

Staff Spotlight: Gwen Sanders (continued)

first job with Youth Villages as a youth counselor in a group home setting. In January of 2000, Gwen took a job as an Audience Coordinator for the David Letterman Show in New York City and also worked as a case manager for a homeless shelter in Brooklyn. After a year, Gwen came back and worked for the Tennessee Department of Children Services as a caseworker, and then came to Streets in summer of 2002, where she currently works with our high school girls.

Now comfortably settled at Streets, Gwen says this is the first time she can say job and love in the same sentence. She now looks back at her other service jobs and knows God was preparing her for her job now. "Some days, I feel like a big kid," she says, "but at other times, when a kid wants to get serious, I know I've already seen and dealt with it, either in my own life or in a work situation, and I am ready to meet the challenge and help them." Her favorite part of the job is hanging out with kids and talking to them on a personal level and just being able to help them if she can: "It's a blessing to work here now, because I can relate to the kids and not only can I say 'You can make it,' – I can show them first hand that it can be done. It means a lot just to give a kid a hug and say 'I love you' and 'you can make it.'" According to Gwen, she plans on giving hugs and telling kids they can make it until God Himself drags her away.



STREETS - BETWEEN THE LINES

MAY - JUNE, 2003

A Summer That Makes A Difference

It is "Cross Talk Night" at camp. All the leaders are up front, as the altar call is given. As kids make their way up to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, I notice that one of our young ladies, Jettina, is in their midst. She asks if I will pray with her. The beauty of this moment is that I prayed with Jettina's mom in our youth group fifteen years earlier. She's had A Summer That Made A Difference.

Ms. Bailey, the Principal at Booker T. Washington High School, congratulates the graduates of the Streets Summer Institute. These six students have just completed eight weeks of intensive academic challenges. The following year they are all on a college campus as fulltime students. They've all just had A Summer That Made A Difference.

It is well over one hundred degrees in this gymnasium that sits in the heart of the Delta in Coahoma County, Mississippi. Daniel, Monica and Ced are telling Bible stories, making Gospel bracelets and loving on young children who live in poverty. It has been another great mission trip and A Summer That Made A Difference.



Our newly acquired one and a half acre field across from the Streets building is filled with huge, colorful, inflatable games that are overrun with kids. There is face painting, a dunking booth, snow cone machines and a sound system that is blaring the Gospel Rap tunes of BIG PROFIT. Eighty missions minded kids from Birmingham are making sure that our kids are seeing the Love of Christ lived out and helping them have A Summer That Makes A Difference.

Kevin is asking about the technology used at Montgomery Martin Contractors. He is on a field trip as part of our summer computer-training program. For the first time in his life he is being exposed to vocational opportunities that he didn't know existed and for Kevin, this is shaping up to be A Summer That Makes A Difference.

The grills are firing up and the celebration is about to begin. Hope Presbyterian Church, with its seventy plus volunteers, is completing another week of Vacation Bible School. They have been sharing the Gospel with our elementary kids for the past four days. Today they send the kids off with great food, t-shirts, crafts and memories for a lifetime, all a part of A Summer That Makes A Difference.

Summer is upon us once again. It is a season that almost all of us look forward to, for a lot of different reasons. Our children are excited school is out. For many, vacation plans are made. We'll be visiting relatives or they'll be visiting us. There is much anticipation. However, for youth in the inner city of Memphis, summer is often a time of boredom. It is a time of year when daily meals are not guaranteed. Relief from the heat is sometimes difficult to come by. Jobs are scarce. The intense summer weather agitates and intensifies violence in a neighborhood that already wages war year round.

At Streets, we are committed to impacting the lives of kids by challenging them educationally, empowering them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and opening our facility as a safe haven and needed break from some unfriendly streets. Please pray for the staff and me as we look to serve this community on behalf of the Gospel this summer and consider how God may use you to serve too.

Your Brother in Christ,
Ken

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Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19-20a

- Ken Bennett**
Executive Director
- John Cowherd**
Middle School Coordinator
- Ashley Diaz**
Education Coordinator
- Grace Halliday**
Education Specialist
- Delvin Lane**
High School Coordinator
- Derrick 'DD' Osborne**
Computer Lab Specialist
- Gwen Sanders**
High School Women's Coordinator
- Rob Thompson**
Director of Development


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The New Girl: Gwen's First Week at Streets

On the last day of May 2002, the staff and kids of Streets Ministries eagerly anticipated the arrival of the newest member of the Streets staff, Gwen Sanders. She arrived early Sunday morning set to go to summer camp with twenty kids and me. In secret, Gwen was as scared as she could possibly be. Here she was – her first day at a brand new job – and she was supposed to become best friends with ten high school girls she had never even met while spending 24-hours-a-day together... in a cabin in the woods. But despite her fears, Gwen was prepared to take on the task of being a leader at Sharp Top Cove in Jasper, Georgia.

As soon as Gwen arrived on the scene, she immediately went to work. She greeted all of us with a gentle smile and became familiar with the girls one-at-a-time, as she had a chance to spend time with each of them. After getting on the bus, it was easy to see how good this week would be for both Gwen and her girls. The girls talked with Gwen as if they had known her for years.

Staff Spotlight: Gwen Sanders

Born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, Gwen attended Fairview Junior High and Central High School. Although she went to high school less than a mile from Streets, Gwen never visited Streets until she came to work here. Her relationship with Ken and Debbie Bennett, however, began much earlier. Debbie was Gwen's track coach in junior high and her basketball coach in junior and senior high school. During this time, Gwen got to know Debbie and Ken well through sports and just from hanging out at their house all the time. Debbie left teaching before Gwen's senior year to have she and Ken's first child, Kristen. Gwen jokes that she was mad at Ken back then, because it was his fault Debbie had a child and as a result, Central did not win the state in basketball her senior year without Coach Bennett at the helm.

Raised by her Mom after Dad died when she was four, Gwen grew up in a rough part of Memphis. Expected to be a product of her environment, not many people thought

After arriving at camp, Gwen helped the girls take their bags to their cabin. One girl was particularly tiny and struggled with her enormous luggage; so Gwen instantly put the girl's luggage on her own back. As I watched her, I thought it interesting that this self-sacrificial act was representative of how Christ took our sins on the cross. Because Gwen grew up in a similar fashion to some of the girls, she was able to connect with them and show them that it is healthy to sing and share the love of Christ with each other. Some of the girls have already entered parenthood, know what jail looks like, and have been raising themselves for some time, but Gwen built special relationships with these girls that continue today. And now, as their friend and mentor, Gwen will often take them to church with her, have them spend the night at her place, and provide advice about life as a young believer – in the same fashion that I imagine Christ would.



Gwen would amount to much. She got into a lot of trouble as a kid, often for fighting. But there was something that drew her to Ken and Debbie, because she said she knew they were different. As a junior and senior high student, she was always looking for an excuse to go hang out with "Coach Bennett." Debbie was a Christian mentor during all this time and even helped Gwen adjust to college.



Gwen eventually received a running scholarship to UT Martin to run the 800 and the mile in track as well as cross country. After her freshman year she transferred to Memphis where she ran all three years. She graduated with a degree in Communications in 1998 and took her

continued on back >>

Calendar of Events: March - May

■ The week of **March 10 – 14** was Spring Break, which means four Streets staffers and 22 kids from BTW spent four days touring the southeast on our annual **College Tour**. Ashley, John, Gwen and Delvin, along with some of BTW's brightest, hopped in a bus and visited Lane College, UT Martin, Fisk University, UT Chattanooga, Georgia State, Morris Brown, Tuskegee and Alabama State in, ahem, four days. The trip went great and kids actually got to submit applications at Lane and Alabama State. Thank you for all your support and prayers.



■ On Friday, **March 28**, Delvin Lane and Gwen Sanders hosted a **High School Lock-In**, which included a trip to the movies, Pizza Hut, games back at Streets and a gospel message presented by Delvin around 5 AM. The lock-in was a great success and was so busy that Delvin and Gwen were not able to squeeze any sleep onto the itinerary!

■ Delvin (and a couple of kids from High School club) drove down to Oxford, Mississippi on Saturday, **March 29** to participate in **Christ Presbyterian's Race Relations Panel**. Others from our neighborhood, including former Streets kids and current Lane College student Mario Gaddy, participated in the event.

■ On Monday, **April 1**, John Storcks began using Streets' elementary room for **Eden Academy**, a start-up classical learning school. For now, the school only includes preschool children. Please pray for John as he begins what we all hope will be a successful service and ministry to this community.

■ Also on **April 1**, DD Osborne reopened the Streets computer lab, which had been closed for a major upgrade project, and introduced the **Streets Computer Club**, which targets Middle School and High School students and uses the computer as a tool to present the Word of God and teach contemporary technical skills.

■ Suggested reading: BTW Junior Tasia Todd was featured in April's *Memphis Magazine* in an article entitled "Honor Bright," which contrasted the difference between life at BTW and White Station High Schools.

■ Streets staff helped to judge **BTW Senior Exhibitions** during the week of **April 8 – 12**. Each senior was required to write a research paper and give an oral presentation on his or her subject in order to graduate.

■ On **April 15** and **22**, Ashley Diaz is putting on the last of four **ACT Workshops** for students at BTW. Seven first-year medical students from UT Medical School have been assisting with individual tutoring.

■ Pathways tutors, please mark your calendars for the **Pathways End-of-the-Year Party** on **May 13** at 5:30 PM. The party is for all Pathways students and their tutors.

■ Summer is coming, which means it's time for summer camps. Camps are an important part of the ministry as we try to develop lasting relationships with kids and effect change in their lives. Each summer, Streets takes over 100 kids to one of five different weeklong camps. As we begin to pursue kids to go to camp, please pray for them and the funds that will allow them to go.

■ **Streets Summer Institute**, as many of you know, was started three years ago to help liberal arts college-caliber BTW students prepare for college entrance essays and interviews. Participants go through an intense writing and oral communications curriculum and are in class forty hours a week with a considerable homework load as well. Starting this month, Ashley and Ken will begin interviewing students for the institute, which starts **June 30**. Please pray for SSI, including the students, teachers and funding. We are currently looking for restaurants and/or volunteers to **provide 29 days of lunches** for approximately ten people. If you are interested in helping, please contact Rob Thompson (rob@streetsministries.org) at Streets.