



Joey and some senior high Pathways students root for their team at their recent Super Bowl party

In the last year, Joey has revamped our computer lab and taken responsibility for and helped to grow our Middle School Pathways program. He's also working with our Elementary Read2Succeed Program, and helping to start StreetSmart, a new Elementary program aimed at first graders, all of who affectionately refer to their tall teacher as "Sloppy Joe." And just last month, Joey began teaching "Advanced Composition/ACT Prep" at BTW High School three days a week. Clearly, Joey has made a considerable impact in a short amount of time.

Recently, Joey was thinking about how different life is in this neighborhood compared to where he grew up. He's heard more than one story from kids whose father has been shot and killed. This gruesome reality stands out in stark contrast to his experience, or as he put it, "it's a little different from ECS." These stories continue to make Joey thankful for his upbringing and motivate him to make a difference in the lives of kids everyday. While Joey could have ended up throwing fastballs in the minors, we're glad God threw Joey a curveball landing him at Streets, and we hope that he'll be here for a long time to come.

A "New" New Year

It is hard to believe it's already February. Perhaps it's time to dust off our New Year's Resolution lists and see what, if anything, is still on the radar screen? If you are like me, you sat down in December and made a list of new goals and ventures for 2004 and maybe resurrected some old goals that never quite came to fruition. But by the end of the year, we tend to just crumple up that list and toss it in the trash, choosing instead to think about how we will approach 2005 with a new vigor.

My list typically includes my walk with Christ and things that pertain to my commitment to live out that walk. I'm fairly easy on myself as I go through the list, making a million (presumably) legitimate excuses for not following through with things. It's not my failure to follow through with these things that bothers me; it's my lack of conviction or desire to see them through that is so astounding. I had just finished revisiting my list when I received the following email from a missionary in Pakistan.



Dear Friends,

In the attachment you will see the photograph of a 17-year-old Christian girl, Julie (not her real name) who was working at a public call office. A Muslim man wanted to convert her to Islam so that he could marry her. Julie is a strong Christian. She turned down the offer and witnessed the love of Jesus Christ to the Muslim man. He came back the next day and threw acid on Julie, which burned her face, both arms, chest and destroyed her right eye. What a tragedy!

Revelation 2:3 reads, "You have persevered and endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary." How little and insignificant my hardships seem in light of Julie's. Just like Julie's story, it is so humbling to truly engage with brothers and sisters in Christ who continue to persevere in situations that seem hopeless and overwhelming to me. And yet, the least of situations tend to throw me off course; my list grows.

Streets is in its sixteenth year of persevering in the third poorest zip code in America. In no way has it been easy, but we have tried to remain faithful in living out a daily Gospel in this community. And just like in my personal life, the list at Streets grows longer each day: More babies are being born out of wedlock to teenage mothers, more kids are "graduating" high school who can't read. Hope is a foreign concept – an abstraction – for most of the people we serve. But we "persevere under trial, because when [we have] stood the test, [we] will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

Today I want to ask you, are you persevering in your own life, where God has planted you? Don't give up on that 2004 list just yet. God has some exciting things that He wants you to persevere through. So go retrieve it out of the wastebasket and begin to work through it, even when it is difficult and inconvenient.

Your Brother in Christ,
Ken

- Ken Bennett**
Executive Director
- Joey Collums**
Education Specialist
- John Cowherd**
Middle School Coordinator
- Ashley Diaz**
Education Coordinator
- Grace Halliday**
Education Specialist
- Delvin Lane**
High School Coordinator
- Gwen Sanders**
High School Women's Coordinator
- Rob Thompson**
Director of Development
- Quinhon Turner**
Recreation and Facilities Specialists
- Joyce Wilfong**
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If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

Isaiah 58:10

What's Coming Up: February

- The **Vance Middle School Boys Basketball Team** finished the regular season 17-1 and plays in the **MIAA City Championship game** on Thursday, February 5 at 5PM. Win or lose, they will advance to the state tournament the following week.
- **Grizzlies Coach Lionel Hollins** is schedule to speak to a group of High School students at Streets in February as part of **Black History Month**.
- Our annual **College Tours** trip will take place **March 7 – 10** and will include UT Martin, Tennessee State, MTSU, UT Chattanooga, Atlanta University schools, UA Birmingham and Jackson State. Almost 25 BTW High School students will participate in the trip. If you are interested in helping to cover part of the cost for a student to attend (roughly \$330 each), please contact Rob Thompson at 525-7380 or rob@streetsministries.org.
- Coming Up: Streets **Summer Institute (SSI) students go to college!** SSI continues to be an apparent success. To date, the five of six SSI students who have taken the ACT have achieved college-qualifying ACT scores. Congratulations guys!

What We've Been Up To

- The holidays were a busy time on Vance Avenue. Delvin, Ken and several players and coaches from the **Memphis Tigers Basketball Team** delivered **Thanksgiving Baskets** to Streets families over the Thanksgiving holidays.
- The **High School girls Bible study** spent two days out at **For The Kingdom Camp** on **January 16 and 17** as the **Work Crew**.
- Delvin, Gwen and the High School crew pulled another all-nighter on Friday, **December 5** during a **High School lock-in** at Streets.
- **Middle School and High School** groups from Streets did some **Christmas caroling** at retirement communities in early December.
- Streets was featured at the **Grizzlies game** on December 13th as part of the **Streets Ministries In-Arena night**. We had a booth in the concourse and a 60-second public service announcement on the Jumbotron at halftime. The 15 or so Streets kids who went as a part of our on-going Grizzlies Tickets for Kids program got an extra kick out of seeing Ken, the rest of the staff and themselves on the **Jumbotron**.
- Always willing to go that extra mile, **Streets staffers** played Santa Claus and his elves in the **Vance Middle School Christmas Program** the week of **December 15**.
- Thanks to the help of a lot of people at **Independent Presbyterian Church**, we distributed over **600 Christmas baskets** to neighborhood residents on **December 20th**. Thanks to everyone who made this possible.
- Staff members from **Athletic Resource Management** came down to Streets on **December 23** and distributed gifts to the **family of six they adopted** this year. Thanks to everyone at ARM!
- Speaking of presents, a big thank you goes out to students **at Presbyterian Day School**, children at **Independent Presbyterian Church** and friends at **Clark and Clark**. Their combined efforts allowed us to distribute Christmas presents to over 70 families in the neighborhood.



Streets girls help FTK Director Ryan Ratliff as a weekend work crew

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What We've Been Up To: Continued

- Volunteer Carrie Evans and Delvin took the **Middle School girls** and **High School boys** to participate in an **Advance Memphis work project** on **January 10**. Both groups helped with a renovation of a home on Georgia Avenue.
- Ashley and Joey hosted a **Super Bowl party** for eight **High School students** on Super Bowl Sunday. (picture at right and below)



Staff Spotlight: Joey Collums

Born and raised in Memphis, Joey went to ECS before attending Mississippi State on an academic and baseball scholarship. After graduating last May with a degree in English, he could have played minor league baseball were it not for a career ending shoulder injury prior to his senior season. Though the injury was unfortunate for Joey and for baseball, it turned out to be quite fortuitous for Streets Ministries and some kids in Foote and Cleaborn Homes.



As he moved through college, Joey never pictured himself doing urban ministry. All throughout college, he had no real plan and felt a little lost. Then he spent a month at Windy Gap on Summer Staff, and during the Urban Session (week), a seed was planted that would bring him to Streets a year later.

Eventually, Joey found Streets the way most people do – simply by hearing someone else talk about it. In talking with a friend about what to do after college, Joey mentioned that he loved working with kids but didn't see himself in a traditional youth ministry role and that he had an interest in education but didn't see himself teaching fulltime. That friend suggested Joey talk to Ken Bennett, and not long after graduating, Joey was here for the summer as our education intern.

All last summer, Joey helped with Streets Summer Institute, grading papers, driving vans and occasionally teaching a class or two. After only a week here, we shipped him off to Middle School Summer Camp at For the Kingdom, where he was a cabin counselor and ropes course instructor, and towards the end of the summer, he spent a weekend with the High School at Victory Valley Discipleship Camp. As the summer wound down (and we anxiously awaited the power coming back on), Joey's internship was supposed to end, but we had not intentions of letting him get away that easily.

Just after school started in August, Ken had a middle school student walk into his office who said that he and Ken "needed to talk" about Joey. A little surprised, Ken asked what was up. The student proceeded to ask Ken if there was anyway Streets could keep Joey around "for good." Joey had made such an indelible impression on this 14-year-old young man over the summer that he felt compelled to tell Ken that he "needed to keep him around." And that's pretty indicative of the impact Joey Collums has made on kids at Streets.

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