

The Marsh Messenger

• Winter 2014-15 • www.marshfoundation.org

Serving children and families since 1922

A Year in Review: 2014 at The Marsh Foundation

In many ways, 2014 has been a year of sadness and rebuilding at The Marsh Foundation. Fortunately, it has also been a time of great support and teamwork throughout the entire Marsh Foundation Family.

In January, 2013, one of our beloved foster mothers, Faye Lepper, passed away unexpectedly in a car accident. At the time, she was running the independent living foster home in Senior Hall on campus.

While staff and youth reeled from her passing, many stepped up to help in the time of need. Most notably, foster care consultant Pamela Reagan, who stepped away from her traditional responsibilities and moved into Senior Hall temporarily to care for the boys Faye had left behind.

Because the home was now staffed and not under the care of a licensed foster parent, the licensing of the home had to change to a group home. Several months later, after the boys had either graduated or transitioned to other arrangements, it was decided to leave the home as that, a group home.

Throughout the year, there were a variety of issues that caused staff to be pulled in multiple directions. The family teachers on campus always pulled together and put in the extra effort and hours that it



At the annual Foster Care Appreciation Dinner, Kim Mullins presents Faye Lepper's son Paul with a plaque in honor of his mother. Faye Lepper passed away unexpectedly in a car accident in January.

took to get the job done and ensure that the kids were getting the best care possible.

After many months of hiring and training new staff, Senior Hall has finally been able to accept new youth. Two have already moved in, and now the home is taking referrals for boys aged 15 1/2 and older in need of independent living services.

In addition, the updating of Trustee Hall has been completed this year. The foster care division is now housed in the eastern part of the home, while the rest of the home is licensed as a foster home. Felicia Quaintance currently has two foster children living with her there.

Another big transition on campus was the hiring of

new Marsh School principal, Robbie Breese. The school has transitioned well and has been implementing a wide variety of new initiatives.

While there have been many challenges this year at The Marsh Foundation, there have also been many rewarding moments.

Once again, the Shirley Haight family graciously donated an Easter egg hunt and gifts for all of the youth on campus. This annual event proves to be a highlight for our kids.

During spring break, staff and youth were able to travel to Kentucky and work on a group service project. This was in addition to the local efforts at area

Continued on page 6...



THE MARSH
FOUNDATION

Please Share

Please pass The Marsh Messenger along to others in your office or family who would like to read it. Thank you!

Inside

- Letter from the Executive **Page 2**
- Deceased alumni and former employees **Page 3**
- Annual Letter from The Trustees **Page 3**
- Letter from the Alumni President **Page 3**
- House Happenings **Page 4**
- Photo Book **Page 5**
- Senior Hall Now Open **Page 7**
- November was National Novel Writing Month **Page 7**

Leadership

The Marsh Foundation Board of Trustees:

Gary Clay
Gary Corcoran
Robert Gamble

The Marsh Foundation Executive Team:

Robbie Breese
Kim Mullins
Jeff Grothouse

The Marsh Foundation
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Van Wert, Ohio 45891

From the executive's desk ...

Every year before Thanksgiving, we ask our students to create a small packet containing a cover page, an acrostic, and an essay about what Thanksgiving means to them. The teachers and I read through all of the packets and we ask some of the students to present their project to the staff and students before our campus wide Thanksgiving meal.

I was beyond impressed with the quality of work and thought that went to in to these packets. It was a proud moment for me. I was proud to be a part of a school and organization that has taught our students the set of morals displayed in these packets.

One of the essays that really stuck out to me came from a student that I, honestly, did not expect to submit such a thoughtful piece. This student also agreed to present his essay to the campus. It was one of the most courageous things that I have ever witnessed, as I watched this nervous young man give his speech and at one point put his paper down and spoke from the heart.

I will not go in to the details of the speech as I feel it is personal to the student and our Marsh Family, but there are two messages that stuck out to me and I will share. First, he asked his peers, "don't feel sorry for me, but learn from my



Robbie Breese

"It was a proud moment for me. I was proud to be a part of a school and organization that has taught our students the set of morals displayed in these packets."

— Robbie Breese

mistakes." Second, he sent a message that I'm embarrassed to admit that I have not heard until this point in that Thanksgiving is meant to be "slow moving, and that you should not overcrowd your mind with other things."

After our Thanksgiving meal, I sat down and read this essay one last time before diving in to the pile on my desk. At the

end of the essay, I leaned back in my chair and chuckled at the thought of "slow moving, and that you should not overcrowd your mind." This led me to reflect on my first couple of months here at the Marsh Foundation. It has been the complete opposite of "slow moving" and my mind has indeed been overcrowded.

I have faced the challenges that we all face when taking a new position of memorizing new names, learning the logistics of the campus, and all of the other things that come.

This combined with our unique set up in that we have a school trying to meet the ever-changing educational demands mandated by the state, and implementing it in a way that works within the Teaching Family Model. It takes quite the collaborative effort between the residential, business and education staff to make these demands work. Although we have a lot of work ahead of us, it has been great thus far in seeing the willingness of my school staff to be on board.

While reflecting and being in the middle of the holiday season, I want to use this insert as an opportunity to say THANK YOU! Thank you to my teachers and secretary for the extra hours you have put in helping to make our school great. Thank you to my school family teachers and your patience. Thank you to the directors and trustees

for the support and direction. And thank you to the Marsh Foundation Family for making me feel welcome.

While on the topic, I want to share with you the people that I am most thankful for, my family. I have been married nearly four years to my beyond supportive wife, Natasha (DuVall). Tasha is currently teaching 4th grade Language Arts at Crestview. We have two children that we are beyond proud of, Addison (2) and Johnse ("John - z", 9 months).

As a family, we look forward to getting to know all involved with The Marsh Foundation both past and present. If you see us out and about, please stop and introduce yourself.

We would also like to wish you the best throughout the holiday season.

Robbie Breese

*Principal and Director of
Education at The Marsh
Foundation School*

*Merry Christmas
and Happy
New Year
from everyone
at The Marsh
Foundation!*

A commitment to excellence

A Letter From The Board of Trustees

Reflection - Introspection - Prudence

The holiday season is upon us and we are quickly approaching the end of another eventful year. For many it is a time of reflection - a time to look back and give serious thought to what the past 12 months has meant. What were your dreams and aspirations when the year began? What did you accomplish? The Marsh Trustees are hopeful that you have had a happy and successful year.

Christmas represents the birth of Jesus, God's ultimate gift of our Savior and the pursuit of peace and joy. Christmas has become a time of shopping and gift giving with an atmosphere of stress and busyness. The real reason for the season can be overshadowed by the craziness of our activities and events this time of year. Christmas can and should be a time of introspection. It may take soul searching and self-analysis to achieve true peace and joy and put our priorities in order. When Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life" his words were for everyone. Through Him we can experience real peace and joy. The Trustees sincerely hope and pray the entire Marsh Foundation Family will experience a calm and peace and content-



Gary Clay

ment this year like no other.

The Trustees continue to be in awe of two things - the mission and vision of George and Hilinda Marsh - and the amazing group of employees who dedicate their careers to helping others. To all individuals and groups who have a present or past relationship with The Marsh Foundation you can be proud. The mission continues to be fulfilled as children and their families are impacted in positive ways. The Trustees bear an enormous responsibility in guiding and managing The Marsh Foundation. Prudence reigns supreme with our decision making process. Applying good judgement to the management and use of our resources will perpetuate and sustain our mission. We will continue to exercise caution and common sense in our endeavor of advocating for children.



Gary Corcoran



Bob Gamble

May the true spirit of the season bring you and your families closer together. Our sincere desire is for blessings to come your way as you enjoy this special time of yours.

Very respectfully yours,

The Marsh Trustees
Gary Corcoran
Bob Gamble
Gerald Thatcher

Deceased Marsh Foundation Alumni and Former Employees

Alumni:

Donna L. (Lee) McLaughlin
Deceased 11/16/13
Notified 12/06/13

Carolyn (Brenneman) Pendergrass
Deceased 04/19/2014

Reeda (Cooper) Jones
Deceased 11/12/2008
Notified 05/05/2014

Lois Edmiston Crouse
Deceased 04/27/2013
Notified 04/11/2014

Mary E. (McClure) Wuest
Deceased 08/17/2005
Notified 03/2014

Larry Danny Wendel
Deceased 03/17/014

Former Staff:

Annis Faye Lepper
Deceased 01/22/2014

From the Alumni President: Jeannie "Hisey" Snyder

Alumni, Students, Trustees,
Teachers & Staff,

I would like to tell you how proud I am that my son, Jeff Snyder, came back to Van Wert to become the Superintendent of Lincolnview Schools. For many years, Marsh students attended and graduated from Lincolnview High School. I bet

a lot of you remember gold old Lincolnview.

While a student, I never really appreciated the beauty of The Marsh campus, Senior Hall or the Administration Building. The architecture of all the buildings is a breath of fresh air. Back then, I was so busy with my work schedule and tasks I had to do that I just never noticed what

a beautiful campus I lived on.

Friendship is so intriguing and valuable. I treasure my friendship with all my Marsh family. Don't miss the awesome opportunity to reconnect with your past and see old friends. The 2015 Alumni Reunion will be held Saturday and Sunday, August 1 and 2, 2015 on The Marsh Foundation campus in

Van Wert, Ohio. There will be an evening meal on Saturday and a meal, tours and open house on Sunday. I promise you will have a great time I hope to see you there!

Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!

Jeannie "Hisey" Snyder
Your Alumni President



Clymer Chat

Clymer Hall does not currently have any openings, although two are expected in the coming weeks.

Recently, Christy Thees was named as the new program manager for the home. She will officially take over her new responsibilities on Dec. 8. The girls in the home are looking forward to having her.

In addition, the school family teacher for the home, Joy Caldwell was promoted to Librarian and Substitute Teacher. Mackenzie Basil has taken over her responsibilities at Clymer.

School has been going well

for the girls. Several of them made the honor roll for the first nine weeks and had artwork featured in the art show at Van Wert’s annual Apple Festival at the fairgrounds.

As the holidays approach, the girls are looking forward to decorating the house and the special outings that occur.



Marsh Matters

Marsh Hall is currently full with 10 boys. As the weather changes, the boys have transitioned from spending a lot of time outdoors to different activities in the rec hall and indoors.

Several boys at Marsh Hall are involved in the Supper Club mentoring program that The

Marsh operates with help from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Van Wert, Mercer and Auglaize Counties. Volunteer mentors have been matched with several youth at The Marsh. They spend two Thursday evenings a month together, having dinner and participating in another activity. Each month, the pairs also spend some free time together visiting or participating in another activity.

The boys are looking forward to the upcoming holidays and all that entails. They are busily preparing for Christmas parties and events.



Vance Voice

Vance Hall is also at capacity. The boys have been busy with school and a variety of activities.

Recently some of the boys, along with other youth on campus and a few foster youth, had the opportunity to attend an independent living conference in Columbus.

The day long conference provided several speakers who presented about college applications, job hunting and other important topics. All of the youth came back excited and encouraged by the things they learned and heard.

Suits for Success was on hand to provide suits and professional attire for the youth in attendance. They even received shoes and accessories. The goal was to provide a professional look for interviews and other important events.

The youth were very grateful. Several of them have been spotted wearing their suits to school.

Thanksgiving Poem and Essay Contest

Each year, The Marsh Foundation School has an acrostic poem writing contest at Thanksgiving time. Below is this year’s winner.

Thanksgiving is the best holiday of the year
Ham and rolls always give me joy and tears
And it’s time for a very special prayer
Now it’s time to eat the turkey layer by layer
Kids spread joy and kindness all around
So laughter is the greatest kind of sound
Grandma’s famous pumpkin pie is finally done
Indian and pilgrim stories are always lots of fun
Vacations are not something we do
I’m getting kind of tired I know we’re almost through
November is the best that’s all I have to say
Going to sleep is the worst part of the day because I know that
 Thanksgiving is about to go away.

In addition, each year there is also an essay contest. Students are asked to write about Thanksgiving and its meaning. Here is an excerpt from the winning essay.

“The true meaning of Thanksgiving is not what pleases us but what is meaningful to us. It’s about meeting with family and friends to have fun and give thanks for the things you already have.

Why wait to give thanks on only one day? We have many days of our lives to give thanks, and many chances to be thankful.

I spent my time not being thankful for what I had, and I wish I could go back in time and change that. But please don’t feel bad for me because I’m alright. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!”



Clockwise from the top right: October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Each Friday, the Van Wert YWCA challenged area businesses and organizations to wear purple to bring awareness to that cause. The staff at The Marsh participated. The annual Fall Festival was held. Staff, Trustees, youth and families enjoyed a meal, costume contest, music and a pumpkin decorating contest. For the first time, a SPIRIT week was held on campus this October. Youth voted on the five theme days. Pictured here are school staff on nerd day and Rob Davis, CPST worker on mismatch, crazy sock day. There was also a crazy hair day, favorite team day and costume day. A luncheon was held to celebrate Thanksgiving. The youth did several projects leading up to the holiday and they were on display for everyone to see during the celebration. In November, family teacher Ben Marsee spoke to the students as part of their Veteran's Day curriculum. He spoke about the meaning of Veteran's Day and why it is important to say thank you to veterans. He relayed information about his time at Guantanamo Bay and his responsibilities there. He also answered several intelligent questions from the youth about the base, normal daily responsibilities for a soldier and questions about the military.

97 Year-Old Alumn Visits Campus

This fall, Donald Oechsle had the opportunity to visit The Marsh Foundation campus. He and his family traveled more than four hours from southern Indiana to visit. Oechsle is now 97 years-old and lived at The Marsh from the time he was 10 years-old until his 18th birthday.

He and his siblings, Louise and Ralph, came to The Marsh after the death of his mother. It was a trip down memory lane when he returned to campus and toured the home where he once lived, Marsh Hall.

According to Oechsle, a typical day in 1927 started at 5 a.m. when he'd wake, make his bed and head out to milk the cows before breakfast. After school, it was time to milk the cows again, eat and clean up dinner and finish other chores such as working in the gardens. He remembers growing things like potatoes and sugar beets.

Oechsle has many fond memories from his time at The Marsh. Among his favorite are when he and his brother Ralph would catch pigeons in the barns. He also remembers showing cows at the fair. "At the time, we didn't have a trailer so we had to get up really early and walk the cows down Main Street to get to the fair," he said.

Oechsle said his favorite part about visiting The Marsh again was simply seeing where he used to live and just being at the place where so many of his memories are from.



Top, the log cabin located at the Van Wert Historical Society is the same cabin Donald Oechsle was born in. At right, Oechsle shows Matt Tuttle, program manager, his name on the Roll of Honor plaque located in the Administration Building.



While in Van Wert, the family also visited the Van Wert Historical Society. The log cabin at their facility is the same log cabin that Oechsle was born in, and where his mother died. His grandfather had lived there before his family.

He is hopeful that in August he and his family will again be able to visit and be on campus for the 2015 Alumni Reunion. The reunion is planned for Saturday and Sunday, August 1 and 2, 2015.

Continued from page 1

food banks and rescue missions.

A wonderful graduation ceremony was held in May for seven Marsh graduates. At their request, caps and gowns were worn for the first time in recent years.

This summer, the foster care division implemented a foster care day camp that many youth were able to take advantage of. It included day trips, art workshops and horseback riding among other things.

Project Believe has blessed us with their generosity time and time again. This year, they provided backpacks and school supplies for all of the group home youth. As the holidays approach, the group is again preparing to bring Christmas gifts to our youth.

This year, we've counted our many blessings at The Marsh Foundation!

New Staff Members

The Marsh Foundation recently hired new staff members:

- Abbi Anthony ~ Family Teacher
- Sarah Binkley ~ Overnight Family Teacher
- Doug Dye ~ Family Teacher
- Thomas Schatzer ~ Family Teacher
- David Beck ~ Family Teacher
- Linda Freeman ~ Family Teacher
- Laura Axe ~ Family Teacher
- Michele Wagner ~ Family Teacher

Congratulations to Family Teachers who were recently promoted:

- Julie Hess ~ Program Manager, Senior Hall
- Christy Thees ~ Program Manager, Clymer Hall



Senior Hall Independent Living Program Now Open

Previously operating as a foster home, Senior Hall's program has changed and is now a licensed group home with a focus on independent living skills.

The home can hold up to six boys, ages 15 1/2 and older at a per diem of \$160 per day. Two boys have already moved in. The home is designed to be a bridge between the group home setting and the community. It offers another step down option for the boys being served in the other group homes on campus.

Julie Hess has been promoted to program manager and will oversee the home. Two other staff are transferring over as well.

The boys in the less restric-

tive group home program have increased privileges and are encouraged to attend public school and find jobs in the community. A curriculum based independent living program is being implemented. The house works hand in hand with the clinical program already established on campus.

In addition, there will be a large focus put on budgeting, life skills and job readiness for the youth living in Senior Hall.

Those interested in making a referral to the program, can contact Kelly Gross at 419.238.1695 ext. 360 for more information, or complete the application located at <http://marshfoundation.org/referrals/>

*Wishing you a happy
& healthy 2015!*

November is National Novel Writing Month and Marsh Youth Joined the Fun

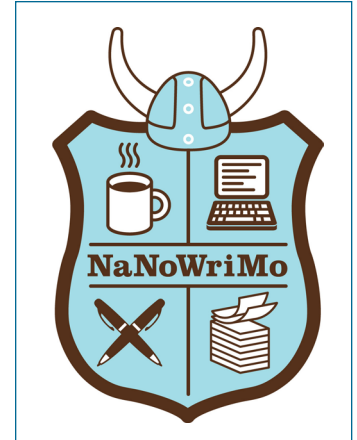
Writers from around the world participate in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) every November. It's a fun, seat-of-your-pants writing event where the challenge is to complete an entire novel in just 30 days. For one month, a writer gets to lock away the inner editor, let the imagination take over, and just create.

Its Young Writers Program (YWP) allows 17-and-under participants to set reasonable, yet challenging, individual word-count goals. This November there were 17 Marsh Foundation youth who joined nearly 90,000 young writers around the world in writing their very own books!

Family Teacher Lisa Washam facilitated the program on campus with weekly writing times to help the youth challenge themselves, win prizes, and meet their goals. Youth that met their goals received five printed copies of their finished story if they choose to edit it.

The participating youth attended a Kick-Off Party in October and received stickers courtesy of NaNoWriMo. They had the chance to draw and then lock up their inner editors and write themselves an inspirational note they will received later in the month.

Washam believes that this program will give the youth a chance to feel empowered through the low-stakes, high-



fun challenge. She loves the fact that they get to write for the sake of writing with no worries about being graded for spelling and grammar- all of that is corrected during the editing process when they create their books.

It also gave them the opportunity to have a positive association with writing as they get a chance to do something enjoyable. According to Washam, the best part will be when they get to see their story come to life in a printed paperback book that will serve as a happy reminder of their potential and what they can do.

Washam was overly impressed with one youth's goal in particular. Which she said, really showcases what the Young Writers Program hopes to bring to the youth: To make something positive and to share their stories with people.

As of Nov., 24, 11 of the 18 students had met their goals. The seven remaining were very close to meeting theirs as well.

The Marsh Foundation
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SAVE THE DATE!

2015 ALUMNI REUNION

The next Marsh Foundation Alumni Reunion is right around the corner! Mark your calendars now so that you don't miss this awesome opportunity to reconnect with your past and see old friends!

The 2015 Alumni Reunion will be held on Saturday and Sunday, August 1 and 2, 2015 on The Marsh Foundation campus in Van Wert. There will be an evening meal on Saturday and a meal, tours and open houses on Sunday afternoon. If you know of alumni who are not on our mailing list, please share this information and encourage them to register for our mailings online at www.marshfoundation.org via the Alumni page.

Also, follow The Marsh Foundation's official Facebook page for updates and event information! Visit www.facebook.com/MarshFoundation and click like! See what is happening at The Marsh!



The mission of The Marsh Foundation is to inspire hope, to teach and to care for children and families.

Calendar of Events

December 2014 ~ April 2015

- December 23 - January 2 - Marsh Foundation School winter break.
- No School Monday, January 19 in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- February 5, 7 p.m. - The Van Wert County Spelling Bee will be held in our auditorium.
- No School Friday or Monday, February 13 or 16 because of staff in-service and President's Day.
- March 23 - 27 - Marsh Foundation School Spring break.
- No School on Thursday or Friday, April 2 and 3 because of staff in-service and Good Friday.
- April 10, 7 p.m. - Peony Pageant in The Marsh Auditorium.



For more information about any event, visit www.marshfoundation.org.

Attention Marsh Foundation Alumni

Are you an alumnus of The Marsh Foundation? Did you know that on our website, www.marshfoundation.org, we have a directory of alumni? To view the directory, or sign up yourself, visit the Alumni page online at www.marshfoundation.org.