

# INK news for teens

## Making a Difference

### Helping Katrina victims helps teens see other needs

By Carmen Musick • ink@timesnews.net

There's a song that says, "You can't always get what you want," but that "if you try some time, you might just find, you get what you need."

A week on a mission trip to the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast this summer taught three J.I. Burton High School students just how much those words can ring true.

"Before arriving in Mississippi, as any youth would do, they had visions of swimming in the ocean, sightseeing and shopping," said Barbara Ellington, mission team coordinator for First Baptist Church in Norton, Va.

The girls — twins Brianna and Mary Jo Stallard and their friend, Raven Hunter — quickly learned that was not to be. It wasn't until they'd returned home, though, that they realized that not getting what they wanted had given them exactly what they needed.

"We were so focused on getting souvenirs and seeing the sights that we were missing the whole point of the trip — to help the victims and put them first," Brianna said.

"We realized how much we have and take for granted each day. ... I could never express in words what I felt and how it affected me."

The trio made the trip from Norton to Bay St. Louis, Miss., with a mission team from First Baptist Church, where all three girls are active in the youth group. Though the church had sent missionaries to various places, 2007 marked the first year the girls were old enough to participate.

"These girls were undertaking a masterful mission. They had not even washed dishes before," Ellington said. "Their crew chief [Jim Hicks of Wise] taught them how to run wire through studs, how to connect light switches and how to sand and mud drywall."

... They soon found that sanding dry wall was a dirty job, especially in hot, humid Mississippi with no air conditioning and no indoor plumbing on the job."

It wasn't always easy, but they worked through it and each day saw how much their kindness and hard work meant to people still rebuilding their lives two years after Hurricane Katrina all but destroyed them.

"It was appalling how many houses were destroyed and, after two years, there is still a lot more damage to be fixed," Brianna said, in a



Twins Brianna and Mary Jo Stallard along with Raven Hunter traveled to Bay St. Louis, Miss., this summer to help construct homes for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

story about the experience. "It's still pretty bad," she said recently. "But it's not as bad as it was — because of all of the help."

After it was over, Raven said she was happy that she pushed herself to do it and "glad that we were able to help other people."

She's also grateful that members of her church took the opportunity to recognize the girls as "Students Making a Difference."

"I was students to talk about it," Raven said. "Maybe it'll change some other people's minds and encourage them to go and help."

Katrina victims aren't the only beneficiaries of the trio's efforts. They truly share their gifts throughout the year here at home.

"Raven came over to pre-K [on a recent Thursday] and helped the children make ornaments and sang 'The 12 Days of Christmas' rap," Jones said. "What a host!"

All three girls spent Saturday, Dec. 15, helping with the church's Mom's Day Out program at church and singing the lyrics to "Mary, Did You Know" at a benefit variety show at J.I. Burton.

The youth group, of which they are a part, collected bottled water and energy bars, and

collected bed linens for the local shelter. Weekly, they assist at the Wise County Food Bank where they prepare bags of groceries for those in need.

"Brianna, Mary Jo and Raven have grown so much in the knowledge of their personal blessings and the need to help those who have so much less," said the church's mission team coordinator Barbara Ellington.

The girls are quick to point out that their mission work in Bay St. Louis wouldn't have been possible without their youth group. The group held spaghetti dinners, hot dog suppers and yard sales to raise the \$2,400 necessary for the three of them to make the trip.

"They have realized that learning what needs are far away from home helps one to see the needs closer to home," Ellington said, which is why the project will focus its 2008 summer activities closer to home — in Southwest Virginia.

And one could safely bet that Brianna, Mary Jo and Raven will be right in the thick of it.

"I am probably giving you more information than you care to know," Jones said. "I just want you to know that you made the right choice in these girls. They are so much more than the one week in Mississippi."



Jurnee Carr (left) gave more than \$500 that she received as donations from guests at her birthday party to the Washington County Animal Shelter, of which Debbie Dobbs is director.

### Girl Scout strives to 'help people at all times'

By Carmen Musick • ink@timesnews.net

There are lots of ways to describe Gray's Jurnee Carr

She's a Girl Scout, an athlete and the reigning Miss Unicoi County Apple Festival. To say her plate is full would be an understatement. Yet, she still finds time to serve others — making it easy to add another descriptor to that list.

At just 13, the Gray Middle School seventh-grader is a "student making a difference."

"She has always been generous at heart, giving and caring of others — even in her preschool years," said proud mom Whitney Carr.

Take her recent birthday celebration for example. When it came time to celebrate her birthday earlier this month, Jurnee threw a big party. But, in lieu of gifts, she invited her charity: the Washington County Animal Shelter. Dozens of people attended and, when it was all said and done, she had raised more than \$500 for the shelter. Her Girl Scout troop also pitched in, donating dog food, stuffed toys and blankets.

"My mom had asked me what I wanted for my birthday and there wasn't anything that I needed so I thought that it would be nice to give something back to those who are in need," Jurnee said.

"Most adults don't think that kids are capable of doing things for others. But my parents have taught me that I can accomplish whatever I want as long as I put my mind to it," she said.

It's an attitude she carries with her in everything she does: whether on the basketball or volleyball court, in a pageant or volunteering.

"I think that it's important to help out whenever you can, even the smallest things mean so much to someone in need. I'm not talking about money either. I am a kid, and I don't have a job so I can't give money, so I find other ways to help like donating old things to Goodwill or reading books to the kids at daycare or helping out at home with my little brother and sister," Jurnee said.

"People need to leave their gifts about acts of kindness early in life so they will carry it on when they get older."

It's a lesson Jurnee has learned well. She logs a number of community service hours each year, and spreads her goodwill in lots of different places. She visits nursing homes to sing and speak with the elderly. She also helps out with the daycare at Tri-Cities Christian School's Gray campus on days she's not practicing sports.

"Both older citizens and kids usually just like to talk and just have someone who will listen to them. Both age groups like to be entertained and have company around them, and I just change my way of thinking to whatever I'm with," Jurnee said.

"The little kids require more attention when there is a large group so you have to be really quick and watch them all at the same time. You can learn a lot from older people because they have a lot of life experience. I love



Jurnee Carr is the reigning pre-teen Miss Unicoi County Apple Festival.

to listen to stories about the 'good ole days.'"

And, then of course, there are the shelter animals that Jurnee helped through her birthday party.

"Jurnee is well beyond her years in seeing how the world works and has taught both her father and I a lot about giving and caring about others. She continues to amaze us," Whitney Carr said.

For that, Jurnee credits her parents and Girl Scouts.

"Girl Scouting has to be my favorite organization. I have learned how to be more confident in myself and be a better citizen to my community. Part of the Girl Scout Law is 'to help people at all times,' and I try to live by that. It feels great to see someone [you've helped] smile."

"Our troop has made surgery hats and donated them to the Johnson City Children's Hospital. We've donated cookies to the Ronald McDonald House, done a food drive for the Gray Community Center several years in a row, and so much more. But we still find time to have fun, just being girls and doing fun stuff like going ice skating together."

Jurnee's giving spirit isn't just for show, either, her mom points out. She exhibits the same selfless attitude at home.

"She is a huge help to us at home as she babysits for her younger brother and sister, helps around the house and takes care of her dog by herself. She takes half the money she earns and saves it for college without being asked to do so," Whitney said.

For Jurnee, giving comes naturally and she doesn't think being young should stop anyone from working to make a difference.

### 'Do something' motto for busy high school senior

By Chistan M. Thomas • cthomas@timesnews.net

The Boy Scouts of America slogan says to "Do a Good Turn Daily," and Doby-Bennett High School senior Chris Jack might just be the embodiment of that maxim.

Chris is a "student making a difference." And, whether it be in his scout troop or high school campus, he says the key is just to get involved.

"Just try to get involved in stuff you like doing," Chris said. "Try to participate and be active. It can be any kind of club or sport or whatever you like. Just do something."

"You can just sort of give back [by volunteering]. It's nice for organizations to have people come in and do work — do free work... If you go in and work hard you can always help somebody else."

And "do something" Chris certainly has. At DB, Chris is active in the band and German Club.

Outside of school he's spent some time with an organization that helps maintain the Appalachian Trail and donates blood when he can.

He's also a Boy Scout and is actively working to become an Eagle Scout.

Scoutmaster David Hrivnak said Chris has served as a great leader and mentor to younger scouts in his troop.

"Chris has been an outstanding mentor to our younger boys patiently helping them master a new skill, encouraging them and setting a good example," Hrivnak said. "He will proactively get the boys organized to set up or clean up a camp site or the meeting room. In meetings he offers helpful ideas to solve various problems and always exhibits a positive attitude."

For his Eagle Scout project, Chris took on the neglected concrete baseball in Domtar Park.



Chris Jack (standing, right) refurbished the concrete baseball at Domtar Park for his Eagle Scout project.

His dad first suggested the project and, since Chris played recreational baseball for several years, he thought it would be nice to work on something he was interested in.

With the help of about 20 others, Chris cleared out around the baseball; landscaped around it; and put in new pavers and a sign. They also cleaned and repainted the baseball itself.

In total, Chris said everyone involved in the project logged approximately 140 volunteer hours during a three- to four-week span.

"It was sort of sitting out there in the middle of the field and it was kind of dirty where peo-

ple had graffitied [on] it and stuff," Chris said. "So I decided I wanted to make it look nicer. ... [Now] people can use it as a picture spot or whatever. It's just a pretty nice addition to the park."

With the project now complete, Chris said he has some paperwork to finish and must then meet with a committee, which will review his application to become an Eagle Scout.

Then, he's got more big plans for the future. After graduating from DB, Chris hopes to attend either Virginia Tech or Clemson University to pursue a career in mechanical engineering.