



aspire
assisting single parents in
realizing education

***stepup**

News from aspire: assisting single parents in realizing education

ASPIRE Reaches California

We are excited to announce that ASPIRE of San Francisco California established an affiliate on March 13, 2012. The affiliate was spearheaded by Dao Jensen, who at the age of 19 was pregnant, single, and unsure of how she would have afforded college tuition had it not been for a full scholarship.

Although Dao married the father, completed her education, and had four additional children, she is again a single parent and found herself wanting to find a meaningful way to give back to the community. Desiring to help single parents finish their higher education, she worked with a community giving-based program to set goals that she is passionate about, determine the metrics for a successful project, and locate resources to achieve the goals. Her research led her to ASPIRE, whose mission and purpose matched the goals for her endeavor.

The board members of SFCA are very eager to assist single parents who are earning their undergraduate degrees in the Bay Area. They will begin interviewing students in July for Fall 2012 scholarships.

Congratulations and best wishes ASPIRE of San Francisco!



L to R - Board Members (front row) Goldie Nam, Asa Williams, Ashea Fuller (back row) Michelle Cannon, Ben Cannon, Dao Jensen and Dave Ngo sign the ASPIRE of San Francisco California affiliate agreement

ASPIRE Workshops

ASPIRE of Green Country Oklahoma board members held their first board workshop in Tulsa, Oklahoma on February 4. With the feedback received, ASPIRE training materials were revised to provide a better explanation of steps to awarding scholarships and using the online tools.

ASPIRE of Metro Atlanta board members met on April 28 in Atlanta, Georgia and ASPIRE of San Francisco California board members met on May 19 for their first ASPIRE workshop. Each affiliate was presented with materials and information about the online training modules, the STAR student and donor database, and the procedure for determining and awarding scholarship recipients. ASPIRE of North Delta Mississippi will hold its workshop on June 7.

All three workshops were well received by the board members. Susan Reid, Board President of the Metro Atlanta affiliate, commented that "the workshop that Christine did for us was invaluable. We are eager to help single parents but we were overwhelmed at the best way to move forward. The training modules and the on-site training gave us the confidence and the tools to do just that. We will be giving our first scholarships this fall and we feel confident that we are on the right track. We couldn't have done it without the help of everyone at ASPIRE."



ASPIRE of Metro Atlanta: Janelle Perrilliat, Ashley Foster, Courtney Clinton, Thea Williams, Tiffani Hindsman, Janeine Williams, Debbie Walker, and Susan Reid.

Meet an ASPIRE Volunteer Executive Director

"The most rewarding thing about ASPIRE is having a personal relationship with our students - to laugh with them and cry with them. It is so wonderful to see them gain confidence and overcome some of the obstacles that are the most challenging. ASPIRE is so much more than financial support. To hear the students' stories about how they are pushing through struggles, making sacrifices for their children, making great grades, attaining their degree, and securing employment - those things remind me why I continue to be a part of this program. A student once said to me that 'there are angels among us, and some of them are part of the ASPIRE team.' I know that we are enriching lives one family at a time!"

Leticia became aware of the single parent scholarship program when she and her family lived in Northwest Arkansas. When they moved back to Joplin, she and her husband, Bryan, thought it would be tremendous to do something similar by helping single parents in SWMO. She started volunteering with ASPIRE in January 2010 and "works with an amazing, caring board." Bryan also volunteers with ASPIRE, as he serves on the ASPIRE of SWMO board.



Leticia Vowels, Executive Director, ASPIRE of SWMO

"The most rewarding thing about ASPIRE is having a personal relationship with our students - to laugh with them and cry with them"

Due to the May 2011 tornado in Joplin, ASPIRE of SWMO was not able to hold their fundraiser last year. The board and staff have been working very hard to get much needed funding, and are pleased to announce the 2012 **Celebration of Success** will be held on Thursday, June 14 at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Joplin, MO at 6:00 pm.

Supporters can purchase a table for \$750, which equals one semester scholarship for a single parent. For more information about this event for ASPIRE of SWMO, please visit swmo.aspireus.org or call 417.291.1640.



Angela with daughter Miriam and son Nathaniel

Angela Parrish
Graduate
ASPIRE of SWMO

Elementary Education
December 2011

"With the ASPIRE scholarship and their support, I was able to finish my pursuit of a college education and obtain a means to make a living that will support my children. I am now a full-time substitute teacher at Kelsey Norman Elementary in Joplin, MO teaching a 5th grade eMints class."

What influenced you to enroll in college?

The need to support my children on my own.

What was your inspiration to choose your degree?

Working with kids, especially those that have a harder time at learning.

What is the meaning of a college education?

It is a way to make a living for my children. It has also instilled self-confidence in myself and given my children the desire to pursue higher education after finishing high school.

What is the most memorable experience of this journey?

Looking up at my children while I was walking across the stage at graduation. They were clapping and cheering and so proud of my accomplishment.

What did you find most difficult about being a single parent & student?

Being a single parent has many challenges. Being the constant parent, without having anyone else to back you up or consult for decisions. Spending late nights studying and being up early for work and class proved to be one of the most challenging obstacles. I believe this helped me to enjoy even the few minutes I am able to spend with my kids and to make the most of the time we have together.

What advice would you give other single parents on their educational path?

Believe in yourself and your future. You CAN do this! And even when you think no one really cares, it's great to know that the people of ASPIRE DO believe in you!

How were you able to use the ASPIRE scholarship?

The ASPIRE scholarship was very helpful to me and my children. One semester, I was able to purchase school supplies and clothes for my children and myself. Another semester, I was able to pay rent, which I was unsure of how I would be able to otherwise.

ASPIRE Endowments Established

ASPIRE is proud to announce the establishment of the **Alford Sherman Endowed Scholarship** and the **Forsythe Family Trust Endowed Scholarship**. These endowed scholarships were established to honor the military widows of the Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program.

A campaign to match the funds will kick off June 1st. Matching gifts will help fund even greater work. Recipients will have a stake in knowing that they are helping themselves and their families through their own hard work and sacrifice.

To make a matching contribution please go to:
www.aspireus.org



Terry Alford, Ruth A. Sherman Forsythe, Sheena McCloud (Surviving Spouse recipient), and Richard Forsythe

**"Your contribution,
their education:
Building success one
family at a time."**

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ASPIRE Board Retreat

ASPIRE board members and guests gathered on April 21 for the annual board retreat. Attendees were treated to a homemade breakfast as they listened to Executive Director Christine Zini speak about the progress of the organization over the last year. She reviewed the updated training materials and online training modules that are presented at the affiliate workshops.



*The smallest good deed is
better than the
grandest good intention.*

-Jacques-Joseph Duguet



Surviving Spouse Scholarship recipient **Sheena McCloud** of Killeen, TX graciously took time out of her busy schedule to speak at the meeting. She told the story of her life with her husband Christopher, her life after his death in Iraq, and her determination to provide a better life for her sons by earning a college degree.

Board member John Suttle presented a check from BAE Systems, Inc. in the amount of \$250,000 for continued support of ASPIRE and the Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program. BAE is also providing numerous in-kind resources for ASPIRE expansion projects that are in the planning stages.

Surviving Spouse Scholarship Recipient... Mara Courcy

Carrying Your Love With Me

Love is not an object that can be seen; it is felt. A feeling that either deepens or fades away. Love can be felt all around through everything if one allows it to. When heartache and tragedy strike it can be extremely hard to see this. That moment when you close your eyes and you can see, feel your hero's love, that moment is the moment that carries you on, pulls you out of the darkness. My husband Cpl Peter Courcy was a US Soldier in the Army. He was a member of the 2-506 Infantry unit. On February 10, 2009, while deployed to Afghanistan, Peter was out on patrol when his humvee was struck by a VBIED. He was killed instantly. That day I became a widow.

That day my life was broken. I was lost, confused, and heartbroken. Through the following months our son (who was 5 months old when Peter was killed) was my only reason for living. I knew I had to take care of him. With time, my smile went from fake to real and I started living again. On memorial weekend, May 30th, 2010, my only sibling, my older brother BJ, died accidentally. That heartache overwhelmed my life once again. Less than a year and a half apart I planned two funerals in my early twenties. Unsure of what purpose there is to life if it's filled with sadness, I questioned everything. There was one thing I could never question; the love that I had for both of them. That love motivated me to be happy again, to cherish the time that I had with them, and to honor them by living, by carrying their love with me!

When Peter was deployed I took a break from school to care for our newborn son. Peter knew that school was important to me and encouraged me to go back when I was ready. With the help of ASPIRE and BAE I went back to school. This May I walked the stage and graduated with an A.A. in Criminal Justice. With the continued help of ASPIRE I will further my college education and continue to get my B.A. in Psychology. I plan to help others who have experienced grief, heartache, and pain, and to use my experience to help other military families in great need. Without the ASPIRE scholarship sponsored by BAE, none of this would be possible. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for this chance. As long as there is love anything is possible.

~Mara



Graduation Day: Mara with sons Liam and Anthony (holding picture of Mara's late brother BJ and late husband Peter)

Welcome Home Veterans Picnic

A coalition of veterans organizations in Northwest Arkansas sponsored a Welcome Home Veterans Picnic on Saturday, March 31, 2012. ASPIRE Executive Director Christine Zini and Program Coordinator Jen Miller were honored to be among other organizations that support military veterans and their families. ASPIRE presented materials about the



Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program, along with pictures and brief stories about the program's current scholarship recipients and their children. Visitors to the ASPIRE table were able to learn more about the organization and take home brochures and newsletters.



Basket giveaway winner, veteran Roseanne Falk, with Jen Miller

New 2012 ASPIRE Board Members



Carla Wasson attended Manhattan School of Music, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree and a Master of Music degree. She earned an Ed.D. from Columbia University and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Arkansas School of Law. She is the City Attorney for Springtown, Arkansas, and has served as a Magistrate Judge for the Siloam Springs District Court.

Carla is the Past-President of the Rotary Club of Siloam Springs, and has served as a board member for North Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Sager Creek Arts Center, Dogwood Literacy Council, and First United Methodist Church of Siloam Springs. She co-founded the Oval Window Chamber Ensemble in New York.

Tania Knudsen is passionate about the people of Arkansas. She uses art to represent the State of Arkansas in a modern, positive way. She manages and owns Studio 7, an art studio whose focus is to teach others how to find their own voice through the fine arts. Tania regularly participates in regional shows including juried shows such as Pinnacle Hills Art Show, Ozark Art Alliance, Artists of Northwest Arkansas and Downtown Bentonville Art Walk.

Tania is a graduate from the University of Arkansas with a BS in Art Education and Elementary Education and a former recipient of the Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Benton County. She has many award winning paintings and her work is in several private and corporate collections.



Christie Vogel Honored - STAR Contributor

Christie Vogel, center, was honored at the ASPIRE Board Retreat on April 21 for her creation and contribution of the STAR database. STAR (Student Tracking And Records) is a custom web application database designed and developed specifically for ASPIRE Affiliates. STAR provides ASPIRE Affiliates with a turnkey database solution for managing students and donors online. STAR also provides a way for students to apply online, reducing the time volunteer board members spend managing their recipients' academic records.

Christie is a graduate from the Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Benton County and holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management and a master's degree in Computer Technology.



Christine Zini, Executive Director, Christie Vogel, and Marjorie Wolfe, President.

ASPIRE AFFILIATES

ASPIRE of Southwest Missouri

ASPIRE of Green Country Oklahoma

ASPIRE of North Delta Mississippi

ASPIRE of Metro Atlanta Georgia

ASPIRE of San Francisco California

How can you impact the lives of single parent families?

- * Spread the word about ASPIRE
- * Volunteer as a mentor
- * Become a board or committee member of National ASPIRE or an affiliate
- * Donate time, special talents, & resources
- * Listen to the story of a single parent
- * Establish an affiliate in your area
- * Call to see how you can help make a difference



By investing in ASPIRE, you will be providing hope to real people who will be empowered through education, thus bringing significant change to the under-served and oppressed single parents in our nation. Your gift will live on in transformed and grateful individuals. As we have witnessed over and over, when single parents become financially stable, they wholeheartedly give back to the communities that made their dream of education a reality.

Yes! I want to help ASPIRE provide single parents the opportunity of an education.
 Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____.

Name on Account (Please Print) : _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Options: ☐ Check Enclosed ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date: _____

Security V-Code (3 digit number on BACK of card): _____

Authorized Signature: _____

_____ Please contact me to arrange for a donation of stock.

_____ Please contact me to arrange for a regular bank draft donation.

_____ I prefer my donation remain anonymous.

_____ To donate online, please visit our website: www.aspireus.org

Your contribution can be mailed to:
ASPIRE - 20 E. Center Street - Fayetteville, AR 72701

www.aspireus.org

479.973.0800 (p)
 866.973.0805 (t)

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