



Backside News

FEBRUARY 2010

FEBRUARY EVENTS:

10TH—VITA
(Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
PROVIDED AT
TRACKSIDE 3PM-6PM

UPCOMING EVENTS:

MARCH 17TH—CHURCHILL VITA
10AM-2PM

MARCH 17TH—VOLUNTEER MEETING AT CHURCHILL
7PM

MARCH 31ST—CHURCHILL VITA
2PM-6PM

It's a boy!
Director Jennifer Hoert's baby boy Garrett Alastair Hoert was born on January 3rd at 1:45a.m. He weighed 8lbs and 10oz. That is one big colt!

“Creating New Ways and Improving Old Ones”

Written by: Emily Dingman

The atmosphere on the backside has changed dramatically. It feels almost like no one has ever been here in the stillness of winter, as if this is the first time the stalls have emptied and the track has frozen. The only evidence of life left in the barns is the occasional stray cat and Churchill Downs maintenance employees. For a short time, untouched snow covered the entrance to the main gap; the Twin Spires are still eye-catching when they are surrounded by snow. Thoughts of the coming season and the return of our dedicated students keep us motivated to come in every day and prepare for another fruitful year.

A brief visit to Trackside revealed that conditions there are similar. The ground is icy and only a few trainers have stayed to work their horses in the barns. Most of the barns are half full at best, while many of them are empty. We determined that there were not enough people at Trackside to make it worthwhile to keep regular hours there. Last year we had the computer lab open and attempted to provide minimal services, but even then the hours went by slowly as we had only one regular attendee. This year we are planning to offer VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), but that will be the extent of the services we offer over the winter.

During these quiet days we keep busy by writing grants and coming up with ideas for fundraisers. The volunteer meeting we held in early January

was encouraging. Volunteers came up with some great ideas! Some of them are new events and activities that will take some work to get going, but others are going to facilitate the success of fundraisers we have



With the Spring comes Groom Elite 101

prior experience with. One of our most exciting accomplishments was the acquisition of a donation from Maker's Mark with a special Derby dip! This will make a great prize or auction item. Other interesting ideas included student sponsorship, and holding games during night racing. We are working on the logistics of possibly holding a “horses and hoops” basketball tournament, or another game like corn hole. If you have any connections to radio shows or basketball facilities near Churchill Downs, we welcome any support that could turn these ambitions into realities.

Like the seasons, activity at the track blossoms in the spring. Once the horses return in preparation for the meet, our students will also return to the Learning Center. The warm spring air is filled not just with

the chirping of birds, but with the sounds of horses galloping on the track and the many voices of our clients. The backside lull is over. Suddenly it is all we can do to keep up with everyone's needs and provide the quality services that so many people look forward to when they come here.

Luckily, come March, the work we've done over this long winter break is all visible. We are able to spend more time conversing with amiable ESL students in English, answering their many questions, and helping people get things done on the computers because our fundraisers are squared away and ready to go. Over the winter we also spent time trying to expand the community's understanding of the Backside Learning Center. We are now widely known despite restricted access to the backside, because we managed to find opportunities to speak to the public about our mission and why what we do is important to them. Now the larger community understands that our services are crucial to the economic and social development of this area, not to mention to the individuals who pass through this building everyday.

With the help of our volunteers, we've accomplished all this and much more. Students and their families are proud to say they come to school, and members of the greater Louisville community are proud to share our success as the nation's first functional educational facility for a demographic that is so hard to reach.

CENTER WISH LIST:

- Any book for adults written in Spanish
- Bilingual books
- Audio books with accompanying texts, particularly shorter or easier books, poetry or adult-appropriate learning-to-read books
- Spanish-English dictionaries
- Soccer shoes (size 8, 8 1/2, 9, gently used is fine)
- Soccer balls
- Class supplies, especially notebooks, binders, pencils, dry erase markers
- Uno card game
- 2 Updated GED textbooks in English
- 2 Updated GED textbooks in Spanish
- 10 Pimsleur Inglés: English for Spanish Speakers with Audio CD textbooks
- Popcorn & oil packets for theater popcorn machine
- "Goo Gone" (Cleaning product to get library stickers off our books)

Team Notes

Written by: Kevin Oberhausen

In 2009 the Learning Center made a focused effort to take our students off track to enjoy more cultural and recreational experiences around Louisville. Last year we went to The Louisville Zoo, The Kentucky State Fair, Actors Theatre, World-Fest, Kart Kountry, Hester's Rock Climbing Gym, Kentucky Kingdom and the St. James Art Fair. The response we received from our clientele was fantastic and for this reason we intend on arranging another full schedule of field trips for 2010.

This year the Learning Center is planning to offer all of the same excursions listed above, with the possibility of some new places/events added to the mix as well. Although it is too early to know for sure, we are tentatively planning excursions to the National Street Rod Show, Reg-

gae Fest, the Kentucky Center for the Arts, the 21C Museum/Hotel and an ice-skating rink. These trips will become more



Otto and Santos enjoy the Ferris Wheel on Kentucky Kingdom Day.

definite once we survey the students about their schedules & interests.

Field trips are great ways for students and volunteers to build relationships and improve the sense of community here at the Learning Center. Personally,

some of my fondest memories so far with Learning Center students have come during these outings. Two memories that especially stick out are riding one of the fastest stand-up rollercoasters in the world with a student who had never been on *any* rollercoaster, and being smashed into a heinous crash during a legendary Kart Kountry go-cart race (all involved parties escaped unharmed).

We are grateful for the tremendous volunteer support we received last year in helping with these field trips, and we will once again need people this year to help us with transportation. If you are interested in driving for any of the opportunities listed above, or have other interesting suggestions for trip ideas be sure to let us know!

VOLUNTEER CORNER

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

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER: If you would like to write an article for the newsletter about a class or student you teach/volunteer with, please contact the Learning Center. We would love to have your contributions!

DATA ENTRY: Volunteer needed once per month to update student and volunteer hours for soccer, movie night, guitar and other programs in Microsoft Access. Experience with Microsoft Access preferable but we can train.

HORSEMEN'S GOLF SCRAMBLE PLANNING COMMITTEE: We are already planning for our 2nd Annual Horsemen's Golf Scramble. If you would like to be a part of the planning committee, contact the Learning Center. Tasks will include planning the event, promoting and getting donations/sponsorships. Time commitment: meet once a month starting in January and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.

DERBY GIFT SHOP TEAM: We are already thinking about Derby. We need people to help get volunteers to work the Derby Gift Shop and pick out the merchandise we should sell. Time commitment: meet periodically starting in January, help out with the Derby

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND TIME!

Gift shop and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.

GRANTWRITER: This winter we are going to be focusing our efforts on fundraising and grantwriting. You don't have to have experience but it is preferred. Time commitment depends on the grant and the number of grants you would like to write.

FUNDRAISING DINNER COMMITTEE: We are planning a fundraising dinner tentatively scheduled in June. This would be the first time we have ever had the event. We need a committee to plan and organize the event. Time commitment: monthly meetings starting in January and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.