

## Summer Learning Loss

vol. 12 issue 1

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## News Briefs



**Kay Brown (Pittsburgh 2006)** received her ordination as Reverend and became Pastor of administration for Central Baptist Church on Sunday 12/5/10. “I have more responsibility and I have to be more accountable to more people,” said Kay. “I think God was preparing me for greater ministry and it’s more than working in the church, God looks at your relationship with His son.” Kay will be responsible for visiting the sick, among other duties and will continue to function in youth ministry. “I think it’s an honor,” she said.



**Khary Bridgewater (Boston 2006)** accepted the position of Foundations Program Officer for Congregational Initiatives for the DeVos Family Foundations. In this position since May 2010, Khary is responsible for providing leadership support to



**Nicole Baker (NYC 2010)** & Jon Bernacet made their marriage covenant on February 5, 2011 at New Hyde Park Baptist Church in New Hyde Park, NY. With about 300 family and friends in attendance, Nicole said a very soul touching moment for her was hearing all the guests singing “In Christ Alone” and “Jesus Paid It All.” “I realized how great the Gospel is and God’s redeeming love,” she said. The newlyweds spent their 8-day honeymoon in Cancun, Miami and Clearwater, FL.



**Stephen Henry (Miami 2009)** and Melissa gave birth to a bouncing baby boy, Caiden, on December 16, 2010 at 10:45pm weighing 6 lbs 13oz and stretching 9¼ inches long. Now a proud Papa of two, Stephen says that having a son “feels so great!” He looks forward to imparting into him all the qualities needed to grow into a responsible man. “I hope that he will be a great mentor, role model and leader...and a musician too,” Stephen says.

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tion’s programs. While breaking through professionally, Donna recently achieved a personal goal of finishing her first triathlon (5k run, 15K cycle, 150M swim). “I met my goal of not stopping to walk during the 5K, instead I ran the whole thing,” Donna said in an email statement. “[This was] a big deal for me to complete the Sprint Triathlon. I was aiming for 1hr 15 min, I made it past the finish line at 1hr 18min and 2 sec.”



**Michelle Cole (Orlando 2010)** & Jermaine Reynolds exchanged nuptials on August 28, 2010 at The Life Center Church in Eatonville, FL. According to Michelle there we some 500 attendees, one of the many things that she’ll cherish was the participation the youth from both of their ministries. Walking as future brides dressed in white were her college juniors and senior girls and all the ushers were the guys Jermaine ministers to. About her husband, Michelle said, “He balances me and is very understanding.”



**Donna Perkins (L.A. 2005)** received a promotion with two titles, National Director of Youth Development and National Director of Strategic Partnerships for Here’s Life Inner City. In these roles Donna is responsible for youth development programming and general activities for all of the organiza-

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## Closing the Gap on Summer Learning Loss

*An Interview with Chaná Edmond-Verley*

Chana is the Senior Program Officer for Community Initiatives for the Doug & Maria DeVos Foundation. For more than 5 years Chana has led successful summer youth programs in the State of Michigan.



You can access the entire interview in audio format by visiting <http://goo.gl/FoaOm>



Explain the problem of summer learning loss.

In the summer kids lose learning. It’s commonly known as “summer slide.” It’s where the achievement children gain during the school year basically seeps out because of the lack of engagement in rich kinds of activities in the summer. Students come back [to school] in the fall knowing less than what they did when they left. It’s like manufacturing “rework” where you make a bunch of parts and 30% of the parts are not good. So teachers (must) work really hard to bring kids (back) up to a certain level in the fall.

Who has done some of the work to discover the findings around summer learning loss?

This is not a new phenomenon, it is based on 100 years worth of research. A researcher by the name of White, in 1906 did extensive research on summer learning loss and the issue of key transitions; particularly transition from preschool into kindergarten, from elementary to middle school, and from middle school into high school, those are most vulnerable times.

Another researcher, Cooper, in 1996, found that every student has some level of loss and the loss for low income children is more than two months worth. The national average is around 22% of the learning that students gain is lost. In urban areas the learning loss is upwards to 40%. Close to half of what they’ve learned during the school year gets lost in the summer.

Does this require that teachers make up for this loss somehow?

Teachers always have to come back in the fall and review what has been taught. It’s pretty dramatic! The issue is the kinds of things kids are doing in the summer. If you are a middle or upper-class child you might take trips to the museum, go to the beach, or read books. The ways parents interact with their kids ensures learning. Low income children, many times do not have the opportunity for those kinds of activities. They are just hanging out on the block. Who is addressing this concern and where have you seen some of the work taking place? We have engaged the National

Summer Learning Association (NSLA). They are raising awareness on a national level and asking for specific summer funding to address this issue. Locally here in Grand Rapids, at the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation, we are working with 27 different organizations to offer academically enriching summer learning in partnership with the Grand Rapids Public Schools. The schools provide the academic pieces through a technology based blended learning model. Then the kids leave school and go to the partner organizations like churches to do music, art, and science projects to keep the mind pliable and moving.

Are there other summer learning models that you can talk about?

In Philadelphia there’s the Summer Dreamers academy where the public schools have transformed what their summer school looks like. If you’re in a community that’s doing traditional summer school, which is just remediation, there is a huge opportunity to take that and transform it into something that kids will want to attend. One of

# Summer Learning Loss



# PHOTOS

## First National Conference 2011

by Rick Diaz

What a wonderful time it was for the 2011 class of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative! The First National Conference in Orlando was a time to begin the journey of healthy change in both personal lives and ministry by developing core values. Alumni presenters included:

Jeremy Del Rio (NYC 2010)  
Micah Espinoza (Denver 2005)  
Felicia Sanders (Chicago South 2007)  
Esperanza Martinez (Miami 2007)  
Henry Greenidge (Portland 2005)  
Khary Bridgewater (Boston 2006)  
Gerald Bell (Kansas City 2003)  
Ron Carter (Birmingham 1999)

Participants enjoyed the beautiful spring weather riding together on airboats. They were also treated to an Orlando Magic basketball game at the new Amway Arena and ended the week with a worship celebration featuring Ron Kenoly. What a blessed week of developing relationships that will continue through the years of learning and growing together.



Find more photos at: <http://goo.gl/OW53l> or



# COLUMNS

## Consider This

by Gerald Bell

For many students in urban communities summer time can mean the pressures of reading assignments, math homework, and essays are off for about 3 months. Therefore, exercising such options as sleeping until noon, catching up on a little television or just hanging with friends may seem harmless. But it can be very harmful to the mind that has been filled with quality learning nine months prior and no activities to keep the knowledge stimulated. Some DVULI alumni refuse to entertain youth during the summer but are committed to ensuring students don't return to a higher grade level unprepared to learn at that level. Consider this!

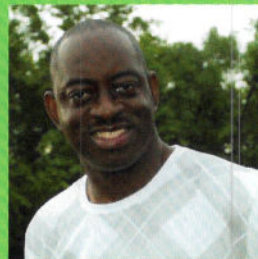
Eric Johnson  
(Los Angeles 2010)



In the summer at Lake Avenue Foundation we have a coalition of partners that support our program providing tutorial to students grades nine through eleven who struggle with pre-algebra, algebra and English. These three subjects are where students experience the greatest drop off. So we allow them to earn core credits for summer learning. Our coalition also offers life skills programming during the entire month of July. Topics include: time management, conflict resolution, gang intervention/prevention, healthy relationships, budgeting, study skills, college preparation, self esteem and personal growth and develop-

ment. Instructors of each topic give students tools on how to listen better, improved ways of note taking, writing, and remembering information. They write it, repeat it and talk to someone else about it. Or students read it, write it and put it on a flash card so they retain that much more. Exit surveys showed that the vast majority of students attending felt they had been helped in a significant way, so much so that, with resources available to resolve personal challenges, they were now ready to tackle the academic rigor of the next school year. We have the blessings of the Pasadena Unified School District and are serving over 250 junior high and high school students.

Marvin Daniels  
(Chicago 2002)



Kids Across America offers summer classroom style learning and equips students in reflective thinking, use of case studies, and other academics such as reading, writing and critical thinking. In addition, there are reading groups to help those with literacy issues see improvements. We know students lose learning habits over the summer if they have any habits at all. So we provide guidance for taking advantage of quiet time, how to practice application of their learning, and reflecting with no TV, radio and phone distractions. Other students need to know how to complete assignments and get through material so we offer guidance there and make it fun for them. Students have a greater value for learning

when they get to practice what they are being taught. That's why we give them opportunities for serving, leading and team building. It really is a great experience and the students show a lot of excitement.

Florence Annang  
(Los Angeles 2005)



We realize at Harambee Christian that you have to keep students thinking critically. We provide summer camps for five weeks that are intensive learning and development from 8 am to 6pm daily. In the mornings student go right into academic instruction in math, English, science, language arts and Bible study. In the afternoon they have options to work on the computer, work creatively with the arts or they can continue with more of the academic content. In the late afternoon some will elect to go the museum or even swimming. But whatever students elect to do in the afternoon they must return with some lesson they have learned from a critical thinking point of view. Vacation Bible School is also offered during this term. Youth grades seven to twelve are employed at the camp but still have required reading and academic instruction along with book dialogues, guest speakers and peer learning groups. In the urban community, so many of our students are performing poorly already and that's why the summer has to be spent connecting and challenging them to continue learning.

# RESOURCE

## National Summer Learning Association

by Ron Carter



"Summer, summer, summertime, time to sit back and unwind." These are lyrics to Will Smith's 1991 hit, *Summertime*. For many school-aged kids, being out of school for the summer is just that, a "...time to sit back

and unwind." Without question, kids need a break from school, but as research shows, summer break often results in learning losses. This is particularly true for students from low income families and the loss is most evident in their reading ability. As the former administrator of an urban Christ-centered school, I'm intimately aware that this is true. Instead of beginning the year with new learning, my teachers had to spend considerable time reviewing material covered the previous year. In many cases, this review consumed the entire first six weeks of school.

Thankfully, there are many concerned individuals

and organizations taking measures to address this problem. One such organization is the National Summer Learning Association. Founded in 1992 at Johns Hopkins University, the NSLA is an independent organization committed to "... providing resources, guidance and expertise to the summer learning community." It could be that you have been looking for resources and support to help you work with academically engaged during summer break. If so, then the NSLA is a good place to start.

Check them out at: [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)

# DVULI NEWS

## Welcome Fuller Pilot Cohort 2011

by Eileen Kooreman

Five current participants have been accepted as the first class of the DVULI/Fuller partnership to complete the training for 24 credit hours at Fuller Seminary. We are pleased to introduce: (pictured L-R) David Comeau (NY), Dan Johnson (NY), Sarah Richman (NY), Adrian McConnell (Dallas), and

Jason Botello (Dallas). Kara Powell, Executive Director of Fuller Youth Institute, joined them in Orlando. They will have additional reading and writing assignments from Fuller along with the assignments they are completing for the DeVos training. All five plan to continue after DVULI to complete the second year of the Urban Youth Ministry Certificate program with Fuller. Since this is a pilot year there are bound to be questions and concerns

about everything from workload to tuition payments. Kara's encouragement was to take advantage of both the staff at Fuller and DVULI to assist in any way possible. We all want to see them finish successfully. Best wishes to this pilot cohort for a great DVULI experience while furthering their academic credentials.



# COVER STORY CONT.

the challenges with summer is kids don't want to attend school because it's not fun. Baltimore and Indianapolis are also doing pretty rich summer learning programs also that could be held up as national models.

**Do you recommend urban faith-based youth workers begin to address this issue somehow?**

Youth workers have the opportunity to speak to the heart of young people. Every youth worker ought to make sure that all of their youth are connected to some kind of learning experience in the summer. That really is half the battle. We don't want kids hanging out on the block and letting their brains go to mush. Kids need to be engaged in activities at least three to four days a week and they need an all day experience. Collaboration, quite frankly, is key to providing a higher dosage of learning.

**Are there tools or resources for how to develop, encourage, or implement summer learning opportunities?**

One excellent resource is the NSLA website. They have two page briefs on every aspect of summer learning loss, what parents care about, what students care about, and ways you can offer different aspects of summer learning. They have a rich set of tools and also provide technical assistance, consulting, and an annual conference.

**"...close to half of what [students] learned during the school year gets lost in the summer."**

**What kind of outcomes is the NSLA hoping to see from summer learning?**

NSLA would like to see an impact in academic achievement... expressly looking at both literacy and mathematic

achievement shifts. Locally, we'd like to see our efforts at least stem summer learning loss. For example, during the summer we found that kids don't have access to the kind of food they have during the school year. There are dollars out there for food programs that most states leave on the table. We are looking at ways to increase access to healthy food, increase activity, and decrease obesity.

**What else should be known in the faith community about summer learning?**

Student achievement is suffering among urban youth who are disproportionately children of color, this is a justice issue. The church should stand tall and to do its part to get connected. It's a high leverage opportunity. We can't afford to have our students lose 40 percent of what they have been taught over the summer. This is an opportunity to close that gap.



# Helping Teen Parents Graduate High School

by Gerald Bell

Now that school is back in, so are the concerns that come with sending kids off to learn among their peers. “I hope my baby doesn’t get hurt, bullied, perform below standard, or worse, get pregnant...” are a few of the mental gymnastics some parents, guardians and even youth workers wrestle with.

With all the programs available on and off school grounds to serve as preventive measures, sadly, next springs, reports will surface that not every student had a squeaky clean school year. Among those will be facts about the number of teen pregnancies and drop outs.

The Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit organization that studies reproductive and sexual health, reported last year that in 2006, teen pregnancy rates in America rose for the first time in over a decade. Their data claimed:

- Among black teens, the pregnancy rate declined by 45% (from 223.8 per 1,000 in 1990 to 122.7 in 2005), before increasing to 126.3 in 2006.
- Among Hispanic teens, the pregnancy rate decreased by 26% (from 169.7 per 1,000 in 1992 to 124.9 in 2005), before rising to 126.6 in 2006.
- Among non-Hispanic white teens, the pregnancy rate declined 50% (from 86.6 per 1,000 in 1990 to 43.3 per 1,000 in 2005), before increasing to 44.0 in 2006.

Educating teens about preventing pregnancy continues to generate heated debate. Yet regardless of the solution, it doesn’t answer the question of what to do once there is a baby in arms and not a high school diploma. Child Trends published a fact sheet last year that showed that teen mothers were less likely than other young women to earn a high school diploma by the age of 22.

## Why do teen parents choose to drop out of school?

Among the many answers to the why dropout question is the high level of need and limited resources teen parents

have to raise their child. Nancy Kuhnski, Teen Parents Director of Youth for Christ’s National Teen Parents Team, said physical needs such as housing are a huge barrier. “I’ve known of teen parents living in cars and couch surfing because nobody wants to deal with them or their baggage,” Kuhnski said. “It’s a struggle finding programs to get them into subsidized housing, and is why there’s a significant dropout rate among teen moms, and dads too.”

Added to this Kuhnski said is the need for employment, job training, family building skills as well as a positive support system. All of which end up taking precedent over finishing school.

**“One of my girls just completed her GED at [a] Community College and is now taking classes there. She has two daughters.”**

YoungLives and Youth for Christ help teen parents work towards completing high school through GED or alternative high school options. Kuhnski recommends going the alternative high school route because many of them offer childcare and evening classes.

## Exploring teen parent’s options

Many ministries and organizations are providing teen parents with mentoring relationships. YoungLives, the teen parent arm of Young Life, is for high school and middle school girls who are expecting or are raising a child on their

[More inside...](#)

## News Briefs



**Stephanie Shipman (Kansas City 2008) & Darryl Answer**

became Mr. & Mrs. Answer on June 4, 2011 at First Baptist Church of N. Kansas City. With approximately 250 family and friends witnessing their exchange of vows, Stephanie said, “It was a fun day and wasn’t really stressful.” The closing prayer that concluded the ceremony was a highpoint for them both. “Three of my DeVos fellow grads prayed on the microphone before the pastor closed. We’ll never forget that.” She said. The Answers spent their honeymoon in Southern California’s Palm Desert and San Diego for 9 days. Of her hubby Stephanie says, “He is the most tangible representation of Jesus because he loves the Lord so much and you can see it on his face.”



**Reginald Regnier (New York 2011) & Yaddle to Immanuel Alton Regnier**

on July 6, 2011 at Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx. He weighed 8 lbs 12 oz and stretched 24 inches long. To describe the day of delivery, the first time dad said, “I was in awe, excited, happy... shocked that I am a dad.” Admitting to finding this new role “unbelievable” Regnard also said, “I pray that Immanuel grows into a man of God, is blessed with success and patience. I pray he is a good athlete, a good son, and a respectful child.”



**Derley Figueroa (Houston 2010) and Annabel warmly received Victoria**

Nicole Figueroa on September 2, 2011 at Woman’s Hospital of Texas. She weighed 6 lbs 9 oz and measured 19.25 inches. With much feelings of “gratitude,” Derley said in an email statement

that there was plenty of “crying” at the birth of his baby girl. He said one of his hopes for her future is, “God [will] give her wisdom and courage.”



**June Evans (Dallas 2009)**

**Mike Hilt (Pittsburgh 2006) & Emily** welcomed their second son, Robert Marc Hilt, into the world on June 26, 2011 at Magee Women’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. Robert weighed 8 lbs 5oz and measured 21.5 inches. Mike says he’s looking forward to the joy of starting over again raising another child. As for Robert’s future, “My hope is whatever qualities he has, (kindness, humility) he’ll have it forever.”



**Edrin Williams (Minneapolis 2008)**

# Diapers, Diplomas & Decisions



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Staff Transitions & Liaisons  
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Graduate  
Helping Teen Parents  
RESOURCE

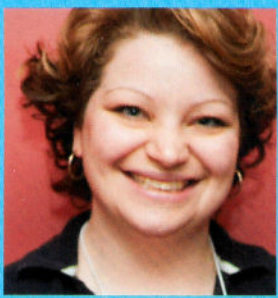
Decisions  
Diapers, Diplomas &  
FEATURE

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Educating Teen Parents

46523  
Grand Rapids, MI  
P.O. Box 230257  
URBAN LEADERSHIP  
DEVOS



## COVER STORY CONT.



Nicole Baker Bernacet, a 2010 DeVos Urban Leadership graduate and Director of the Boro Pregnancy Counseling Center in New York City said many teen moms eventually get their GED, but they also have to think about employment and that will likely require job training. She says there are programs offering teen parents help to succeed such as Year Up. "Most programs are city specific like Workforce1 in New York, but it pays

to do the research locally to find what's available," Bernacet said.



Last year Vanessa Davis (Cleveland 2009) launched Deborah's Place, a parent education and family development center for teen moms. She's seen some of her program participants take advantage of local efforts to acquire their education, gain employment and support their children. "I always encourage our teen moms to go slow. Take one class and get a part time job while the

child is in day care," said Davis. "One of my girls just completed her GED at Cuyahoga Community College and is now taking classes there. She has two daughters." "Being a teen parent is a difficult thing and the biggest thing you can do is give them encouragement," Bernacet said. "It's important to show them people that have made it. Help them figure out how much school is there to finish and [realize] they don't have to be stuck nor an expert, just find help." Any urban youth worker helping teen parents graduate from high school should always consult the department of education to learn about what they can do to assist them successfully Bernacet advises.

## DVULI NEWS

### Staff Transitions & Liaisons

by Eileen Kooreman

This past June, Rick Diaz and his wife Ida packed up a rental truck and left Grand Rapids for sunny Texas. After 4 years of working on



staff with the DeVos Initiative, Rick felt led to return to 'hands on' ministry in his home city of San Antonio. Rick first became involved with the DeVos training as the City Coordinator for San Antonio in 1999, he later served as a coach for Denver, and then came on board in a fulltime capacity at the Grand Rapids, Michigan office in November of 2006. It was wonderful to have Rick working here with

us and we will certainly miss his cheerful presence around the office. Fortunately, he is only a phone call away.

When Rick gave notice that he was planning to make a change, we took the opportunity as a team to re-evaluate how we get our work done. Two things quickly became clear. First, we reaffirmed that long term relationships with our cities and alumni were a top priority for the DeVos Initiative. Second, as we add new cohorts of graduates each year, it was becoming increasingly difficult to nurture all of those relationships. After 14 years, we have over 700 graduates!

For a number of years now, each city has been assigned a 'Staff Liaison' who committed to maintaining relationships with alumni and supporting 'follow up' projects that the alumni might be working on as a way to supporting others who work with urban youth in their cities. We brainstormed ideas and

decided to add several part-time Liaisons who would work alongside the DVULI staff in cities that were clustered close to their own city geographically.

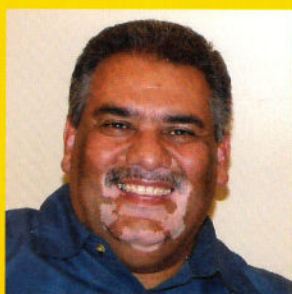
Angela Reeves, Phil Abeyta and Rick Diaz will take primary responsibility for staying in touch with alumni from their cities (see below for respective cities) and supporting their follow-up projects. Of course, our entire staff is always available to each of you by phone or e-mail. If you live in a city that has been assigned a new liaison, our staff will be visiting to make personal introductions. We hope that you will see this as simply adding another person who is invested in your life as a leader. We are so excited by the growing number of cities who are doing learning communities and leadership training events for other urban youth workers. The DeVos family's investment in each of you is bearing fruit as you train and mentor others.



**Angela Reeves**  
Chicago, Indianapolis, Minneapolis



**Rick Diaz**  
San Antonio, Dallas, Miami, San Diego



**Phil Abeyta**  
Denver, Albuquerque, Phoenix

### Welcome Zoraida Vélez

by Eileen Kooreman

Zoraida Vélez has joined the DVULI staff as a Program Associate. Her main areas of responsibility will be overseeing the accreditation partnership with Fuller Seminary and providing support for the participants who take the DeVos training for credit; coordinating the work of the DVULI Liaisons, Coaches, and Coordinators; and assisting with the coordination of in house trainings

for DVULI. Zoraida has a Master's degree in Education from Grand Valley State University. She taught for 7 years in the Grand Rapids Public Schools. She lives in Grand Rapids, is married to Abdiel, and they have two beautiful children. She is very excited to be a part of our team.



Please join us in welcoming Zoraida. Drop her a note at: [goo.gl/G4s9e](mailto:goo.gl/G4s9e) or [zoraidav@dvuli.org](mailto:zoraidav@dvuli.org)



## COLUMN

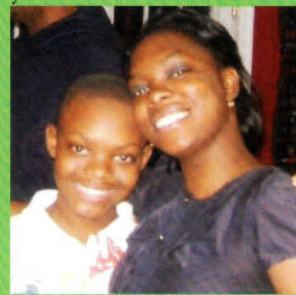
### Consider This! It can be done!

Jammie Albert  
(Pittsburgh 2006)

I was in the 9th grade when I had my son Justin. He was born October 15, 1997. My family was very supportive of me as a pregnant high school student and helped me cope so that I could focus on studies and not be stressed. I was out of school for about four weeks after Justin's birth. My teachers gave me homework and I worked hard to get caught up after I returned to classes. During school hours Justin was cared for by my family

and I persevered to complete my high school education on time. When I graduated my son was 4-years old and I went on to Wilberforce University in Ohio. While there, Justin stayed with my cousin and his wife in Maryland. We were together there during all holidays and summer breaks. When I graduated from Wilberforce Justin was 8 and we returned to live in Pittsburgh, where we've been together ever since. He and his father have a great relationship and he has always been active in Justin's life. Although his father and I were teen parents that did not interrupt our education as we are both college graduates.

I also have a Masters in Elementary Education from Carlow University in Pittsburgh. Today, Justin is 14-years old and in the 8th grade. He's an honor roll student and very active in sports. Being a teen mom I learned not to let others put limitations on me. It's not a tragedy but you have to find ways to make it benefit you and your child.



## RESOURCE

These are the resources mentioned in the feature article by those interviewed.

**GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE**  
U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity  
[goo.gl/gMIwZ](http://goo.gl/gMIwZ)

**CHILD TRENDS**  
A report on "Diploma Attainment Among Teen Mothers". An independent, nonpartisan research center dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families.  
[goo.gl/jf58A](http://goo.gl/jf58A)

**DEPT. OF EDUCATION**  
Funding, Policy Updates, Research and News about what our government is doing to help our children.  
[ed.gov](http://ed.gov)

**TEEN PARENTS**  
The teen parent arm of Youth For Christ is for high school and middle school girls who are expecting or are raising a child on their own.  
[yfc.net/teenparents](http://yfc.net/teenparents)

**GET YOUR GED**  
Sometimes life prevents individuals from achieving their educational goals. However, regardless of your life circumstances, it is never too late.  
[yourged.org](http://yourged.org)

**YEAR UP**  
is a one-year, intensive training program that provides urban young adults, ages 18-24, with a combination of hands-on skill development, college credits, and corporate internships.  
[yearup.org](http://yearup.org)

**YOUNG LIVES**  
YoungLives is a unique cutting edge non-profit Christian organization designed to empower and equip teen moms. Young Lives is a branch of Young Life.  
[goo.gl/7CAev](http://goo.gl/7CAev)

## PHOTOS

### City Coordinators poised for 2012

This past August our staff hosted and trained the new City Coordinators for the 2012 training season. The lineup of City Coordinators included:

Fred Oduyoye (Cincinnati)  
Ellen Barton (Denver)  
Ruben Ortiz (Philadelphia)  
Jerrel Gilliam (Pittsburgh)  
Clarence Presley (Seattle)

Cincinnati and Seattle are first year cities and Denver, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are third year cities respectively. The nomination process for participants is officially taking place and coordinators are accepting names and contact information of urban youth workers in the cities listed above.

Qualifying nominees must:

- lead a youth program or ministry
- be willing to share leadership
- have a strong desire to learn
- have a teachable spirit
- be in a position to implement change
- a minimum of three years in ministry
- participate as part of their current job
- be active in church

Join us in welcoming our City Coordinators for 2012. Feel free to contact our staff to nominate participants.



Find more photos at: <http://goo.gl/urT1w> or





## Passing the ‘School Partnerships’ Exam

by Gerald Bell

The classified section of your daily news won’t post an ad, but word on the street is that public schools want the help of churches and ministries. Given all the challenges facing the education of urban students – declining graduation rates, increased violence and access to illegal drugs and weapons – principals and teachers come to the realization every school year that they can’t do it all by themselves.

*USA Today* reported in 2008 that Detroit graduates fewer than 30% of public school students on time. In addition, the on-time graduation rates for Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles hover in the 30 percentile. New York City graduated 44% on time in 2008. According to Jeremy Del Rio (New York 2010) of 20/20 Vision for Schools in New York, that same year NYC Schools received the nation’s highest prize for education reform.

“The crisis in schools is first and foremost a crisis in leadership,” Del Rio said in an article posted



That was all it took for Rev. Walker, pastor of St. Mary’s United Methodist Church in Houston, TX to establish a now vibrant partnership with not just the neighborhood’s elementary school but also the middle school—which is only yards away from their backyard:



on his blog. “Comprehensive reform requires multi-sector, collaborative strategies led by men and women willing to commit ‘[to fix this problem].’ Churches, and pastors who lead them, are uniquely positioned to [steer] the effort to right this wrong.”

Rev. Thomas Walker (Houston 2005) recalls the walk across the street from his church to meet with the principal of Foster Elementary School seven years ago. “When I went into his office he bowed at my feet and said, ‘I have been the principal for five years and this is the first time a pastor from this community has come to see us.’”

“It was our responsibility to step in that environment to make it

better by asking, ‘how can we help?’” says Rev. Walker. “We have adult members from our church at both schools every day mentoring students, serving as classroom and hall monitors, and supporting the teachers.”



“They blew the doors wide open,” he describes. “...they want us there [they want] somebody who truly cares about the kids.” Rev. Walker, who was a youth pastor for twelve years, said his passion for youth made it natural to approach both schools back in 2005.

“It was our responsibility to step in that environment to make it

### News Briefs



**Alvin Chu (D.C. 2011)** & Ruth Pan became Mr. and Mrs. Chu on

September 17, 2011 in Fort Washington, MD with 100 of their closest family and friends in attendance to celebrate the occasion. Alvin said some of the special qualities about his bride are that she has a heart for God and is open to God’s will. The two spent their mini-moon in Maine for a week, but in an email statement Alvin said that “the real honeymoon is next year where we are planning to go to Turkey and Greece.



**CJ Neal (Indianapolis 2007)** and

Anika were blessed with their fourth child, Bricia Jaelle Neal, who was born October 17, 2011 at 5:28pm at Community North Hospital in Indianapolis. She weighed 7 lbs 9 oz and stretched 19 inches long. According to CJ, her birth is one day prior to her only brother’s birthday. While CJ admits he hopes she’ll learn to sleep through the night soon, he also said his hope for her future is that she’ll “[learn] to love the Lord with all her being.”



**Donna Perkins (L.A. 2005)** & Darin

Whitman tied the knot on September 17, 2011 at First Evangelical Free Church Fullerton. With 280 people in attendance to witness the exchange of vows, Donna said both her parents escorted her down the aisle and that was a most memorable highpoint in



**Fred Woods (Portland 2003)** exchanged

vows with Melissa Reed on October 7, 2011 in the living room of Fred’s home in Vancouver, WA. “I’m very grateful to God for a woman that loves God, loves me, and has a self assurance about herself,” he said in an email statement about his new wife. “She is God sent... intelligent, personable and comfortable with life. The newlyweds met in Nashville, TN while Fred was there on business who recalls that was, “Love at first sight... We both believed it was God’s will for us to be together.” They plan to have a ceremony and reception next year.



**Felicia Sanders (Chicago 2007)** & David

Sanders endured 15 hours of labor to give birth to Danielle Renee Sanders on July 6, 2011 at 5:21pm at Chicago’s Mercy Hospital. She weighed 5 lbs 5 oz and measured 18.5” long. According to Felicia, daddy David was out of town and had to catch a flight home but made it in time for the delivery. “She has mommy’s cheeks and laughs and smiles all the time,” said Felicia of her first baby girl. “I hope she’ll love and honor the Lord, be well grounded and know who God created her to be.”

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