

# THE CHAMPION

FALL 2016

OUR CHAMPION:  
ANN BAKER

## Volunteer Rallies Community to Support High-Risk Kids

4 Thanks to Altria, Grieving  
Kids Will Heal at Camp

5 Tamara Imagines a  
Future Without Secrets

6 Kids Express Themselves  
Through Dance

7 Sophia Booker Joins  
State Executive Council

  
**UMFS**  
Official Newsletter



## Volunteer Rallies Community to Support High-Risk Kids

Ann (left), collaborates with Caitlin Himelright, an art teacher at Charterhouse School-Edinburg.

**ANN BAKER FIRST CONNECTED** with UMFS through her church in 2002, but her passion for serving high-risk children dates back to her experience working as an art teacher for a junior high school in North Carolina in 1975.

“In those days, schools were at a low point in serving kids with disabilities,” Ann remembers. “Most of us didn’t have a clue what to do with kids with special needs — there were just no resources and no training for us.”

In 1975, Congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Together, the

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— Ann Baker

two laws established the right to public education for all students regardless of disability and mandated that states that accept public funds for education must provide special education to children with disabilities.

“All of a sudden,” Ann remembers, “children who I was not prepared to teach were dumped into my classroom ... I got on a bit better than some of the other teachers because I was teaching art, but there were a lot of rough days.”

Ann taught in North Carolina public schools for 25 years before retiring to her hometown of Harrisonburg, VA, where her work as a champion for high-risk kids would continue through her church.

“If you attended Asbury United Methodist church during Doug Hill’s tenure there, you knew about UMFS,” Ann says of the Rev. L. Douglas Hill who served the church as pastor for eight years. Doug presented UMFS as an opportunity to do mission work and invited UMFS President and CEO Greg Peters to come speak at the church in 2002.

“Hearing Greg talk about the kids and families UMFS serves took me back to

that classroom in 1975 when I felt helpless to support those kids,” Ann says. “For me, working with UMFS gave me a chance to make things right for them.”

In 2011, Ann started a Child Advocacy Council (now called Child Champion Council) in Harrisonburg to support UMFS. Ann’s leadership of the council became critical when UMFS Charterhouse School-Edinburg, about 30 miles northeast of Harrisonburg, opened in 2013. The school serves students in the Shenandoah Valley area with autism and other neurological differences, as well as emotional and behavioral challenges.

Ann saw the school as a rallying point for churches in the valley. Her vision was that, while some of the larger churches could support the school financially, the smaller ones could be the hands and feet of the mission, serving the school as volunteers. Clergy and lay people from 10 area churches joined forces to help the school. Members of Asbury UMC donated funds to purchase a kiln for the art classroom. Braddock Street UMC donated \$2,700 worth of gift cards. The Rev. Bob Jones championed his congregations at St. John’s UMC and Wesley Chapel to stuff Christmas stockings with toys and treats for students.

“Ann essentially single-handedly rallied support for the school by reaching out to more churches in the surrounding counties and getting more people to join the council to support the school,” says UMFS Volunteer Manager Angie Williams.

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Ann is a vocal advocate for keeping students with special needs in their community. She worked with Charterhouse School administration to bring six superintendents from nearby school districts to the summer Child Champion Council meeting. Those strong community connections helped Charterhouse School-Edinburg grow from serving 18 students when it opened to 45 at the start of this year.

“Ann was instrumental in getting the word out in the valley about Charterhouse School-Edinburg,” says Greg Peters, UMFS president and CEO. “She’s been a champion for the students we serve there, bringing new volunteers and resources to the table as the school has grown to serve more and more children and families.”

“At UMFS, we are constantly attracting and collaborating with unwavering champions for high-risk children and families,” says Greg Peters.

“Ann is a committed champion who exhibits passion, perseverance, and tireless energy. When presented with a challenge, she responds as an unstoppable force of good. Her leadership encourages and supports many community volunteer efforts. She is a game changer for children in the Shenandoah Valley,” Peters says.

Last year — 40 years after starting her career as an art teacher — Ann stepped back into the classroom, as a volunteer and mentor for the school’s art program. “Life is coming full circle for me on a lot of levels,” says Ann.

Volunteers like Ann serve on Child Champion Councils throughout Virginia. Get involved! Attend a Child Champion Council in your local area.

For more information on how you can serve, visit our website at [www.umfs.org/get-involved/church-relations](http://www.umfs.org/get-involved/church-relations) or contact Angie Williams, [anwilliams@umfs.org](mailto:anwilliams@umfs.org) or 804.239.1039.

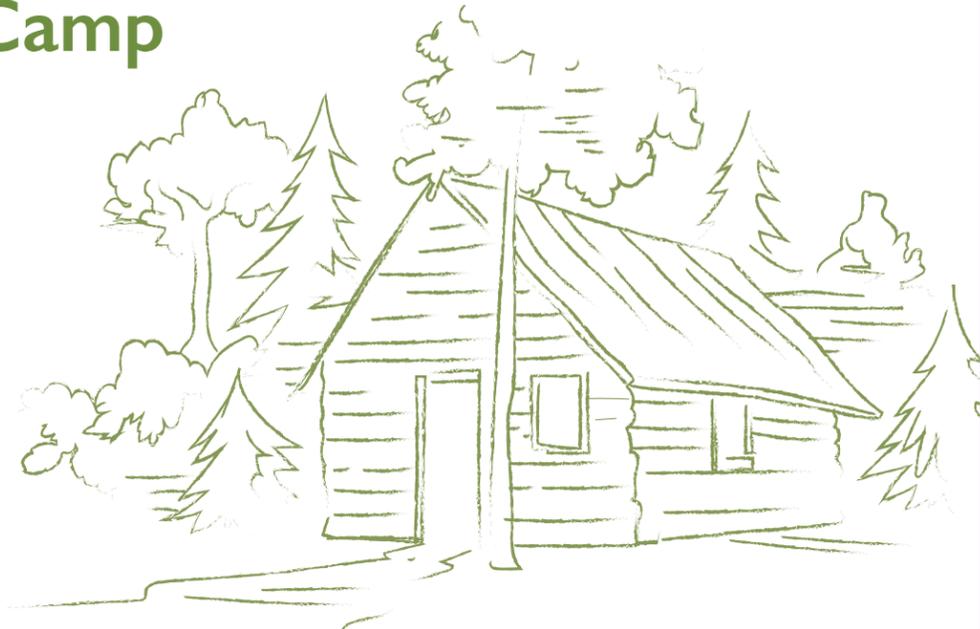


# Thanks to Altria, Grieving Kids Can Heal at Camp

**WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK** the Altria Companies Employee Community Fund (ACECF) for a grant of \$40,000 to support the development of a therapeutic grief retreat program for UMFS youth in adoptive and foster care. Although these children may still have biological parents and siblings, their sense of loss is similar to what many children experience with the death of a parent or sibling.

In collaboration with Comfort Zone Camp, UMFS will send between 35-60 kids from all over Virginia to camp in the spring of 2017 to help them process their grief in a supportive and safe environment.

“In foster care, there are so many things that happen that make these teens feel like the world isn’t a safe place,” says Emily Clark, LCSW, UMFS assistant regional director. “This retreat gives them one weekend



where they can feel safe and just relax — a safe space where they can gain more than they would in their normal environment,” she says.



**YOU CAN HELP!** With this generous gift, we are 80 percent to our goal, but we still need another \$10,000 to cover costs to make the camp happen. Please support the grief retreat by making a donation to the “Heal and Enrich” item in the gift catalog enclosed with this newsletter or online at [www.umfs.org/donate](http://www.umfs.org/donate)



Richmond Regional Director Erica Mann.

## Regional Director Wins \$10,000 Leadership Award

**THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SERVING RICHMOND** and Central Virginia awarded UMFS’ Erica Mann, regional director of community-based services, with a Stettinius Award for Nonprofit Leaders. The Stettinius fund recognizes and supports outstanding professionals who provide effective organizational leadership within the local charitable sector.

Erica will use the award to fund her participation in the Alliance for Strong Families Executive Leadership Institute. She will also attend the Adaptive Leader workshop with Cambridge Leadership Institute. Congratulations, Erica!

# Tamara Imagines a Future Without Secrets

**WHILE HER PEERS ARE BUSY** listening to country music, hunting, fishing and driving pickup trucks, Tamara finds solace in Broadway musicals she watches on her iPad. Being 14 and gay while growing up in a small Virginia town makes it hard to fit in. Not being able to be herself made her feel trapped and hopeless. That is, until she met Gene Lee, a UMFS clinician who provides counseling and support at Bon Secours primary care and pediatric practices in the Richmond area.

“Tamara needed a place to safely express who she is without fear of judgment,” Lee explains. “She needed someone outside her family and community to help her imagine a future beyond her small town and out from behind her secret.”

With support from her mother and twice-a-month ‘tune-ups’ with Gene, Tamara has a plan and hope for the future. “As soon as I turn 17, I’m going to spring into happiness and live my life without secrets,” she says.

Tamara wants to study performing arts in college. She and her mom visited Virginia Commonwealth University and The Julliard School this summer. She felt comfortable at both schools, and she can’t wait until the day she is finally able to stand in the spotlight and just be herself.

“As soon as I turn 17, I’m going to spring into happiness and live my life without secrets.”  
– Tamara



UMFS’ Integrated Behavioral Health Partnership with Bon Secours helps to bridge the gap between children’s medical needs and their mental health needs. UMFS provides behavioral health services at St. Mary’s hospital, Cross-Ridge Pediatrics and Family Medicine, Lee-Davis and Laburnum Medical Centers, and Ironbridge Family Practice.



## Henrico Teen Teaches Foster Kids Self-Expression Through Dance

### A PASSION FOR DANCE BROUGHT JUSTIN

Holloway and six UMFS foster kids together for a week of hip hop and ballet at a Henrico dance studio over the summer. Justin, a rising senior at Henrico High School's Center for the Arts, applied for a grant through the Youth Philanthropy Project of The Community Foundation to make a summer dance camp happen. The grant awarded Justin and UMFS \$1,850 to pay for Justin's teaching assistants, costumes, shoes and other supplies, the studio space at Central Virginia Dance Academy and fees for Justin to attend a conference to hone his dance instructional skills. Justin attended the Joffrey Ballet Summer Intensive in San Francisco for Contemporary Ballet in 2015. As soon as he returned, he hosted the first dance camp for 13 Richmond-area foster kids.

"I wanted to give these kids a chance," says Justin. "A chance to find out who they are and what they like... and hopefully give them an outlet to express themselves through hip-hop dancing."

Kids in foster care often miss out on the chance to participate in extracurricular activities because of circum-

stances beyond their control, including where they live and where they go to school. The intensive, weeklong camp gave them a chance to learn how to creatively express themselves through dance.

"The camp was better than I could have imagined," explains Tory Everson, UMFS community based services supervisor. "These kids come from tremendous trauma, abuse and neglect...to see them actually try new things...it shows them and gives them hope for what they can actually do despite their background."

The dance camp is the first step toward turning his life-long passion into a career. After graduating, he hopes to study dance and kinesiology in college with the goal of becoming a dance therapist.



Justin wants to give foster kids a chance to try new things.

## UMFS Capital Campaign Begins Feasibility Study

**CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES OF** Winston-Salem, N.C. will work with UMFS executive leadership, board of directors and development staff to develop a feasibility study for our 2017-18 capital campaign.

Kevin Jacques, senior counsel for CapDev, worked with UMFS in 2003 on a successful capital campaign to build Charterhouse School.

"Kevin and his team are trusted and proven professionals in the industry, and we're excited to renew our partnership with them," says Greg Peters, UMFS president and CEO.

UMFS' board of directors plans to appoint a campaign chair and steering committee members by Christmas. The goal is to have the feasibility study completed by the end of the year.

This partnership will help UMFS to realize our four-phase development plan, and serve even more high-risk children and families throughout Virginia.



### Mission

UMFS is an unwavering champion for high-risk children and families, collaborating with communities to help them reach their full potential.

### Vision

Creating a world where caring, opportunity and generosity are passed on from generation to generation — empowering all children to contribute to society as engaged citizens.

[www.umfs.org](http://www.umfs.org)

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540.984.6266 • [info-edinburg@chs4u.org](mailto:info-edinburg@chs4u.org)

## Governor Appoints Project LIFE's Champion Sophia Booker to State Executive Council

### ON JULY 1, SOPHIA BOOKER

became the first youth representative to serve on Virginia's State Executive Council. Sophia, youth network coordinator for Project LIFE at UMFS and a student at VCU, was a vocal advocate for the Fostering Futures program, an initiative proposed by Governor Terry McAuliffe and ultimately accepted by the General Assembly. Sophia got the attention of legislators and lobbyists when she ended her testimony with, "Woo hoo for the bill!"

"I missed the call from the governor's office because I was taking a nap, but when I listened to the message on my phone, I couldn't have been

more excited," Sophia says. "I'm truly honored to be appointed to serve on the committee. I'm excited to get to work this fall."

You may remember Sophia as our featured champion in last summer's newsletter. Sophia and her twin sister grew up in foster care and were eventually adopted as teens. Sophia works with don't fare as well. Sophia wants to be sure these youth have the support they need when they leave foster care. She's a social work major at VCU with a minor in psychology who isn't afraid to use her voice to make an impact.

"Sophia has become an influential role model for the youth she works with through UMFS, and now she will be a powerful advocate for them on the state level. I am so proud of her, and know that she will do a wonderful job!"

— Jill Gaynor,  
Sophia's mentor





## #BackInTheDay

“Down, set, hike!” These young men in front of one of the old boys’ cottages enjoy some friendly R & R. In the 1950s, children moved into “new” cottages which have been in use ever since.

## HAPPENINGS AT UMFS



# FORE the Kids golf tournament

**WHEN:** October 14, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.  
**WHERE:** Royal New Kent Golf Course  
10100 Kentland Trail  
Providence Forge, VA 23140

## Tee Off Fore the Kids

Time is running out! Sign up today to play or sponsor our Farmville Fore the Kids golf tournament. Your donation will help our Children’s Greatest Needs fund, which supports kids in UMFS programs who need basics like clothing, shoes and furniture.

Don’t play golf? You can still donate online,  
[www.umfs.org/donate](http://www.umfs.org/donate)

To register, visit:  
[www.umfs.org/golf](http://www.umfs.org/golf)



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for up-to-date information on events or to give online.

Find other updates about upcoming events and other news on social media:

