASPSF Leadership Development Conference is scheduled to convene on those two days at the Holiday Inn Presidential Conference Center in Little Rock. Don't miss the random drawing for the \$1,000 scholarship, great networking opportunities, and the presentation of the 3rd annual Bernice Jones Philanthropy Award worth \$500.

Registration materials, schedule and more information will be mailed soon, so stay on the lookout.

### Top 2005 Fundraising Events

We honor the following SPSFs for their creativity and hard work in developing successful fundraising events in 2005.\*

1. **Washington**—Celebration of Success—\$89, 000
2. **Saline**—Salute to Hot Springs Village—\$6, 624
3. **Madison**—golf tournament—\$2, 525
4. **Newton**—Home Tour—\$2, 188
5. **Lonoke**—Fish Fry—\$2, 187
6. **Chicot**—Dinner & Hat Fashion Show—\$2, 007
7. **Garland**—golf tournament—\$2, 000
8. **White**—yard sale & tshirt sales—\$1, 958
9. **Marion**—Christian Women's Tour of Homes—\$1, 500
10. **Perry**—Basketball Shoot-out—\$1, 277
11. **Woodruff**—basketball tournament—\$1, 270
12. **Stone**—yard sale—\$1, 133

Two rules of successful fundraising are: (1) creative, original ideas for events will attract donors. (2) "train" your donors and community by holding an event each year. They'll come to expect it and look forward to it!

Want to learn more about these fundraisers? Network with your fellow affiliates! Learn about their proven methods and adapt them to fit your needs.

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\*according to totals reported for single events on 2005 matching funds request forms—does not consider direct mail campaigns or grant writing efforts



# Reaching For the Stars ★



White County recipient Ruby Goodlow with Lincoln Nail, sales manager of Searcy F.A.N.



Phillips County SPSF award recipients (L-R) Nicole Baker, Lakisha Jackson, Rhonda Sparks, Elizabeth Shackelford, Doriane Washington, Shandrea Lambert, & Tosha Ponell. Not pictured are Jacqueline Johnson, Shandrill Thomas, Romelia Walker and Charlotte Williams



More recipients from Phillips County SPSF w/children (L-R) Shandrea Lambert, Elizabeth Johnson, Torshalle Smith, Brenda Stelle, Virginia King, Lakisha Jackson, Melinda Sheard, Tasha Ponell, Tiffany Webster, Betty Webster (not a recipient)



Faulkner County SPSF Entergy Scholars pictured with Entergy representative Ron Harris



Pope-Yell County SPSF award recipients left-right Andrea Rackley, Jo Bidwell, Lara Buchanan, Amanda Duffy, Cassandra Hill, Patrick Reynolds, Sharon Pockrus, Amy Vanderheiden, Anita VanWinkle, Freda Smith, Minnie Garcia, Brandee Thomas, Melanie Smith, Amy Holland



Rosemary Ashford, Desha County SPSF recipient

## Funds Award Over One Million Dollars in 2005

**F**or the first time in twenty-one years, 2005 saw sixty-four Single Parent Scholarship Funds make 1,895 awards worth \$1,111,588. This represents a remarkable achievement, given that we began statewide efforts in 1990 with 106 scholarship awards worth \$43,878 in four counties!

Since 1990, affiliates of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund have awarded 15,154 scholarships worth \$7,462,919. Affiliate matching grant support from the ASPSF has totaled \$1,860,305.

Crossing the threshold of one million dollars in scholarship aid in a twelve-month period is a tremendous achievement. It means that nearly 2,000 single parents received the help they need and deserve to achieve their goal of earning a college diploma. It also means that literally thousands of contributions from every corner of our state were made to local SPSF's.

The ASPSF would like to congratulate all SPSF board members, donors and students for making this wonderful accomplishment possible.

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