

Staff Spotlight: Crystal Neal

Streets is excited to have Crystal Neal on our full time staff as the new Elementary Coordinator. No stranger to the community, Crystal attended Vance Middle School and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School with honors. While at BTW, she was a participant in Streets Summer Institute and credits the development of her task prioritizing and multi-tasking skills to the program.

Crystal is a recent graduate of University of Memphis and has a degree in Broadcast Communications as well as a minor in English. She has a two year old daughter named Madison Nicole and is looking forward to working with all the Georgia Avenue Elementary students both on campus and at Streets.

Her daily motto can be found in Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (NASB)



Crystal Neal (back row, center) spends some time out in the community getting to know kids.

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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

Agents of Hope: A Response to the School System

I pull up at Streets on another summer morning. The scene is typical. As my car nears the building, a familiar site catches my eye. High school kids are leaned up against the center or sitting on the steps reading, in preparation for another day of Streets Summer Institute. They are nice enough to say hello as I open the door, while being careful to stay focused on the task at hand. These are the academic superstars from Booker T. Washington High School that have been handpicked through a fairly thorough interview process. The greater Memphis community labels them as exceptions. Regrettably, their assumptions may be correct.

We look at the statistics from inner city schools not only in Memphis, but any other major urban area. The numbers emit a string of responses from depression to horror to anger. We look at the test scores, acts of violence, and dropout rates that cause defeat to the point of withdrawal and hopelessness. Does this always have to be the case? Do we always have to be defeated by the state of education? Can we not find a hope that stirs a passion inside of us to increase the number of these so-called exceptions?

If we are really honest, our defeat usually stems from our lack of action. I know in my personal life that is certainly the case. The things that frustrate me most in life are the things that I have no positive response to. I just sit and complain along with the rest of the world while praising God that I have the personal resources available to buffer me and my family from those perceived atrocities. So what role does Ken Bennett play? Simply put, I am called by God to be an agent of hope!

I Peter 3:15 "But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." How many times during the day do we give the response of hopelessness to people? I shutter to think how many conversations I have each day that end with no hope or conviction to be an agent of change.

We are living in a fallen world that is desperately seeking hope. If we truly embrace the Gospel, then we not only know, but are passionate about the fact that there is hope in every situation. Whether you have kids in the public system, private system, home school, charter school, or your kids have already graduated, we need you to be engaged in public education. At Streets you can mentor, tutor, read to kids, or assist in the homework lab.

In the pages that follow, you will read the story of this year's Streets Summer Institute. You will get a glimpse of how God has given a young man academic hope for the future, while drawing him to a stronger relationship in Christ.

I can assure you that whatever part of the city that you reside, there is a school in that district that could use your help. As the body of Christ, let us join together to be agents of change in our public school system because of the hope that we have found in the Cross. Let us start off the Fall by being true agents of hope!

Your Brother in Christ,
Ken



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Director of Development

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Education Director

Carmen Coleman
Education Coordinator

John Cowherd
Middle School Coordinator

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Streets Summer Institute: by Carmen Coleman

This past month, twelve students from the top of their class at Booker T. Washington High School were given the opportunity to participate in Streets' Summer Institute program. As in years past, the program focused on grammar, college preparation, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills. This year, classes were held at Crichton College and St. Andrews-Sewanee Boarding School, but visits were also paid to Rhodes College and Christian Brothers University.

Part of the focus of this year's Institute was to allow students to take a glimpse into the life of a college student. So, in addition to classes and study time, there were daily "off campus" activities scheduled as well. Some of the activities were held at Crossfire, the Muvico Theater, Putt-Putt Golf and Games, and the Hickory Ridge Community Center. Crossfire is a program sponsored through the Have a Standard Foundation where students work on their team building skills and participate in oral group discussions on questions relating to the bible. Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner Rogers quotes: "What we know about individuals, no matter how rich the details, will never give us the ability to predict how they will behave as a system. Once individuals link together they become something different...relationships change us, reveal us, evoke more from us. Only when we join with others do our gifts become visible, even to ourselves." In every thing we do, we realize that there is a message to be learned and, with our own perception, we determine how we will



Summer Institute students enjoying a swim in the Hickory Ridge Community Center pool one day after class.



The Summer Institute class of 2007 preforms a motivational chant during their recent field trip to Crossfire.

conceptualize that message. From that experience at Crossfire, hopefully the students will feel more comfortable about expressing their individuality in a group setting and realize that sometimes it requires input from the entire group in order to complete the task at hand.

While in Sewanee, the students participated in a hike along the Grundy Forrest Trail in South Cumberland State Park. The hike allowed students to experience God's creation of nature first hand. Along the way, students swam in a water hole and saw an amazing waterfall. As is every year, the most anticipated activity of the trip was the whitewater rafting tour down the Ocoee River. The students' facial expressions showed a range of emotion from scared to excitement as we guided our rafts down the river rapids.

Isaiah 43:1-2 states, "But now, this is what the Lord says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."

Throughout the entire time in the raft, the students learned that the rapids in the water symbolize the obstacles we face in life; but regardless of the obstacles, there is always a professional guide in God who is leading us down the right path.

A Student's Perspective: by Arsenio

My experience with the Streets Summer Institute program was amazing. In addition to improving my study skills, the program helped me learn how to write speeches and talk properly around people. There are many things you can get out of this five week program.

I have participated in the Summer Institute program for two years now, but this year I feel that I learned even more because I was more aware of the expectations. I learned how to do a research paper comparing main characters in two novels, and how to write an essay using literary terms such as characterization. I also improved my grammar skills and learned that if you just take the time to do the work, the rules really aren't that hard. The debate portion of the program taught me how to be a team player and get along with others even if our thoughts are not the same. It served as a way to communicate without arguing.

The program also taught me not to judge a book by its cover. When the teachers gave us the novel "Native Son" by Richard Wright and "The Stranger" by Albert Camus, the first thing that came across my mind was, "I'm not going to read those books!" But one day, I heard a classmate friend of mine talking about how good the novel was, so I went home and read the first three chapters. After that I did not want to put "Native Son" down. I enjoyed it so much that I stayed up late at night reading past my assignments. So far, "Native Son" has been one of the best books I have read in my entire life. It has been weird to me how the two books we read have so much in



Summer Institute students pose with Streets interns Sarah Doss and Callie while on the campus of St. Andrews-Sewanee.



Arsenio, on the front left, and his classmates prepare to take on the brisk level 3 rapids of the Ocoee River.

common even though the two authors have lived very different life-styles. After completing both books, we had to write a ten page compare and contrast paper.

The best part of the program was when I was in Sewanee. There, we participated in activities like capture the flag, water balloon fights, cards, ping-pong, basketball, water gun fights, and white water rafting. Despite all this fun however, work came first. We had to get up at 7:00 am each day to get ready. Each morning was started with a devotion given by John Cowherd followed by classes at 9:30 am. Later on in the day we had Bible study time with Streets' Interns Sara Doss and Callie. They were from Alabama and did a great job. The theme for the program was unity and the devotion and Bible studies focused on it because we as sinners are separated from God. This time played a major role in my studies because it grew me closer to God and caused all the activities I participated in to glorified Him.

Despite all the fun I had in Summer Institute, I would sum it up by using a quote from Jim Valvano, "How do you go from where you are to where you want to be? I think you have to have an enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal, and you have to be willing to work for it." Thank you to everyone who helped make my Streets Summer Institute session possible this year.

Arsenio will be a senior at BTW this year. He is a fullback on the football team and has a 3.1 GPA.

What We've Been Up To

- June 4th-5th, 20 students from Streets participated in an ACT Workshop put on by Jane Ross Tutoring Services.
- The week of June 17th, Streets took 32 Vance Middle School students to **For the Kingdom** summer camp in Raleigh, TN. In addition to organized games and team building exercises, the students participated in a nightly "Club" and listened to a Gospel presentation.
- Streets hosted a pool party at L.E. Brown Pool in Cleaborn Homes on June 27th. While John cooked hotdogs, DJ Delvin and Cleo played music to the over 300 kids in attendance.
- On July 16th, 20 volunteers from the Environmental Department of **International Paper** participated in a work day at Georgia Avenue Elementary.
- A group of 22 students from **Second Baptist Church** came and cleaned Streets facility from top to bottom on July 18th. If you or your group would like to take part in a similar mission project, please contact Richard at richard@streetsministries.org as we are always in need of this type of help.
- On July 19th, a group of middle and high school aged students from **Grace Evangelical Church** assisted Streets in the cleaning and moving of several classrooms at Georgia Avenue Elementary as a part of Massive Mission Day.
- From July 16th-20th, **Camp 32** was held at Streets. The camp, which was led by former Streets board member and Memphis Tiger (#32) Kenneth Moody, focused on "building character through basketball" to 100 kids each day.
- A group of families from **Independent Presbyterian Church** hosted a Summer Elementary Day at Streets on July 21st. Along with Miriam and Crystal, the group cooked out, played games, and had a good time in general with over 25 kids from the community.



John Cowherd, Streets' Middle School Coordinator, spends some "under the tree" time with kids at For the Kingdom.



Streets new board table, courtesy of Ed Vining's ArtFunction, consists of an inlaid cross and map of the neighborhood.

- From June 23-29th, Streets served as home for 16 middle school youth and six leaders from **Hope Presbyterian Church** as they held their annual Youth Urban Plunge. During this time, the youth group members ate and slept at Streets while they while they lead a Vacation Bible School in the community at the **Emmanuel Episcopal Center**.
- After over a year of planning, design and construction, Streets received its new board room table courtesy Ed Vining's **ArtFunction** on South Main. The table is close to fourteen feet long, weighs an estimated 600 lbs., and is constructed of African mahogany, Spanish cedar and cherry woods. With an inlaid map of the community Streets serves defined through the different types of woods, it is truly a one of a kind piece of functional art.



What's Coming Up

- Booker T. Washington High School graduate and two time Streets Summer Institute participant, Veronica, has been awarded the prestigious **Little Rock Nine Foundation Scholarship and Mentorship Award**. The award, which will be presented by former President Bill Clinton on September 24th at the Peabody Hotel-Little Rock, is the result of a nationwide essay competition and comes with \$10,000 in scholarship money. Veronica will be enrolled at the University of Tennessee at Martin beginning this fall. Congratulations Veronica!
- July 29th, 21 students from Booker T. Washington will board a charter bus headed for a week of summer camp at **Young Life's** Windy Gap property in North Carolina. Once they arrive, students will have the opportunity to learn how to horseback ride as well as drive bumper cars, ride a zip line, and bounce fellow campers off "the blob" and into the lake. A nightly "Club" consisting of group games, songs, and worship will then lead to cabin time discussions. Please be in prayer for these students that they may hearts for which to hear the Gospel.
- August 7th, Streets will be participating in the **Memphis Grizzlies** "Team Up" event at the FedEx Forum. The event, which will consist of lunch, prizes, and feature various players and personnel, will focus on mentoring opportunities available through the Grizzlies' partner organizations. If you would like to attend, please send an email to RSVP@grizzlies.com or call (901) 888-HOOP for more information.



Seville, a running back for BTW, shares dinner with a St. Georges player as part of the Bridges Kickoff Classic.



Veronica practices her smile prior to a summer job interview with FedEx during the recent BTW Job Fair.

- On August 25th at 10:00 am, the defending District 8-AA Champion Booker T. Washington Warriors will be taking on the **St. Georges Gryphons** as a part of the **Bridges Kickoff Classic** held at the Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium. Tickets are \$10 if purchased through the school with all proceeds going directly to the Warrior football program. If you would like more information or would be interested in attending, please contact Coach Delvin Lane at either (901) 525-7380 x205 or delvin@streetsministries.org. Your support would be greatly appreciated by these hard working young men.
- Hard to believe, but **Memphis City Schools** begin classes Monday, August 13th. So, with the fall semester basically upon us, Streets is currently seeking out volunteers. Opportunities are available in our **Pathways** and elementary **Ready Readers** programming as well as for **Room Adopters**, **Street Smarts**, and both middle and high school **Bible Study** groups. Dates for groups to provide **Club Food** on Monday and Thursday nights are also available.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, or would like to know more about other ways in which you or your group can get involved, please contact Richard at either (901) 525-7380 x201 or richard@streetsministries.org for more information.