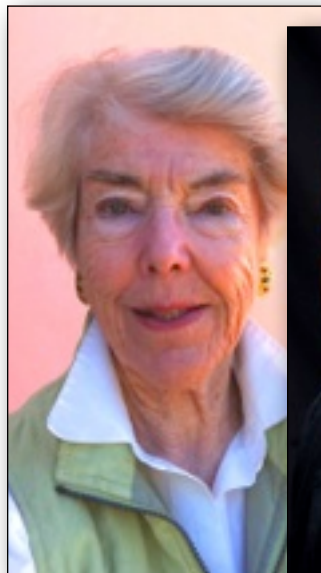


The Village Group

Bridging the gap for a better Community

Making a Difference

Meet some of the individual heroes behind The Village Group



Marcia Constance



John Funny



Ann B. LeMay

Having grown up in Plantersville as the youngest of 11 siblings, John Funny understands better than most the value of the programs The Village Group provides for the youth in that community.

As founder, president and CEO of Grice Consulting Group, LLC., of Atlanta, he's done well for himself. However, he believes he could have achieved more and excelled faster as a young man if an organization like The Village Group had been around.

"I would have been exposed to so much more and been able to see so many more opportunities and how to take advantage of

those opportunities," he said. He recalled several years ago when TVG took a group of students to tour the White House and meet congressmen and senators. "Being in that sort of space allows youth to have a better understanding of the opportunities that are out there and just how far they can go."

That's why he's an enthusiastic TVG supporter today — he wants to invest in programs that give that extra boost to young people who are already on the way to success or that might be the tipping point for others on a different path.

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*A huge thanks
from our
executive director*

To the friends and benefactors of The Village Group, I'd like to offer my deepest appreciation for your generosity and support. It is only because of you and your interest in our organization and its mission that 2014 was a banner year for us.

We met our financial goals and obligations, and were able to provide quality academic and enrichment programs for the youth of Georgetown County.

Our Summer Academy continues to be popular with students and families. Enrollment has increased nearly 50 percent to 198 students. In order to handle the additional students, last year we hired four more certified teachers for a total of nine. We also thought it was important to bring on a registered nurse to ensure that we have a safe environment for participants.

We expect 2015 to be another banner year for the Academy. And speaking of 2015, it marks our 10-year

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Making a Difference

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"I consider it an honor to support an organization that has taken the time, effort and resources to invest in the youth from my hometown and their futures," Funny said. "I'm not there all the time, but this is a way to support the Plantersville community on a constant basis."

Funny has been a supporter of the group since its launch a decade ago and he's one of the reasons the program has been able to grow in recent years. In 2014, TVG saw a 37 percent increase in net income, and individual and corporate donations totaling more than \$35,000.

"Our donors are truly a blessing," said Ray Funnye, TVG executive director. "Without them, we couldn't accomplish what we do, and whether they give \$5 or \$5,000, their donation makes a difference in the lives of the youth we work with."

While many of TVG's donors have ties to Plantersville, not all are former residents. Ann Brittain LeMay, co-owner of Brittain Resort Management, grew up in and resides in Myrtle Beach. Funnye introduced her to TVG at the funeral of Julia Grate, a family friend who worked for more than

40 years at a motel owned by LeMay's family. Grate was from Plantersville and had supported TVG. Supporting a group and a community that had been so dear to Grate seemed a good tribute to a woman who had meant so much to so many, LeMay said.

"Even though I live in Horry County, the Plantersville community has a special place in my heart and it deserves our care," LeMay said. Added to that, she has a great appreciation for its mission to encourage educational success.

"School was very important to me as a child," LeMay said. "It was a second home, I guess you'd say. Learning and reading was something I enjoyed doing, so I can imagine how important this is for some kids."

Marcia Constance, who resides at Chicora Wood Plantation with her husband Jamie, is another donor who has lent her support to TVG almost since the beginning. She noticed a need for programs like those offered by TVG in the early 1980s, shortly after moving to the area from California and actually was founder of another summer program which served the area for a number of years before The Village Group.

"I was not a working mother, so in the summer in California I

could be with my children and go to the beach or the mountains, or they could go to summer camp. They were very fortunate," Constance said. "When I came here with my Southern husband and we were restoring the house where we live, we would go through Plantersville and the different villages around. I remember asking my husband, 'what do these children do all summer?' There were no summer camps and no Y at the time."

They started a program called Youth Enrichment Adventures, which served the Plantersville area and other communities for seven years. TVG is an improvement over that early program, she said.

"Ray certainly knew our interest in youth and being sure summer activities were going on," Constance said. "I decided to see how I could help."

"I love children and what they're teaching these children — manners and trade and work skills. I'm just so happy children in this community have something to do besides getting on their cell phones and computers," Constance said. "This is such a wonderful thing for our local Plantersville children, and I know they're much better prepared for school in the fall after these programs in the summer."

We need your help!

The Village Group has already reached out and joined forces with numerous community organizations and individuals. We need your financial support to help sustain this important community project, which has such a significant impact on the lives of so many of our area's young people.

We ask that you please consider making a tax deductible contribution so that we can continue our work. Donations can be made online at www.thevillagegroup.org, or you can mail your donation to:

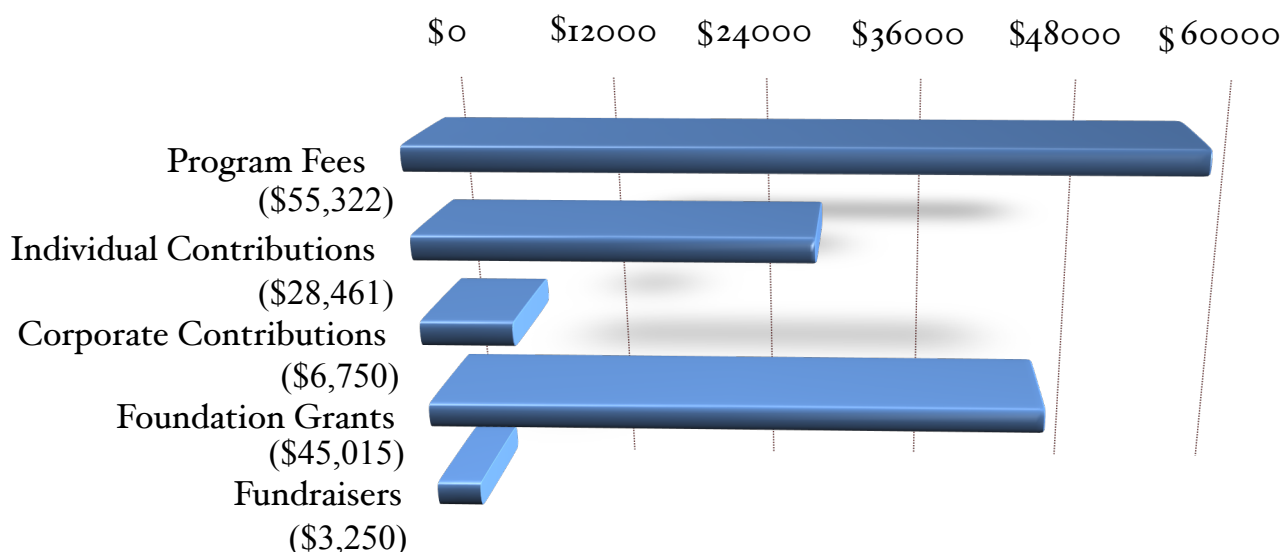
The Village Group, P.O. Box 700, Georgetown, S.C. 29442.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2014

The Village Group had some excellent financial accomplishments during 2014. Among them, we're proud to report a **37 percent increase** in net income from 2013! Many individuals, foundations and corporations supported The Village Group with financial contributions, and countless others lent their support through volunteer efforts, prayer and by sharing our story. We are called to give of ourselves to those whose need is greatest. We want to express our sincerest thanks to those who do that through their support of The Village Group. We ask you to continue your support in one of the following ways: 1) Tell one new person about The Village Group, 2) Send us a note about how involvement with The Village Group has touched your life, or 3) Make a financial gift and have a direct impact on the lives of youth in our community!

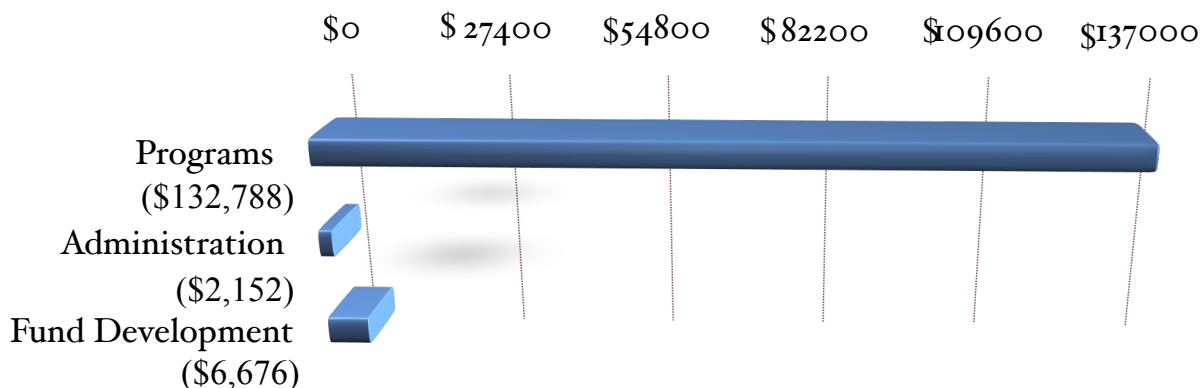
Income Total: \$138,798

Where Our Funds Come From



Expense Total: \$141,616

How Our Funds Are Spent



Summer Academy keeps kids on track

By Chris Sokoloski

Courtesy of Southstrand News

While the sounds of children's voices had mostly faded out of county schools, Plantersville Elementary was filled with laughter and nervous energy on June 9, 2014.

Kids, parents, grandparents and community members filled the cafeteria for the opening of the Plantersville Summer Academy. In its fifth year, the program had grown from 101 students in 2012 to 136 in 2013 and 181 in 2014. Even with the expanded enrollment, there were still kids on a waiting list.

The goal of the academy is to provide a nurturing environment during summer months while at the same time helping to improve performance on standardized tests and increasing the number of students who graduate from high school.

The academy kicked off on a Monday morning with breakfast and some light study work. The next day, a group of students and chaperones were on their first field trip — to Front Street in downtown Georgetown.

The academy was staffed in 2014 by eight teachers, one nurse, four students from the Duke University Scholars program, two students from Coastal Carolina University and eight recent graduates or students from county high schools. Karen Pyatt, a kindergarten teacher at Waccamaw Elementary School, took over the academy's kindergarten class in 2014.



"I enjoy the challenge and I think it's a great program to stimulate the minds of our young people through the summer," she said. "And I think this is an investment into our future."

Pyatt said teachers often have to spend time at the beginning of a new school year getting kids readjusted.

"Throughout the summer, their minds aren't on school. So when they get back, we have to take the time to refocus them. But this program helps them stay focused."

Along with studying the three "Rs," kids also attend sports camps and take field trips. New to

Top: Students on the first day of the 2014 Summer Academy. Above: A student receives one-on-one academic help. Left: Students at the academy learn and have a great time.

the academy in 2014 was a robotics program. Ray Funnye, executive director of The Village Group, said robotics was added to spark students' interest in math and science.

"The STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] program is critical for future growth of this country, and robotics is an introduction to that area," Funnye said.

The Plantersville Summer Academy will return this year!

The Village Group participates in Heritage Days

The Village Group sent 91 attendees to the Penn Center's 32nd annual Heritage Days Celebration in Beaufort in November. Over the years, the Penn Center has collected historical information on the rich cultural legacy of African-Americans and the Gullah Geechee people. Heritage Days is a festive family event enriched by the unique cultural expressions of the Gullah Geechee people. The event included a variety of cultural programs and displays.



Rep. Anderson delivers donation to The Village Group



S.C. Rep. Carl Anderson and his wife Doris joined The Village Group at one of its planning meetings, where they presented a \$2,500 check for the organization and its programs. Rep. Anderson has been and continues to be a strong supporter of TVG through monetary donations and his constant encouragement.

Director's note

Continued from front page

anniversary and we hope to celebrate this accomplishment with you.

For this milestone year, we have several exciting events in the works, which we believe you will enjoy. The first is a benefit entitled "History, Heritage and Homage," to be held on Saturday, April 18, at 4:40 p.m. at Hasty

Point Plantation in Plantersville. Please check our Facebook Page and website for additional details.

On behalf of our board of directors and those who benefit so greatly from the programs made possible by your contributions, I salute you for your interest and commitment to the Village Group.

With sincerest thanks,

*Ray Funnye
Executive Director*



Youth program features renowned illustrator, authors

E.B. Lewis, world renowned author, artist and illustrator, along with Margot Theis Raven, author of "Circle Unbroken," participated in a day-long celebration of lifelong learning and a community's commitment to literacy last spring. Sponsored by the Village Group, this hugely successful event took place at Plantersville Elementary School and was part of The Village Group's LIFE (Literacy Is for Everyone) Adventures program.

Lewis and Raven spent the day visiting with students, and participated in an afternoon tea, and an event open to the community at large. The intent of the program was to acknowledge the worth of being a lifelong learner; to help inspire and encourage the value of reading; and to emphasize the community's commitment to literacy.

Lewis and Raven are celebrated for their collaborative effort "Circle Unbroken," a powerful picture book. With its rhythmic text and evocative paintings, the book spirals through time, becoming a triumphant song — a rich story of a craft, a culture and a people. This book celebrates the tradition of sweetgrass basket making through a grandmother weaving a generations old story to her granddaughter during basket making lessons.

Many residents of Georgetown have familial and traditional ties to sweetgrass basket making through history and family connections. Mt. Pleasant native, Vera Manigault, a



Top: E.B. Lewis with a Plantersville Elementary student. Above: Margot Theis Raven is pictured with one of the school's classes last April.

celebrated sweet grass basket maker and teacher, was also on hand at the event to demonstrate the art of sweetgrass basket making.

Lewis is the author of more than 60 children's books and is the featured artist in six domestic and international galleries. He is the winner of the

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IN THE WORKS FOR 2015!

Bike club will help kids stay active, make good choices

The Village Flyers Project (VFP) is in the process of creating a bicycle club to serve middle school students in the underserved community of Plantersville in Georgetown County.

Scheduled to debut this summer, VFP is based on Momentum Bike Clubs, a proven model successful in upstate South Carolina. It is aided by affiliation with the Riley Institute Diversity Leaders Initiative Capstone Service Project.

VFP uses an intentional approach to engage youth within their communities in a manner that affirms their assets and strengths. It promotes positive outcomes for youth by fostering positive relationships and offering consistent support to enhance their leadership potential.

VFP requires students to embrace vigorous exercise and healthy peer/mentor relationships. In conjunction with the faculty of Carver's Bay Middle School and community leaders, VFP recruits eligible mentees and connects them with volunteer adult mentors. VFP schedules weekly bicycle rides as a tool of engagement. As the program progresses, students earn bike ownership opportunities by demonstrating club commitment,



Pictured are students who are already seeing the benefits of Momentum Bike Clubs in other areas.

maintaining successful academic standing and practicing civic responsibility.

The Plantersville Road Scenic Byway is identified as the trail for the inaugural ride. Essential to VFP's success is the identification of those committed to serve as a consistent presence in student lives. Recruitment of volunteer adult mentors is currently underway. Partnering with a local bicycle shop for basic training, equipment and repairs is another key component. These discussions are also in progress.

Authors visit students

Continued from front page

Caldecott Honor for "Coming On Home Soon" and winner of the Orbis Pictus Award for "The Secret World of Walter Anderson." His works of fine art are owned by numerous private collectors and sold by art galleries throughout the United States and Europe.

A national award-winning author and speaker, Raven's long professional career included

writing in the fields of radio, television, magazines, newspapers and children's books. She has more than 1,000 published articles to her name, and nine published children's picture books. She unfortunately passed away several months after the event in Plantersville.

After his visit to Plantersville and seeing what The Village Group is working toward in regard to lifelong literacy, Lewis said he wants to be a part of the organization.

"I do a lot of school visits across the country, working with young people but also with administration and teachers, helping them with their programs," Lewis said following the program. "I want to be a part of what The Village Group is doing because they understand it takes a village to raise a child. I felt [executive director] Ray Funnye's passion for the children, the community and his neighborhood. I want to be a part of that village."

Helping teens get hired and become model employees



Last spring, The Village Group partnered with Waccamaw Regional Education Center and the Waccamaw Workforce Investment Youth Program to help teens learn how to get jobs and how to keep them.

With competition high for jobs available to teens, young people need an edge to move to the front of the job line. A youth symposium featuring Don Weaver, a career development facilitator gave participants tips for gaining that edge. Weaver covered résumé writing, how to fill out job applications and, of course, tips for keeping a job once one has been obtained.

This was one of many special programs The Village Group sponsored in the last year to help young people get a jumpstart on a successful future. Turnout for the program was significant and teens said the information they took home from the program was extremely valuable.

Above: Don Weaver, a career development facilitator, is pictured with a participant during the program last May. At right: The program attracted a packed house as dozens of teens turned out to get tips promised to improve their chances of landing and holding onto a job.



P&G donates \$5,000 on behalf of Georgetown Native



From left: Coretha Grate, TVG board member and treasurer; Dorothy Ford Roberts; and her parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Robert Ford.

In appreciation of Georgetown native Dorothy Ford's participation in Proctor and Gamble's Salute to Military Moms campaign, the company, in partnership with ProCamps, made a \$5,000 donation to The Village Group in Roberts' name.

Roberts participated in a photo shoot for use in marketing to promote ProCamps, which involves professional athletes volunteering at athletic camps at military installations.

"We selected The Village Group because I wanted to give back to the community where I grew up," Roberts said. "The Village Group works to promote and achieve youth development, literacy enrichment, recreation enhancements and community improvements, so I wanted to help them live their mission."

2014 IN PICTURES





The Village Group

Our Board of Directors

Cheryl H. Brown, Interim Chairperson

Evette E. Small, Secretary

Coretha Grate, Treasurer

Richard Neal

Barbara Pontiere

Rochelle Geathers

Richard Freedom

Ray C. Funnye, Executive Director

You can change a life!

Be a part of something special. Make your tax deductible donation today! Donate online at www.thevillagegroup.com

How to Contact The Village Group

P.O. Box 700,
Georgetown, S.C. 29442

Phone: (843) 240-0534

Join our email list at:
thevillagegroup@frontier.com

Find us on the Web!
www.thevillagegroup.org

You can also find us
on Facebook and Twitter!

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