

Victory Village Christian Academy

Fifty-Four Years of Showing God's Unconditional, Healing Love to Teen Age Girls

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Now Thank We All Our God, With Hearts and Hands and Voices! ***A Special Thanksgiving Issue of The Victory Village Newsletter***

Dear Friends! Though Thanksgiving should be always, it is also good to have a special time of year to give it more emphasis. We are especially thankful to God for changed lives, and we are highlighting one of our girls who will be graduating from VVCA in the month of December. Ivy Ahlrichs has been a blessing in our school, and will bless many others as God leads in her life journey. Here is Ivy's testimony.



I was born in Thailand inside a refugee camp in 2006. I'm eighteen years old and I'm getting ready to graduate in December. Growing up, I never had consistent parents to tell me what to do or how to do things. I became very independent at the age of four, because my Mom was never really around to take care of me and I've never met my Dad. When you think of a refugee camp, you think of dirt, and a lot of people in poverty, and that's exactly how I grew up for six years. I never got the chance to experience toys, running around with other little kids, or having parents to treat me like a kid. My mom never acted as though I was important, because she treated the men in her life better than me. Most of the time, those men were never to be trusted, they were abusive, physically, sexually, and mentally, not just towards my mom, but also me. After getting beaten so terribly by my stepdad, my mom had us move to the United States, including my three-year-old little brother. I was able to learn English within the first two years of being in Pennsylvania. My mom continued to see untrusting men and that led my little brother, my newborn little sister, and I at the age of nine into foster care while we were in Iowa.

The Ahlrichs family were Christians who took us in the week before Christmas. That week turned into months, years, and then they adopted all three of us into the family two years later. Mike and Olivia Ahlrichs, my parents now, have always treated me with love. With the trauma that I faced earlier in life, I realized later on that I never really accepted their love. I was afraid, all the time. As I got older, I got more afraid, not necessarily of my parents, but of being alone in my thoughts due to past trauma. So, to ease that loneliness, instead of going to my parents, I went to friends, boys drinking, and other teenage things. I found that I didn't like authority because I didn't grow up having authority tell me what to do. So, when my parents told me what to do, I made every excuse to get my way, even if it included lying to them constantly.

My loving parents started seeking places that would help me heal from my trauma, and the ways I was living my life. I was brought to Victory Village a year and a half ago, and I am so grateful for how this place has shaped me to be the best version of myself. I was saved last fall and God has helped me grow in so many different ways. I've learned how to accept authority by reading the Bible and seeking God. The Lord has given me peace within my heart and I now find value in my alone time. I'm so thankful to God for bringing me here not only for me to seek Him but for helping me heal from the sinful ways of my past.

The Chapel
A focal point of the Victory Village Campus
For beauty and for the Worship of God
By Carole



We waited many years for our Victory Village Chapel! We had prayed for one and hoped for one for so long! And then one day, God answered our prayers! Friends from one of our supporting Churches sent a generous offering with an attachment that said, *For a Victory Village Chapel!* It wasn't enough in itself, but provided a first step! It was enough for a foundation and a floor. In a few weeks we had both of those finished, and they sat there for over a year. We had run out of money, that is until we met one of our neighbors! Two of our students held their graduation out on the cement slab to show their belief in the future of the little Chapel.

Our neighbor told us that he was a builder and asked what that cement slab was doing out there! We told him, and he said *I want to help you.* He got his workers to volunteer their time, and his suppliers to donate materials and other necessities. Soon the shell of the little chapel was built! People from neighboring churches and our board members helped do the finish work. Furnishings came from many different churches and individuals. One church was getting new pews and asked if we could use the ones being replaced, which were still very good. Of course we said, YES! Other furnishings included hymnals, communion table, pulpit, a Steinway piano, pipe organ, and a beautiful life-sized stained-glass window of Jesus praying in Gethsemane.

The recent addition of a carillon is a delight to all who live here and those who visit. The Westminster chimes strike on the hour, followed by the bells ringing out a favorite hymn. The Chapel is used daily during school, on Sunday morning for worship, and for special events from time to time. It is our desire for Christ to always be the Lord of our lives and activities, and the Chapel helps make this possible, greatly enhancing the beauty of our services and of the whole Victory Village Landscape.



For Jesus Christ and His Kingdom
We come to Worship God
That in communion with the Highest
Those who enter
May acquire Divine Wisdom and Power
To aspire nobly
Adventure daringly
Live honestly
Serve humbly
Sharing God's love and peace
With a needy world
(inscribed on the inside wall of the Chapel)

A 5k Run at Victory Village

As they did last year, **Jessie** and **Rebekah Nininger** organized a 5k run at Victory Village on November 2. The course was a challenge through the pastures, woods and over the sand hills. There was no fee charged to run, but donations were encouraged for Victory Village Christian Academy, and a good amount of money was contributed. The runners were multi-age with children, teenagers and adults all taking part. The trails were wet from recent and continuing rainfall, but our students and a good number of others showed up to accept the challenge. Here are a few pictures of the event, which climaxed with chili and cinnamon rolls served in our gymnasium.





The run captured the attention of our friend, **Dan Deming**, and here are excerpts from his editorial in the Hutchinson News on October 27. Dan is a longtime Hutchinson resident, former Reno County Commissioner, radio station manager and a frequent contributor to the local newspaper.

Something Worth Running For

Seventeen hundred dollars may not seem like a lot of money to raise, but for the recipient, Victory Village Christian Academy, it is significant and much appreciated.

Especially when the 54-year old school for young girls east of Hutchinson receives no state or federal funds and depends strictly on church and individual donations to keep its mission alive.

Victory Village has been a community fixture since 1970 near the Reno / Harvey County line in a rural setting. It offers education through high school, parenting, and a wholesome environment to turn around lives after home conditions have failed.

And it has an impressive number of successes. The home-like atmosphere and school was founded by Bill and Carole Cowell, a highly dedicated couple who note that few parents or guardians are able to pay, but students receive services without charge.

Last year, \$1,700 was raised by **Jessie and Rebecca Nininger**, of rural Hutchinson, to help Victory Village, where troubled girls ages 12 to 18 get a state approved education and learn how to cope with problems, along with enriching life skills. The facilities are open for public tours at almost any time. Another 5k run is planned for Saturday, November 2, with registrations now being taken. There is no entry fee, but donations, such as money given last year, will be appreciated. Competition will be timed along with age and gender categories, all in a family atmosphere.

Chili and cinnamon rolls will be available after the run. "It's all about physical fitness, healthy running and helping a very good cause," said Nininger. We know there are a lot of worthy causes for donations, especially for recent hurricane relief in the South, but Victory Village serves a critically important mission of saving young women who many have already given up on. The school has an ability to stretch dollars so that lives can be not only enriched but saved.

We certainly appreciate the interest and encouragement of Dan Deming, and this year's 5k run went well, in spite of the rain that had pretty well subsided by race time.



Ivy Ahlrichs, graduating in December, was honored during a volleyball game. She is pictured with **Larissa and Nathaniel Hawkinson** and family, while **Elise Epp Gaeddert**, one of our volleyball coaches, makes a presentation.



We were blessed by a visit from **Pastor and Mrs. Trevor Hubbs** and five of their members from the **Grace Baptist Church** of Neodesha. This Church has been a generous supporter of Victory Village for 50 years.



We were also blessed by a surprise visit from longtime friends, **Don and Elnor Stutzman** of Hesston. Their daughter **Amy** and two granddaughters were students in our school many years ago. Don was also Chairman of our Board of Directors during that time, and Elnor accompanied us on one of our Choir tours to California.

Victory Village Christian Academy

November, 2024



Our 54th Year of Changing Lives for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom; Jesus said, I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

Our Mission is to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus. Inspired by His Gospel, we seek to make God's amazing love and compassion real to teenage girls, serving them without charge to their families by providing a clean and safe home, a good Christian and State certified education, nutritious meals, training in life skills, outdoor and indoor activities and sports, opportunities to be involved in the ministry of helping others, and an introduction to Jesus, who will love them forever. We affirm the worth of all, without prejudice, partiality or intimidation. **Victory Village Christian Academy** is located at 201 S Victory Road, Burrton, KS 67020, and is licensed by the State of Kansas, with State approved teachers and curriculum. Credits are transferable, high school diplomas are earned and recognized for entrance to colleges. **Rev. Bill and Carole Cowell, Founders and Administrators; Kelli Schwarz-Rump, Director Katy Nininger, Athletic Director, Assistant Principal, Marla Johnson, Jerry Nininger, Teachers; Barbara Hedges, Office Manager, Secretary-Treasurer, Wilma Engle, Accountant; Jessica Kerzner, Therapist; Kristi Colvin, Case Manager; Heather Smith, Dormitory Director; Robin Traffas, Shannon Fitzgerald, Larissa Hawkinson, Karey Weaver, Angela Simmons, Emily Moore, Amanda Herd, Karen Chaterton, Cayleena Pilgreen, Grace Skiles, Bri Neal, Becky Valdois, Ahneka Valdois, Brenda Shenk, Dormitory Staff; Emma Foster, Cook; Scott Hilburn, Maintenance Director, Board of Directors; Bob Friesen, Chairman, Rev. Bill and Carole Cowell, Becky Goering, Larry Chapman, Gordon Goering, Lyndal Penner, Rev. John Williams, Kelli Schwarz-Rump, Dr. Jessica Kerzner.**

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We were blessed on a Sunday morning at the Chapel by a visit from Aubrey's sister and Dad. from Illinois. They shared with us about a mission trip they took recently with their Church to Uganda, Africa.



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We were blessed to visit the **First Baptist Church** of Salina, and share music and testimonies. **Pastor Kevin Hazelton** and their people have been a great blessing to VVCA, making a generous gift for the construction of our Woodworking / Therapy / Art building, and then sending a group of workers to help with its construction.



A visit by **Theodora Koslowsky** from Marion, and two of her friends brightened our day at VVCA. Theodora's parents, the late **Ted** and **Bertha Longhofer** launched our radio broadcast from the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Marion over KJRG. For 36 years it helped build and support this ministry, later expanding to nine more stations. The sign, **Jesus Never Fails**, was a gift to our Chapel from the Emmanuel Baptist Church, where Heart Ministries was founded.