



**RIISING STARS
NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2012**

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Hope. Believe. Grow. Succeed



Graduation ceremonies were held on November 29, 2011 for the first time at First Methodist Church in Brunswick. This group is the 62nd class to graduate from the program, which began in 1997.

All of the students in this class qualified to receive a computer.

Graduation is a huge event for many of our students as this is often the first time in their lives they have had the support to follow through on a personal commitment.

(Back row left to right) Sandra Williams, Valerie Williams, Anita Tyson, Ikeaka Williams.

(2nd to Back row left to right) Cassie Gregg, Shannen Williams, Zandra King, Shirley Smith, Olivia Wilcox.

(Front row left to right) Felecia Dawson, Latasha Woods, Ellen Murphy (Executive Director), Tiffani Owens, Katie Orrell (instructor), Kristy Thompson, and in front of Katie, Precious Whitaker. Not present are Amy, William Jackson, and Carrmen Miller.

Newest Board Member Retired Darden Restaurants Executive joins the STAR Foundation Board



"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish and he will feed his family forever." George Williams serves on the Board of a foundation whose mission is the education of fish farmers

in developing countries on how to grow fish in an environmentally responsible manner. George attended the November 2011 STAR Graduation as a guest and was so impressed he joined the Board. "What attracted me to STAR Foundation is that it teaches skills a person can use to

make a better life for themselves as well as for their family." said George. George's time in the Peace Corps after graduating from UGA began a lifelong dedication to volunteerism. A native Georgian and Mercer Law School graduate, George moved to Florida to work for Red Lobster. This chain of restaurants grew to become Darden Restaurants, which now has seven brands including Olive Garden and Long Horn Steakhouse. At Darden George was responsible for its non-profit foundation which made grants to charitable organizations across the country. "That experience gave me a great appreciation for the good that can be done in teaching life skills, no matter the field."

After retirement George and Dale, his wife of 44 years, returned to Georgia and now live on St. Simons Island. They have three children - two daughters, a son, and two granddaughters. Their children live in great places to visit: Orlando, FL, Asheville, N.C., and eastern France.

In the workplace: Where are they now?



STAR GALA



The Inside Story



Idella Bradley graduated in May 2007.

At the time she was unemployed and living in public housing. Today Idella is living in her own home and working three jobs. Idella lived in public housing for one year, then moved out and hopes to never need that assistance again. Within six months of taking the class, Idella found employment at FLETC and has been there for more than four years. She initially worked housekeeping but has since advanced to taking care of the instructors' offices. Six months after starting at FLETC, she added another job in the Gym and continues in that capacity today. Idella has a bubbly personality and is very gregarious; people readily fall in love with her, just as we did at STAR.

Just seven months ago Idella started a third job, working in the five-star Georgian Room at the Cloister hotel.

When asked what STAR did for her

Idella said the program inspired her to become what she is today. She jokes that her fondest memory of the STAR program is the fun she had driving Ellen and Katie crazy, but most memorable of all is the encouragement Katie gave her to keep going and not give up. That motivation is now a part of her own character and is reflected in her strong work ethic and desire to be independent. "You have to keep going, no matter what happens in life. Life is a wonderful struggle that we can all win."

STAR holds first ever Gala Fundraiser!

On October 20, 2011, the STAR Foundation sponsored its first annual fundraiser. Bob & Gerry O'Brien graciously hosted the event in their beautiful home on Sea Island. The evening was a wonderful success, as many local residents learned about STAR for the first time, and how this program benefits the entire community. THANKS to all of you, sponsors and guests, who helped make this occasion memorable.

The computer you donate will be formatted and loaded with Microsoft Office.

Graduates who meet certain requirements are awarded one at graduation. For many, this is the first computer in their home, so your donation can make you just like Santa! Ho Ho and Merry Computing to all.

If Santa gave you a new computer.... Please donate your old Pentium IV computer to STAR.

Gently used professional clothing for ladies (particularly) and men is needed. The right outfit really has a huge impact in enhancing self esteem when interviewing for that better job. Please support our students as they improve their lives. Cash, computers and clothing are the three C's of our survival. Please help.

Part of the curriculum of the program includes good citizenship, and giving back to the community through **effective volunteering** is part of the process. Students have the opportunity to give blood, work with the United Way on various projects, take part in food drives, collect funds for The Salvation Army by ringing the kettle bells, and help pack medical supplies for third world countries. Students also benefit from volunteers who come in and share their skills and expertise. Every effort is made to include some volunteering opportunity during each class. Many of the students comment at the conclusion of the activity that they really enjoyed the experience and would

like to do it again. Some initially struggle with the idea of helping others when they need so much themselves, but inevitably experience the joy that comes with serving others.



STAR FOUNDATION

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The STAR Foundation is a nonprofit organization that educates and encourages adults in Coastal Georgia to become financially self-sufficient through a comprehensive program of computer, job and life skills training.

A new year is upon us all, 2012! In 2011 we held our first fundraising event, and thanks to all of you it was a wonderful event. This leap year we plan to continue making huge bounds in the lives of all the students we will serve. Many exciting new stories will unfold as the year goes by, none of which will transpire without your kindness. Together we are making a difference in the lives of families in our community. Please stop by and visit us with your old computers, gently used professional clothing and any money you might have lying around. We live in challenging economic times, and we need your help now more than ever. Please tell your friends about STAR and encourage them to become involved. With all of us doing even just a little bit, we can make meaningful results a reality.

Ellen Murphy

Director

Board of Directors

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