



## OCTOBER EVENTS:

**OCTOBER 2ND— ST.**  
JAMES ART SHOW FIELD  
TRIP 11:30AM-2PM

**OCTOBER 8TH—**  
STUDENT & VOLUNTEER  
RECOGNITION PARTY  
5PM-7PM

**OCTOBER 10TH— ROCK**  
CLIMBING FIELD TRIP  
AT HESTER'S FAMILY  
FITNESS 11:30AM-2PM

**OCTOBER 22ND—**  
DRACULA FIELD TRIP AT  
ACTOR'S THEATRE  
7:30PM

**OCTOBER 23RD—**  
ELECTRONIC GAME  
NIGHT 5:30PM-7:30PM

**OCTOBER 29TH— HAL-**  
LOWEEN PARTY &  
HAUNTED HOUSE FIELD  
TRIP 5:30PM-8PM

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**NOVEMBER 10TH—**  
FALL DANCE 6PM-  
10:30PM

**NOVEMBER 17TH—**  
VOLUNTEER MEETING  
7PM

**NOVEMBER 19TH—**  
LADIES DAY 11:30AM

**NOVEMBER 24TH—**  
END OF YEAR RECOGNITION PARTY 5PM-7PM

## OCTOBER CENTER HOURS:

**MONDAY-FRIDAY**  
CHURCHILL  
11:30AM-8PM

**SUNDAY**  
SOCCER AT GEORGE  
ROGERS CLARK PARK  
5:30PM-7:30PM

# Backside News

OCTOBER 2009

## Center of Community

*Written by: Rachel Brokaw*

In recent years, the Learning Center has focused on building community as a way of keeping our students involved. Instead of just offering classes, we also try to foster relationships among students, volunteers and teachers through community activities.

While this approach to student relationships has been part of many volunteers' mindsets since we opened our doors, Jack Cox took a big step forward when he organized our first soccer games in 2007. Since then, we've added weekly movie nights, monthly parties to recognize student achievement, and regular field trips.

Many of these activities do not seem directly educational. However, they involve our students in relationships with volunteers and teachers. These connections are often what make a difference in a student's commitment to the Learning Center. These connections are the difference between just attending a class and being a part of a school community. For adult students with many responsibilities competing for their time, knowing that this is a place where people care about them elevates the value of staying involved.

"I like coming here, talking to people, practicing

my English," says José Arriaga. "I feel like the people I know here are friends and family." Dennis Quezada, a student in the Advanced English and Art classes, says that these activities are "like a prize for the effort I make to study."

For many of our stu-



Volunteers and students play games during Bilingual Hour using game vocabulary in English and Spanish.

dents, community is hard to find on the backside. As immigrants, they have travelled a long way from their families, and often this is the first time they have lived independently from that family support. And, of course, they face a language and cultural barrier that can take years to adapt to. As horsemen, they work in a job that keeps them on the move. At the most, they can expect to spend 6-8 months here in Louisville. Frequent travel combined with the unique, early morning work schedule often make it difficult for immigrant horsemen to put down roots in a new place.

Creating a school community also motivates our volunteers. Alayne Wright is one of the Learning Center's most active volunteers. She usually comes in three times a week, helping with tutoring, bilingual hour, and soccer. According to Alayne, building relationships with students "makes it all worthwhile. I feel very close to them, and I just want to be here."

It is not all about socializing, though. Building community also furthers educational goals. Opportunities for social interaction are also opportunities for practicing English in a meaningful context. Diego Zacarias, who attends Intermediate English, Guitar, and Art classes, affirms this: "Always I learn something, talking to someone- a little bit, a word or two. Even in the movies, with the subtitles. It's a practice for me, and I like it."

All of this is part of what makes the Learning Center at Churchill Downs a unique place. We are one of a kind in the horse industry, and our students appreciate this.

"There is no community like this at other tracks," says Dennis. "For example, in Arkansas, they teach English in the chapel. But the class is for only a short time, and it's only English, no other classes."

# Student & Volunteer Recognition

## Volunteer of the Month



Kathy Stevenson has been a wonderful addition to our crew of volunteers. In August she stepped right in and took an active role in teaching the Intermediate English practice. Students have really taken a liking to her and she has put a lot of thought and care into her lessons. She has substituted numerous times when she was needed and her love for teaching shines through in all of her classes. Thank you, Kathy, for all of your hard work!

## Golden Pencil Awards

These are given to students to recognize remarkable dedication or contribution to their classes or to the Learning Center community. Students are nominated for a Golden Pencil by their teachers, tutors, volunteers, or a team member.

Exadibal Orantes, for his persistence and good attitude  
Edwin Moran, for assisting the teacher during English practice  
Bayron Cardona, for assisting the teacher during English practice  
Henry Perez, for assisting the teacher during English practice  
Rafael Hernandez, for assisting the teacher during English practice

## Student of the Month

Special thanks to the Outrider's Society (the Kentucky Derby Museum's volunteer organization) for donating gift cards to give to each Student of the Month this year. Because we were not able to provide a prize in the past for Student of the Month, we are opening the Student of the Month award to all students, including those who have been recognized as Students of the Month in the past.

## English Student of the Month



Florencio Lopez is our English Student of the Month. Even though he spent more than a month working at Trackside this summer, he has still built up enough attendance hours to be in the top ten for English class attendance. He participates both in English practice and English class, and he is a very dedicated student.

## Participation Student of the Month

Diego Zacarias is our Participation Student of the Month. In the past, Diego has been recognized for his English attendance, but he is also very involved in Learning Center programming across the board. In August, he joined our guitar class. He also never missed a soccer game, and participated in bilingual movie nights.



# Team Notes

## FEATURED WISH LIST:

- 10 new head-phone sets with long cords
- WordUp game
- New Paper Cutter
- External Hard Drives
- Taboo in Spanish
- Candy

Written by: *Emily Dingman*

Hello readers, my name is Emily. As you know Rachel was working here as an AmeriCorps VISTA. Her term ended in the beginning of September and I am the new VISTA. I grew up in Maine and then went to college in upstate New York. My freshman year of college I took an intensive Spanish course, and then directly after graduating I worked at a Thoroughbred training barn as an exercise rider. Although I only worked there for a few months I was introduced to some of the difficulties for migrant workers employed in this industry. After graduating I applied to many AmeriCorps programs, but this one caught my

attention. When I saw the listing for Churchill Downs I hoped I would get the position because it



*Emily Dingman, AmeriCorps VISTA* works with a population that I had some interest in based on my experience with racehorses and my basic knowledge of Spanish; I was eager to come here.

These first few weeks have been very exciting for me as I have begun getting to know the volunteers, staff and students who come here. The programs we offer and the community we are part of have made a very positive impression on me. It is quite evident that the students have great relationships with their teachers, volunteers, and tutors, and that is such an important part of what we offer. I am excited to be a part of the community and some of my goals are to help expand the programming we offer, our volunteer base and make our services more accessible to the population here on the backside.

# Class in the Spotlight



Written by: Jonathan Brown

Internet navigation, search engines, email, and file organization may all seem daunting to beginners. However, The Backside Learning Center's Computer class aims to teach basic and advanced computing techniques to students of all skill levels. The Computer class is offered every Wednesday evening from six o'clock to eight o'clock in the computer lab.

The class is offered in Spanish and/or English and is primarily taught by Alice Roques. I serve as an in-class assistant and occasional instructor of the course. Moreover, Pat Vickers is instrumental in the process as she helps create and organize the curriculum for the course. The Computer class usually has an attendance of around ten students but has served many more throughout the year. The content of the class runs the gamut from mousing and typing to learning how to upload and edit digital photo-

graphs. Each class begins with review of last week's material and ends with a practical exercise designed to test the under-

standing of the day's lesson. The three week session on digital photography culminates with the students printing out their favorite pictures at Walgreens. Students may begin the class at any time no matter their skill level.



Alice Rodriguez teaching Computer Class

standing of the day's lesson. The three week session on digital photography culminates with the students printing out their favorite pictures at Walgreens. Students may begin the class at any time no matter their skill level.

One outstanding student, Enrique Rodriguez, has demonstrated extraordinary attendance and has increased his computer skills by leaps and bounds.

He successfully navigates the internet to find desired information and stays connected to others through the efficient use of email. Enrique also uses his knowledge to help other students in the class. Getting involved at The Backside Learning Center for me began with one-on-one ESL tutoring and in class support for the English Practice Services. I first started with the Computer class as an impromptu substitute teacher and have enjoyed it extremely ever since. The politeness of the students and their zeal for learning makes the Computer class a real joy to be a part of. What's more, I've had the benefit of learning new Spanish vocabulary and making new friends.

The Computer class will continue to be a vital service towards the education of the Backside population and will continue to provide the students with another tool to be connected to family and friends.

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Contact Emily Dingman at the Learning Center if you are interested in volunteering.

**BILINGUAL ESL TUTOR:** Provide personalized instruction, encouragement, and support to an adult English language learner. Plan lessons and work one-on-one with your student. Time commitment: Two hours a week, Mondays at 1pm.

### CONVERSATION LEADER FOR BILINGUAL CONERSATION TABLES:

Plan bilingual conversation prompts for multiple levels of language ability. Assist in matching conversation partners and adult ESL students. Act as a conversation partner when needed. Time commitment: one to two hours a week, Thursdays from 6-7pm.

**QUILTER NEEDED:** Someone has generously donated materials for a quilt.

For more information, visit the Volunteer Corner on our website!

We need a talented quilter to put these materials together and make a quilt for us to sell for a fundraiser.

**RECOGNITION PARTY SPONSORS:** We need 2 sponsors for every party to bring drinks and party snacks for about 20 people. Parties are usually the second Thursday of the month from 5-7 PM, starting in May.

**SOCCKER DRIVERS:** Sign up to drive students to soccer on Sundays. This is a very flexible volunteer opportunity. Talk to Jack Cox or Emily Dingman for more information.

**ROCK CLIMBING FIELD TRIP DRIVERS:** When we take the students on field trips, we always need drivers to help out. The next Learning Center field trip is to Hester's Family Fitness on Saturday, October 10th. If you are interested in volunteering to drive students,

contact Emily Dingman. You are more than welcome to join us on the trip!

**LADIES TO DANCE AT THE FALL DANCE:** Attention, Ladies! The Fall Dance is coming up in November and we need ladies to come and dance with the fellows. There will be a ten-to-one ratio, so you can't lose!

**STUDENT & VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PARTY: THURS. OCTOBER 8TH**

### THE OUTRIDER'S SOCIETY

The Outriders Society is the volunteer organization of the Kentucky Derby Museum. Since we are a Derby Museum program, all Learning Center volunteers are eligible to join, and your volunteer hours count towards Outriders benefits. For more information, contact Julie Henry at 637-1111, x336 or online at: <http://www.derbymuseum.org/>

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND TIME!