

Intern Spotlight: Eric Stenberg

Streets is excited to have Eric Stenberg as the newest member of our team. Eric, currently a senior at Auburn University, is pursuing a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. As a part of achieving this, he will be serving as an Intern at Streets for an entire semester. Eric will be kept busy manning the homework lab, helping with the Ready Readers program and assisting with middle school "Club" events. A member of Second Presbyterian Church, Eric will also be leading a middle school Bible study group on Tuesday evenings.

While his main interests involve working in the areas of middle childhood development and adolescents, Eric has taken it upon himself to share his love for "useless" facts and trivia with the staff members and students as well. He has even implemented what has become known as "Fun Fact Friday" in the Homework Lab. "Fun Fact Friday" is a time where students are able to earn candy rewards for correctly answering a wide-range of both educational and fun questions. Topics go anywhere from geography to brain teasers, so students have to be on their toes in order to win a prize. So if you see Eric, please help us make him feel welcome; and do not be afraid to throw some more "useless" facts his way. He will most likely use them as material.



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Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 82:3-4

STREETS - BETWEEN THE LINES

MARCH - APRIL, 2006

What am I Doing to Address the Human Need?

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19

A recent article in the New York Times by Eric Eckholm had some startling data that jumped off the page at me and broke my heart. In a new study released by Columbia, Princeton, Harvard and some other institutions, the following facts were stated about African American men.

In 2000, 65 percent of African American male high school dropouts in their 20's were jobless. This means that they were either unable to find work, not seeking work or incarcerated. By 2004, that share had grown to 72 percent, compared with 34 percent of white and 19 percent of Hispanic dropouts. Even when high school graduates were included in the data, still half of all African American men in their 20's were jobless in 2004, up from 46 percent in 2000.

In the inner cities, only half of African American males finish high school. By their mid thirties, 30 percent of African American men with no more than a high school diploma have served time in prison, and 60 percent of dropouts have been incarcerated. The list goes on and on.

At the Bennett house, it is relatively easy to gather up cans of food for the hungry, blankets for the homeless, and send letters to or accept collect phone calls from those that are currently living in a prison facility. But when the overwhelming statistics concerning education system hit us in the face, most of us just shake our heads and complain about the plight of our nation's city schools.

Many of the comments I hear day to day from people are along the lines of, "the teachers must not be teaching", "busing destroyed our school system long ago", "there is no discipline anymore", "poor people just do not value education", "when prayer left the classroom, so did education", "gangs have taken over our schools" and "there is no hope of change." However, rarely do I hear, "What am I doing to address the educational needs of our city?" or "What am I doing to confront the human dilemma that jumps off the newspaper page at me every morning?" As God's word says in Luke, Christ has empowered me to be an instrument of hope in a seemingly hopeless world.

I am stating the obvious when I talk about the effects of education on the African American male in our country. What is not so obvious is what the body of Christ should do in response to it. The foundation of the ministry at Streets is evangelism and discipleship, but our compassion does not begin and end there. We must play our faith all the way out, which includes equipping those in need with practical life skills to be productive in the communities in which they live.

In the pages that follow in this newsletter, you will read about a facet of the Streets experience, College Tours. These kids are now on track to pursue higher education because many of you have engaged in their lives through our educational programming.

My prayer is that as you read through this newsletter, you will begin to pray about your role in our public school system. The volunteer opportunities are limitless, and if you need help in getting plugged in, we would love to be a resource for you.

In Matthew 25, God's word is clear. When have you seen me in need and how did you choose to respond?

Your Brother in Christ,
Ken



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College Tours: Class of 2006

Each year, twenty-four students and four chaperones spend their Spring Break touring twelve different universities, colleges and historically black institutions. Known as "College Tours", the week long trip is now in its 16th year and has become a tradition in this South Memphis community. Its roots reach back to 1990, when a bold Streets staff member packed ten kids and a U-Haul trailer to visit universities across the southeast. In the process of exploring science labs, dorm rooms and enormous libraries, these pioneers discovered a key ingredient in helping inner-city youths transition from life on the streets to life on campus.

The following articles, composed by Streets staff members and high school students alike, chronicle some of the highlights from this years tour.

A Student Perspective: by Chantelle, class of 2006

Hello, my name is Chantelle and I'm a senior at Booker T. Washington High School. I'm writing on behalf of the Streets Ministries "College Tours" class of 2006 that visited Union University, Lane College, Bethel College, Tennessee State, UT Chattanooga, Clark Atlanta, Morehouse, Spelman, Auburn, Tuskegee and Alabama-Birmingham. To begin with, I would like to say that I have had many experiences in my life, but never one quite like this. I have participated in many events with Streets, but "College Tours" was the most amazing of them all. While traveling to all these different cities, I had a chance to explore the world more and learn about different cultures. We saw a variety of campuses and students, and learned some of the history behind many of these Colleges and Universities.

Along the way, we not only visited academic institutions, but we also had fun at places like LaserChase, The World of Coca-Cola and The Martin Luther King Jr. Center. In addition, my experience during this year's "College Tours" was one of the best not only because we have a lot of fun, but because we also met a number of different people and learned more about who they were and where they were from. So on behalf of the entire group, I would like to say thank you for making this year's trip more than just possible, but extraordinary as well.



Two dozen BTW students aboard the "College Tours" bus.



Tanesha, a Junior at BTW, fills out an information card.

Unveiling the Cloak of Ignorance: by Delvin Lane

"College Tours" is always an exciting time for me at Streets as it gives me an opportunity to share some important historical information with our kids. This year, we visited many different types of colleges and universities, but I felt that one of the most exciting things, for the kids as well as myself, was visiting some of the places that famous African Americans like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Booker T. Washington grew up and served in.

For example, while in Atlanta, the guys and I visited the home of Dr. King. As we entered the home, we experienced what life was like for Dr. King growing up in a middle class community in Atlanta. For starters, the house was nice and very well kept. On the tour, we heard stories and saw pictures of the King family during the 1940's. We also visited a church that was started by Dr. King's grandfather and where he also served as pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church. Later, we went inside that church and listened to some of his sermons in addition to the testimony of an elderly man who fought and served beside Dr. King.

Outside of the church, we talked to each other about the plight of the African American male in America as we stood in between the grave sites of Dr. King and his wife Coretta. The guys realized that without serving God and furthering their education, their lives would be meaningless.

After leaving Atlanta, we headed to Tuskegee, Alabama where Booker T. Washington founded his institution.



Members of the "College Tours" class of '06 visiting the childhood home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Because our high school is named after him, I felt it was necessary that the kids at Streets understood his teachings. Booker T. Washington felt that it was important for the African Americans of this country to make an effort to "unveil the cloak of ignorance" in their lives. For him, education was the key, and I had a wonderful time discussing his ideology with the young men as we stood in front of a statue representing this message.

Some of these young men have been raised with no father in their lives and really do not have a clue about what it takes to be a Godly man. This trip was filled with times where we talked about some of the issues that are essential to the survival of young men today. God has provided Streets with the opportunity to help kids in the inner-city of Memphis come to know him and better themselves through "unveiling the cloak of ignorance" and pursuing a higher education through the prayers and support from you. Thank you.



Students at the foot of Booker T. Washington's "Unveiling the Cloak of Ignorance" statue in Tuskegee, AL.

Streets Center Update

This time last year, construction on the new 34,500 square foot Streets Center at 430 Vance Avenue was just getting underway. A small abandoned motel was being demolished and dirt brought in by the truck load. Today, a completely different scene exists as a nearly completed facility receives some finishing touches and edges closer to opening its doors to the community. In just a year's time, the Streets Center site has transitioned from rendering to reality.

With construction nearing completion, we wanted to give you an update on the progress of our "Proclaiming Freedom" capital campaign. To date, Streets has received almost \$4,100,000 in commitments towards the total campaign goal of \$5,000,000. We have also received a \$500,000 matching grant from a local foundation. Since that grant was awarded, a total of \$360,000 in commitments have been made towards that match. This means that we need only to raise an additional \$140,000 to reach the \$4,700,000 mark in the campaign.

With the facility scheduled for occupancy some time this May and programming set to begin later this summer, now is the time to act if you are interested in contributing to the "Proclaiming Freedom" campaign. To find out how, or to learn more about specific giving opportunities, please contact Rob Thompson at either (901) 525-7380 or Rob@StreetsMinistries.org.



As brickwork along the main entrance facing Foote Homes nears completion, the rendering becomes reality.



Gym floor installation is currently underway.



A view down the main hallway leading to the Rec. Room.



What We've Been Up To

- On March 15th, a youth group from **Mullins United Methodist Church** sacrificed a day of their Spring Break to help Streets pack up in preparation for the "big move". Afterwards, a joint "Club" between Streets kids and the youth group was held.
- Over 50 Vance Middle School students attended a Spring Break version of movie night. Pizza was served in the Rec. Room as the kids enjoyed watching "The Gospel" and "The Underclassman" up on the big screen.
- Each Monday through Friday at 12:30, the Streets **Ready Readers** program has been holding sessions on the campus of Georgia Avenue Elementary. Currently, over 20 students are working on improving their reading and phonetic skills with Streets volunteers and staff.
- On Saturday, April 1st, 110 kids from the neighborhood met with a missions team from **River Oaks Presbyterian Church** for a one day VBS at Streets. After a few skits, some arts and crafts time and a lunch, the kids learned some new songs before listening to stories about foreign missions trips and learned to "Go, Go, Go" wherever God sends you.
- Later that same day, Streets joined Advance Memphis to celebrate Easter and Spring. Over 100 kids from the neighborhood enjoyed searching for candy-filled Easter eggs in the park directly across from Streets.



Mullins UMC volunteers take a break from moving and enjoy a "Club" game with some Streets kids.



A Georgia Avenue 1st grader searches for another egg.

What's Coming Up

- April 10-15th, Streets will be proctoring the TCAP exams at Vance Middle School.
- On April 17th, the Rec. Room will be packed as Delvin hosts a "Spring Dance" during "Club" for kids from Booker T. Washington High School.
- Beginning April 27th, Streets will be playing host to members of **Hope Presbyterian Church** as they conduct their annual "Urban Plunge".
- On Saturday, April 29th, fifteen **Pathways** students will once again have a chance to land "the big one" as they go fishing with members of the **Mid-South Fly Fishers Association**.