

# Victory Village Christian Academy

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

Heart Ministries, Inc., 201 S. Victory Road, Burrton, KS 67020; Phone 620.463.6112; [www.victoryvillagechristianacademy.org](http://www.victoryvillagechristianacademy.org)

*Bill & Carole Cowell, Founders, Administrators & Editors - Phone 620.694.7938*

*Tish Horton, Director; Bob Friesen, Board Chairman*

*VVCA Newsletter, Volume 56, Issue 5 - May, 2025*

## Songs of Praises.....by Bill & Carole

We have so many reasons to be thankful to the Lord, and to those of you who pray for Victory Village and give to keep the ministry going. Recent gifts have enabled us to eliminate large debts we had been struggling with for some time. Thanks to all who have helped us achieve this victory! We still need your faithful giving, as we don't want to fall behind again.

It does take Team work to make the Dream work! Our Board is functioning well under **Bob Friesen's** leadership, while depending on God's Spirit for guidance in making major decisions. Our Director **Tish Horton** continues to do a great job of leadership and coordination. Dormitory Director, **Ashley Penner**, is loved and respected by all the girls and Dorm Staff. Her husband **Ernie** is coaching our Cross Country Team, and their daughter **Serenity** is a blessing and a friend to all. Both the Dorm and School are in good hands and under good leadership in both places. Our Principal, **Ahneka Valdois**, along with our teachers are doing a great job of teaching the academic subjects along with modeling and teaching good Christian character. **Barbara Hedges**, our very capable and devoted Secretary for 35 years, endears herself to everyone, while working hard and long hours taking care of the book work, and many other office duties. Our Maintenance Director, **Scott Hilburn**, also works hard to keep things running in good shape, and he really keeps the rolling terrain of our grounds neat and beautiful.

Our files are full of letters and testimonies coming from students we have had for over 50 years. We are beginning to work on another book that will be called, **Voices of Victory from Victory Village**. It will consist of testimonies from former students, parents and others whom God has blessed, and many of whose lives have been changed through this ministry. Our desire is for these to glorify God, remembering that He is the One Who has built the ministry and kept it going for 55 years already. We would like it to keep going until Jesus comes, as there will always be a need for a ministry to teen age girls.

We must also thank you, along with many Churches, for faithfully supporting and praying for Victory Village. Some of you have prayed and given generously and sacrificially for many years. God has answered those prayers, and used your gifts to change many lives. To God be the glory! Great things He has done, and continues to do!

## Meet Bryndan and Mello Smith



**Bryndan Bradley** was born in China in 2003, and came to VVCA in 2019. She said, *I lived in Arizona with my mother and five other siblings. In short terms my family and I did not get along. The situation at home was rough. When I was 13, March 1, 2016, Bill and Carole picked me up from the airport and took me to Victory Village. I was an angry child, mostly because of the life I had. I had forgotten what joy was. The girls and staff at VVCA were extremely patient and helped me see that there was more to life. Basketball and volleyball were key outlets for me, as well as poetry and art. I took my time but Christ became my hope and salvation.* (continued, page 2)

## Purpose in the Village by Ashley Penner VVCA Dormitory Director



**Ashley, Ernie & Serenity**

It's funny how the words we speak over others—the reminders of their strength, resilience, and worth—can be the very things we struggle to believe for ourselves.

I love the Village—the staff, our girls, and the way it has become our home away from home. More than anything, I love how it has intertwined with my family, becoming not just a calling but a shared journey. Ministry isn't

something I do alone--it's something we do together. Yet, even in the heart of the Village, doubt still finds its way in. There are days I wonder if I'm doing enough, if I'm leading well, if my words truly make a difference. (continued, page 2)

**MEET BRYNDAN BRADLEY SMITH** (continued from page 1)

*Even though I didn't graduate from VVCA, I was there for 4 years and learned from some amazing women. My biggest takeaway is that, you can't choose the life you are given, however you can choose how you react. I chose Jesus. Thank you VVCA for giving me a chance."* After Victory Village Bryn went to live with our present Director, **Tish Horton** and husband **Joe** in Plevna. She finished her high school education at Fairfield High School in rural Reno County, met Romello Smith from Oklahoma at the Kansas Bible Camp, and they have been married for a year and a half. Bryn is a senior in college, studying Sociology, and Romello works for an IT Company. They are a very devoted Christian couple.

-----

#### **PURPOSE IN THE VILLAGE** (continued from page one)

I pour into our girls, reminding them of their strength, but then wrestle with my own insecurities. It's a strange contradiction--lifting others up while quietly questioning my own worth.

But God meets me in those doubts. He works through my uncertainty, sending reminders that I am exactly where He wants me to be. And in ways I never expected, the Village pours into me just as much as I pour into it. Our girls' strength inspires, their joy uplifts, and their faith reminds me that even in my weakest moments, I am still enough.

Ministry isn't easy. Being a Christian isn't easy. But God never promised ease--He promised purpose. And through every challenge, every doubt, He sends small blessings to remind me that I don't have to have it all figured out. He is working daily, in me and through me, and He has given me a Village where our girls can heal, grow, and thrive--and where my family, too, has found a calling, a purpose, and a place to serve with love.

Even on the days when doubt whispers, I hold onto gratitude--for the Village, for our girls, for my family, and for a God who surrounds us in His love.

-----



**First Baptist Church of Anthony** is a long-time supporter of VVCA, and **Pastor Warren Stanton** and wife **Yvonne** are long-time friends. We enjoyed sharing testimonies and a message on a Sunday morning in April. They served us a bountiful and delicious dinner and Pastor Warren continued his tradition of giving all of us a two dollar bill!

#### **Optimum Sweetness and Beauty!....By Carole**



This picture shows Bill and a neighborhood friend, **Dale Turner**, getting two new bee hives going at Victory Village. Last winter was hard, and we lost our bees as did many others. What fascinating little creatures they are, and that God made to be an example to us of a great work ethic, and to provide us with a perfect sweetener – **HONEY!** Are they creatures of great repose and recline? NO! They are some of the hardest workers in God's creation! They work so long and so hard that they literally work themselves to death! And honey! It is that sweet, sticky substance that most humans love as much as the bees! It shows us that tiny honey bees are a great illustration of God's sweet love for His children! Yes, a real treat! The words, ***Sweeter than honey from the honeycomb***, in Psalm 19:10, describes God's Word and it is most certainly Optimum Sweetness!



**Our five children** grew up at Victory Village, and were an important part of our ministry. They went together and gave me a real treat for my 82nd birthday! Becky took me to Stutsman's Greenhouse and let me pick out a lot of beautiful flowers. They really beautify the patio in front of our house.



**Our Director Tish Horton** was invited to appear on **KAKE-TV**, channel 10, to receive a \$500 gift to VVCA from **DeVaughn James Insurance**.





One of our longtime and most generous supporting Churches is the **First Baptist Church of Silver Lake, Kansas**. **Pastor Deron Johnson** has not only led the people in giving, but also in coming to help with special projects. They had a large part in helping us finish the interior of our Chapel. We were blessed when a large group of their members came to visit recently. They brought supplies, took a tour of our buildings and grounds, and were our guests for dinner.



Seen here on Awards Night is Board Chairman **Bob Friesen**, along with Director **Tish Horton** and her husband **Joe**. This is an important event at the end of Spring semester when recognition and honor is given our students for both academic and athletic achievements.



A special honor was given to Teachers **Jerry Nininger** and daughter **Katy**. The Board of Directors unanimously decided to name our Gymnasium the **Nininger Gym**. Both Jerry and Katy have made great contributions to our athletic program and are well deserving of this honor. Their contributions include coaching, leading physical education classes and leading in work of remodeling and turning the Gym into a beautiful and first class athletic facility.

We are thankful that our Victory Village girls were able to be involved again in the **Mennonite Relief Sale** at the State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson.



They ran the 5k race at 8 am, and **Jordan** came in first in her age bracket.



They enjoyed good German food at the **Feeding of the Multitude** on Friday night, and a hearty breakfast prepared and served by the **Buhler Mennonite Church** after the race Saturday morning.



Our girls were also asked to assist in serving another multitude Saturday noon. All of these activities and the effort put into them are in keeping with Jesus' command to minister to the physical needs of the world's people. It was **Menno Simons**, who in the 16th century said that, *True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant, but manifests itself in works of love--clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, consoling the afflicted, sheltering the miserable, aiding and consoling the oppressed, returning good for evil, serving those that injure it, and praying for those that persecute it.*



# Victory Village Christian Academy

MAY, 2025



***Our 56<sup>th</sup> 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 approved 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 qualified teachers and curriculum. Credits are transferable, high school diplomas are earned and recognized for entrance to colleges.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Bob Friesen, Chairman; Rev. Bill & Carole Cowell, Becky Goering, Gordon Goering, Dr. Jessica Kerzner, Rev. John Williams, Larry Chapman; **FOUNDERS & ADMINISTRATORS:** Bill & Carole Cowell; **DIRECTOR:** Tish Horton; **SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:** Ahneka Valdois; **DORMITORY SUPERVISOR:** Ashley Penner; **SECRETARY:** Barb Hedges; **MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR:** Scott Hilburn; **THERAPIST:** Dr. Jessica Kersner; **CASE MANAGER:** Kristi Colvin; **TEACHERS:** Marla Johnson, Jerry Nininger, **CROSS COUNTRY COACH:** Ernest Penner; **PART AND FULL TIME DORM STAFF:** Cindy Ayachi, Candi Wilson; Karey Weaver, Charis Valdois, Becky Valdois, Emily Moore, Felicity Reed, Melissa King, Emma Foster, Shannon Fitzgerald, Leigha Ensz, Karen Chatterton, Jennifer Smith, Ashlyn Lahman; **ACCOUNTANT:** Wilma Engle.

## VVCA IS SUPPORTED BY DONATIONS

The Newsletter is printed by Taylor Printing, Pratt, KS



We were invited to bring the girls and share in the service at the **Halls Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church** in Newton. Following the service they served us a bountiful and delicious dinner, and everyone had a great time.

HEART MNISTRIES, INC.  
Victory Village Christian Academy  
Post Office Box 2068  
Hutchinson, KS 67504-2068

Nonprofit Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Permit No. 3  
Burrton, KS 67020

(Address Service Requested)



It looks like we are going to have another bumper crop of Potatoes again this year. Last year's crop supplied us all year, and we even have some surplus.



Our Maintenance Director **Scott Hilburn** does a great job of managing the garden, and supervising the girls as they help.

Dear Friends,

It seems we always run out of room when preparing the Newsletter, as there is so much going on, and so many good things to share. We have a great Staff, great Board Members, and great support from Churches and those of you who read the Newsletter. We have trusted the Lord for more staff to meet State requirements, and to give some relief to those who have been overworked in the past few weeks. God is answering those prayers, and it looks like we will hopefully be able to increase the number of students for next year. We continue to appreciate your gifts, along with your prayers, both of which are so necessary in making the ministry more fruitful in the lives of our students. As we said on the first page of this Newsletter, God has lifted some financial burdens, but we still need your faithful giving and support so we don't fall behind again. Thank you so much and God bless you all.

-Bill and Carole