



CLASS ACTS

SOUTHCOAST

For the past two decades United Way's Summer Fund program has provided thousands of enrichment opportunities to youth in Greater New Bedford. This summer is no exception; nearly \$100,000 has been allocated to programs throughout the community to provide camperships, youth employment and cultural enrichment opportunities, according to a news release.

SOUTHCOAST
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Class Acts briefs are updated every weekday on our online education page.

"Summer Fund has made a difference for so many youth during its 20-year existence," said Michelle N. Hantman, president

of United Way of Greater New Bedford in the release. "These experiences are the building blocks of their futures and we are glad to be part of that."

Summer Fund is made possible through a pool of funds provided by the Island Foundation, Bilezikian Family Foundation, Patrick Carney Foundation, Webster Bank, The Women's Fund, and Acushnet Foundation, YES and Rainy Day Funds at the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, the release said.

It was originally begun in 1993 as a way to provide the at-risk youth with the opportunity to attend summer camp. Now, the program offers youth employment and cultural enrichment opportunities that benefit older youth and the general community.

"The youth employment tract is a very important piece of the program, especially since all of our youth are working at non-profit organizations," said Victoria Grasela, communications & development associate at United Way in the release. "The participants are getting real world work experience, while making a difference in the community - this is something that very few of their peers are doing."

This year's Summer Fund youth employees recently attended the Ready 2 Work Conference in New Bedford to learn the basics of the working world and to learn what would be expected of them throughout the time at their positions.

Organizations that received funding to provide employment and enrichment opportunities include: 3rd Eye Youth Empowerment; artMOBILE; AHA! New Bedford / City Celebrates; Artworks; Boy Scouts of America - Narragansett Council; Buttonwood Park Zoo; Buzzards Bay Coalition; Community Boating Center; Dennison Memorial Community Center; Dream Out Loud; Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts; Hunger Commission of Southeastern Massachusetts; Immigrants' Assistance Center; Jems Program; Lloyd Center for the Environment; New Bedford Festival Theatre; New Bedford Whaling Museum; NorthStar Learning Centers; Ocean Explorium; Schwartz Center for Children; Something's Fishy Summer Camp; Team Builders; Temple Landing; Trips for Kids New Bedford; Trustees of Reservations; YMCA SouthCoast; and YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts.

TIME AND TREASURE



PHOTOS BY JOHN SLADEWSKI/THE STANDARD-TIMES

Mackenzie Ferguson, left, Alexis Ferguson, center, and Andrea Nunes clean a Big Wheel tricycle. Students from the Lincoln School were making their Tuesday visit to GiftsToGive in New Bedford to help clean and sort toys as well as take part in some activities.

Retired city educator teaching new lessons at GiftsToGive



Joyce Lantange puts cleaned toys into a bin as part of her visit to GiftsToGive.

"Children come to understand, through their 'doing' the power of giving and service and that we all have gifts to give."

MARTHA KAY

who develops educational programming at GiftsToGive

By JESSICA TROLAND
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

NEW BEDFORD — In her nearly four decades as an educator in the city's public schools, Martha Kay saw too many children from impoverished homes who lacked the most basic necessities.

When she retired from the School Department, their faces stayed with her.

And now, as she develops educational programming at GiftsToGive, she continues in a new role reaching out to them.

According to its website, GiftsToGive's primary mission "is to give all SouthCoast young people - the privileged and those in need - an opportunity to practice Big Citizenship and Tangible Philanthropy through their gifts of time and treasure.

"Children come to understand, through their 'doing' the power of giving and service and that we all have gifts to give," the site says.

Kay has been working with the charity, its founder Jim Stevens and local schools to create quality education programs at GiftsToGive. "Build, build, build. Build

out and build strong," said Kay, who worked in the New Bedford Public School System for 38 years. "Do it and do it right."

Kay, who knows firsthand the difficulties some children go through, says her heart goes out to low income families. She is a firm believer that education is the solution to poverty.

"You don't give them the fish, you teach them how," she said.

"The issue is child poverty. It's killing us all because no one's paying attention," said Stevens, also GiftsToGive's CEO.

Now four years old, GiftsToGive has already had a tremendous impact on the community, involving roughly 1,000 kids per month from schools across SouthCoast in community service; it is now looking to link that service to school academics.

Currently, there are after-school and summer programs. One of them, GiftsToGive Service Learning works to connect what student volunteers are learning in

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NBHS musicians plan reunion to reconnect

By LILY O'GARA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

NEW BEDFORD — Here's a reunion to really trumpet. Alumni from the glory days of the award-winning New Bedford High School band are getting together this weekend to reminisce and reconnect.

The reunion is being hosted by members of the 1988-1992 NBHS Band Boosters Association and students who played and marched under director Donald L. Vasconcelles' leadership will be in attendance.

Vasconcelles, fondly known to his former students as "Mr. V," headed the band for 20 years, and is widely credited with transforming the program. The reunion, which will be held at the Century House in Acushnet, will celebrate his tenure

When Donald Vasconcelles began as band director in 1980, there were only about 20 students in the band. Throughout his years as director, the Whalers Marching Band grew in size and stature.

and the accomplishments of the band from 1980-2000.

Former Booster Association president Richard "Dick" J. Mello and former secretary Susan Mello Souza collaborated to organize the event. Both Mello and Souza had children in the band and, as board members, chaperoned 125-plus students during dances and trips.

It was in remembering the fun everyone had at the booster-sponsored dances that Mello and Souza said they were inspired to

hold the reunion.

"It was a wonderful time in my life, as well as in the kids' lives," Souza said. "I cannot wait to see those kids!"

Both of Souza's daughters were in the color guard, and the band students played a particularly important role in her daughter Jacqueline's life. Jacqueline died from leukemia in 1990, and during her illness, her friends in the band supported and comforted her every step of the way

Souza said her daughter told her, "Mom, band is my life."

"That was the true essence of what every kid felt," Souza said, adding that the students were very much a family.

Mello said he was not surprised that people are coming from "all over the country" to attend the event and he anticipates at least 150 people will attend.

"We just wanted to do something to reunite these kids who haven't seen each other in a while," Mello said.

For his part, Vasconcelles said "It's going to be a great time." He said he can't wait to trade "war stories" about the band with his former students.

Vasconcelles became an educator in the New Bedford School

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GiftsToGive: Program pays dividends

from B1

school with their experiences at Gifts and out in the world.

One recent day, Maida Hofel of Portsmouth Abbey School and Jordan Sparks of Dartmouth High School spent some of their volunteer time searching for toys for three small children, ages 19 months, 8 and 11. Gifts, located in an old mill building in the South End, catalogs and warehouses the many donations that come in from the community.

Hundreds of local agencies and caregivers go on-line and order customized gift-packages for homeless and at-risk children in their care, the website explains.

"We try to find things we think they would like," Maida and Jordan said in near unison.

In a small classroom-sized room off to the side of the mill, children from a local school read "Thumbelina." As part of the service learning project, Kay links the book with the opportunity to teach the difference between a fable and a fairy tale.

She has also used it as a springboard to teach the students about the water cycle (the story has a lot of plants and raindrops).

For an added dose of fun — and sugar — Kay brought cupcakes for students to decorate with their newfound knowledge.

GiftsToGive has also begun to promote early childhood literacy. Kay recruits teachers and parent volunteers from the PTOs and provides them with books to read to participating classrooms.

She gives each volunteer a prep packet, complete with notes on the book and

comprehension questions.

After a few reads, children are given their own copies of the book in the hopes that they will share their reading with their families.

Kay has also begun to bring early literacy programs to new moms and dads and infants. Books for Babies provides new parents at Charlton Memorial and St. Luke's hospitals with books to read to their newborns.

That encourages parents to read to their little ones from the time they are born, said Kay, who believes reading at an early age enhances every aspect of a child's life, including boosting the bond between parent and child.

For older kids, GiftsToGive is involved with two middle school mentoring programs: The Gentlemen's Round Table, and The Sorority.

"We believe it's the perfect age, it's when kids start to understand how much trouble they're in and that they have choices," said Stevens, "They have no idea of the choices they have."

"They need role models," said Kay.

The groups focus on addressing issues such as bullying, values and goal setting, as well as any other obstacles students may be facing.

The Gentlemen's Round Table meets Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, with a luncheon provided by Domino's Pizza every Friday. The boys who take part are able to socialize and seek advice from program leaders.

Each week, the group is joined by a guest speaker; the speakers range from the mayor to former gang members and each brings a valuable lesson to the table.

"It's very compelling," said Nathan Turner, a Gentleman of the Round Table and freshman at New Bedford High School. He said speakers allow the boys to see how the choices they make now — both good and bad — will affect them for the rest of their lives.

Kay said David Pena, founder of the Round Table, serves as a great mentor for the boys.

"They come here to tell their problems," said Kay, "They connect with him, some will even call him."

For middle school girls, there is The Sorority at Normandin Middle School. Like the Gentlemen's Round Table, The Sorority hosts guest speakers once a week to introduce the girls to women who can act as role models and share a variety of experiences.

During their meetings, the girls also do activities such as arts and crafts and learning about nutritious foods.

"You see changes in attitude. They're more socially engaged, they have a wider group of friends," said Kay.

While pleased with what is happening, Kay stressed that more needs to be done.

She said she would like to further expand the programs and eventually have college students participate in the volunteer services.

"When communities work together, you get to educate the whole community, make education a whole community effort," said Kay.

Kay also hopes to set an example for other former educators who may have "a little extra to give."

"Everybody has some time and some energy to give back," she said. "Everybody has a gift to give."

Band: Reunion offers chance to reconnect

from B1

Department in the early 1970s and took up the director's baton in 1980. He switched roles in 2000 and served as headmaster at the high school, before retiring in October 2010 after nearly 40 years of service.

When he began as director in 1980, there were only about 20 students in the band. Throughout his years as director, the Whalers Marching Band grew in size and stature.

The band was invited to play in two inaugural parades in Washington, D.C., and performed eight times at

Disney World. In addition, the Whalers won 25 regional titles, and performed in two international Festivals of Music competitions, placing first and second. They even played on The Today Show in 1986, live from Faneuil Hall and participated in the Cherry Blossom Parade in Washington, D.C.

Asked what made the band so successful, Vasconcelles said "A lot of good fortune and a lot of hard work." Vasconcelles, a Berklee College of Music graduate, credited his dedicated and talented staff and the band parents who raised more \$30,000 each year, ensuring

that the students never missed a trip.

The parents "sold everything but the Brooklyn Bridge, and they probably would have sold that, too, if they could have gotten away with it," Vasconcelles said with a laugh.

And, of course, the students were at the core of the success, he said.

"The kids were just excellent," Vasconcelles said, adding that many of them are professional and accomplished musicians today.

"They really wanted something, really wanted to be good."

LEARNING CALENDAR

DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Presents a three-day weekend Landscape Photography Master Class, Aug. 16-18 with Dana Mueller and Bonnell Robinson of Camera Eye Workshops. They will help those interested in taking photography to another level to explore their creativity and develop their visual perception. Tuition is \$325 for DHAS members and \$375 for non-members. For information visit www.cameraeyeworkshops.com. 1205 Russells Mills Road, Dartmouth.

MASSACHUSETTS APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS IN PARENTING (MAPP) TRAINING: A pre-service training that prepares adults to parent a child from foster care. Dates: 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Sept. 14, 21, 28 and Oct. 5 and 19. Must register and have pre-screen home visit before training. For information and registration call Becky Baker (508) 676-5708 ext. 4181. Child & Family

Services, 3057 Acushnet Ave., New Bedford.

CRAFTERS AND EXHIBITORS WANTED: For Holy Family - Holy Name Holiday Fair taking place Nov. 16. Spaces available are approximately 6 1/2 feet wide and include one six foot table for a donation of \$35 and an optional gift for our Holiday Auction. Applications are available at: Holy Family-Holy Name School, 91 Summer Street New Bedford. For information call (508) 993-3547 or visit www.hfhn.org.

VETERINARY ASSISTANT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM: Offered by Massasoit Community College beginning Sept. 10. Students will receive training in office and hospital procedures and pharmacy, lab and surgical procedures. Upon successful completion of the program, students will receive a veterinary assistant certificate.

Information/registration session scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Aug. 14 at the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce. For information call (508) 588-9100, ext. 1307. Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, 134 Court St., Plymouth.

WAREHAM COMMUNITY TELEVISION: Second Annual Television Boot Camp for Wareham students in Grades 8-12 at the WCTV Studios, 9 a.m.-noon Aug. 19th-23rd and 26th-30th. Classes are free and no previous experience is required. Kids will learn about new TV equipment, software and production techniques. Scheduled dates are snacks provided. Night classes are also available - please inquire. RSVP by Aug. 15 to Christian at 508-273-2340 X 3 or christian@warehamtv.org, (put "VP Boot Camp" in the subject line). 505 Main St., Wareham.

GLEASON FAMILY YMCA: and NETA are co-sponsoring the following national-recognized workshops: H.I.I.T. and TABATA High Intensity Interval Training (H.I.I.T.). 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sept. 28. TABATA rest-based training. This workshop will help you bridge the gap between exercise science and interval programming. Cost \$109; Cycle Coach, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sept. 29. This workshop will expand on your training to explore different types of motivation, creating "killer cues" and the power of language to create an unforgettable riding experience. Cost \$109. To register pricing call NETA at 800-237-6242 or register at www.netafit.org, for local information contact Lu Brito 508-295-9622 x.19 or at lbrito@ymcasouthcoast.org. 33 Charge Pond Road, Wareham.

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF): Looking to recruit volunteers for Foster Care Review in Southcoast area. For information, visit www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dcf/

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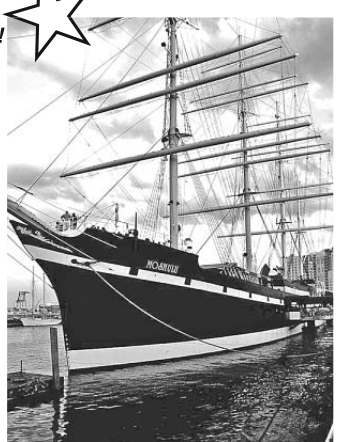
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