

Victory Village Christian Academy

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

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Tish Horton, Director; Bob Friesen, Board Chairman

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In Memory of Richard and Beth Johnson



The beautiful Westminster Chimes and Bells that ring, strike the hour, and then play a hymn from the Victory Village Chapel steeple are a memorial to long-time supporters **Richard** and **Beth Johnson** and lovingly given to Victory Village by their daughter, **Adele Hillner**.



We met **Richard** and **Beth** in 1975 when we left Wheaton and moved to Hoisington, Kansas, to pastor **Calvary Baptist Church**. They were among many others from **First Baptist Church of Lorraine** who helped us in our first pastorate and became enthusiastic supporters of our ministry for the rest of their lives. We recall a North American Baptist Youth planning meeting in their Rice County farm home when Beth served delicious refreshments to all seated around their dining room table. Both Richard and Beth are home with Jesus; however, we will always treasure their friendship and enthusiastic support of Heart Ministries.

When the Saints Go Marching In! School is Starting! By Bill & Carole

That will be happening in the next few days, and what an exciting time it is! The start of the new school year is imminent, and will be underway by the time some of you read this Newsletter. We really like our mascot—**The Saints**, as we

hope for every student to become a true Saint—a genuine follower of Jesus. It is our 55th year, and Carole is writing more about our beginnings in another article. We are both happy to do all we can to help make this the greatest year yet! Of course, roles we had in the past are now being filled by capable and enthusiastic people who are younger, full of God's Spirit and wisdom, and determined to see this 55-year-old ministry continue. Those who support VVCA need not fear about the future. **Bob Friesen** is a very capable and dedicated Chairman of our Board. **Tish Horton** is doing a great job as Director, as is **Ashley Penner** who is Director of the Dormitory. Two of our Board members are retired Judges, while others are all dedicated followers of Jesus. All are committed to the furtherance of this ministry, for the glory of God and for helping teenage girls meet Jesus and live for Him the rest of their lives.

We want our students to experience God's love--the transforming power of Jesus, and become disciples who will go forth and help change the world. Responses from past girls, a few of which we are sharing here, show that the Light of Christ is shining brightly, helping illuminate dark corners of the earth.

Love and peace to you and Carole. You helped me so much and I will be eternally grateful.

While I was at the Village, I learned there is a difference between disciplining and being abusive. You guided and led me to our Lord. Many of us alumni thank you.

I will always remember the example you all were to me and still are! You showed all the girls at the Village that unconditional love is real, and what we should all aspire to have. Thank you for helping me when I felt all alone in the world. Thank you for loving me when I felt unlovable.

I miss you very much and all the girls. There is not a day goes by when I do not thank you guys and the Village.

I had a warm place to sleep and meals every day, but above all I learned about Christ Jesus and His amazing love and forgiveness. I committed my life to our Lord while I stayed at Victory Village.

WE APPRECIATE ALL THE GIFTS IN KIND THAT WE RECEIVE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. FROM PREVIOUS LISTS, MOST OF YOU KNOW THE SUPPLIES SUCH AS CLEANING MATERIALS, PAPER PRODUCTS AND OTHER THINGS THAT ARE REGULARLY NEEDED AT VVCA. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR HELPING TO SUPPLY THEM.

Fresh starts and Faith-Filled Beginnings

By Ashley Penner, Dormitory Director

It's that time of year again—the whirlwind season of gathering school supplies, picking out new outfits, and trying to wrangle our schedules back into something that resembles a routine. For many, this back-to-school season is hectic and even stressful. But it also holds a sense of promise—a fresh start and a blank slate.

A new school year means new opportunities. Kids step into the next grade with a chance to grow, explore, and reinvent themselves. Whatever challenges or triumphs came last year are behind them—they get to decide who they want to be now. Maybe this is the year a child discovers a passion or tries something brand new. In our home, this is the year my daughter Serenity joins band and picks up the saxophone. So, prayers and earplugs are very much appreciated as this mama prepares for the joyful noise ahead!

As I reflect on the excitement and newness of the school year, I'm reminded of our walk with Christ. How incredible is it that the God we serve offers us that same fresh start—not just once a year, but every single day? No matter what choices we made yesterday, they don't define us today. We get to wake up, reset, and move forward with intention. True hope lies in choosing the path of who He wants us to become.

Wishing everyone a smooth and meaningful start to the school year. Summer is a beautiful reset—but I'll admit, I'm ready for a little more structure in my schedule.

GOD'S TRANSFORMATION OF A 117 ACRE COW PASTURE INTO A BEAUTIFUL VVCA CAMPUS!



Our ambitious and skilled Maintenance Director, **Scott Hilburn**, works hard and long hours keeping the campus looking beautiful, as you will see in these pictures.



If you have ever visited VVCA and entered the front door to the school building, you will remember **Barbara Hedges**. Pictured here with **Carole**, Barb always has a pleasant and friendly greeting for everyone. She has multiple jobs—getting the mail, doing the banking, keeping detailed financial records making sure every penny is accounted for, paying bills, handling correspondence with the State and their regulatory agencies, doing needed janitorial work in the building and taking care of the plants and flowers in front. Barb started working at VVCA in 1989, being our longest employed worker.

In the Beginning, by Carole

Did anyone ask how Victory Village got started? Well, one day while we were pastoring the **Emmanuel Baptist Church** of Marion, we found a 14-year-old boy in the County jail! His “crime” was truancy, and we did not think that was a very good place for him, just for not attending school! We convinced **Judge Loveless** and **County Attorney Wheeler** that he would be better off in a home—ours! So, the first student in what was to become our girls' school was a boy!



Roger came to be a part of our family for a time, in the parsonage of the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Marion.



After he left, we decided to open our home to girls. A member of the Emmanuel Baptist Church gave us a house located in downtown Marion. The picture is how it looks today,

but when it was given to us the house was badly in need of repair. We were grateful, as there was a lot of room, and it was home to our family and several girls for a while. It became obvious that our ministry was in transition to that of ministering full time to teen age girls.

One of those first girls who came while we were in Marion was **Glanda Smith Blank** from Texas, now a wife, mother, grandmother, and retired teacher. She reminded us forty years later how she became a Christian.

Tomorrow marks 40 years since I sat in a little Church in Marion, Kansas, listening to a sermon more like a Bible study, and not a message on hellfire and damnation, and yet my heart and soul was so convicted that I knew I wanted to be saved. Thank You Jesus, and thank you both for taking me in to your home and caring enough about me to teach me God's Word. Love you both.

When it appeared that our ministry would become larger than we could maintain in one local church, we sold the house and re-located to Reno County and to the area around Buhler. **Wilbur** and **Rachel Neufeldt** opened the family room of their Buhler home as a place to start our new school. Wilbur's sister **Edna Neufeldt** was our first teacher. New girls continued to come, and new Board members began to join us from the Buhler and Inman area. Victory Village property was acquired—117 acres of grassland and trees, and development began in drilling wells and building the new dormitory, under the direction of **Harold Froese**.

From that time until now, a steady stream of girls in need of help, numbering close to 2,000, continue to come from across the United States and other places in the world. We are thankful God has blessed the ministry that has continued its mission through the last 55 years. Our five children grew up at Victory Village, making good friends with the girls who came, and now continue to make a difference in places where they live. We are hopeful that the ministry of Victory Village will continue well beyond our lifetimes, and we also hope to remain active in ministry here as long as God lets us live.

From Chicago...to Tucumcari...to Victory Village!

In the summer of 1985, we received a phone call from **Pastor James Taliaferro** of the Temple Baptist Church in Tucumcari, New Mexico. A girl by the name of **Christina** had been found sitting on the Post Office steps, and she was crying! She and another girl had run away from a group home near Chicago and somehow made it over a thousand miles to Tucumcari. Christina's "friend" then ditched her and left her stranded. Alone and scared, she needed comfort, and was ready for some help. Christina came to Victory Village, and we found ourselves dealing with the scars of trauma and turmoil that had been going on, since she was an abandoned child. Following her time at Victory Village, we kept in touch intermittently for several years. In 2012 she wrote a story of her life and called it, **Gentle Loving Hands**.

A very long time ago when I was just a small helpless, broken, and lonely child, I was thrown to the curbside like any other piece of trash. I was tossed around like a rag doll from place to place. I felt scared and all alone, not knowing who I could trust. Suddenly, I felt gentle and loving hands picking me up and holding me close. Then I heard a gentle voice of Jesus say that if I would put my faith and trust in Him, He would save me, and that He would never leave me, or forsake me.

As I went on through my life, I ran when I had to. I hid in cold dark places. I even had turned to drugs, alcohol, and many other things. I often wondered if those gentle loving hands that had once cradled me, and made me feel safe, had forgotten about me. Then in an instant I felt those gentle loving hands cradling me once again. I also heard that small voice telling me again that all I had to do was put my faith and trust in Him and He would never leave me, nor would He forsake me.

At this very moment, I asked the Lord to come into my heart and I asked Him to be Lord and Saviour over my life. Since I asked Him into my life He has taken away the drugs, and alcohol. Whenever I feel like I am all alone, all I have to do is call upon His Wonderful Name, and His gentle loving hands come swooping down and makes me feel safe again.

So friends, I'm here to tell you that no matter what you're going through, or how tough you think things are for you, and you think that there isn't any way out, if you put your faith and trust in the Lord, and make Him Lord and Saviour over your life, then He can and will heal all your heart and pain. This is what He did for me. He took all the bitterness, anger, and pain from me. I give Him all the glory, honor, and praise for changing me. He will do the same for you if you will let Him. So, wrap yourself in His gentle, loving hands each and every day.

Christina also wrote us about the same time and said,

I just wanted to write to ask you for your forgiveness for all my rebellion, and negativity that I showed towards you while I was there. I truly feel in my heart that if I hadn't come to you all when I did, then I'm not sure where I would be at this time in my life. Giving God all glory, praise, and honor, I truly want to thank you for the life-changing experience that I had while I was at Victory Village. I have given my life to God. I still face obstacles that come my way, but I trust in the One who died and rose again to see me through. Love Always, Your Sister in Christ, Christina.

Fifty-five years ago some wondered if it would be possible to finance the ministry without charging tuition or for room and board. We believed God would supply and He has! Many students would never have been able to come if we had made a charge. Thanks for your faithful giving as we continue with this no charging policy.

Victory Village Christian Academy

BACK TO SCHOOL-- AUGUST, 2025



Our 56th Year of Changing Young 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, Patricia Macke-Dick, Dr. Jessica Kerzner, Gordon Goering, Rev. John Williams, Larry Chapman; **FOUNDERS & ADMINISTRATORS:** Bill & Carole Cowell; **DIRECTOR:** Tish Horton; **SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:** Arianna Valdois; **ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL:** Ahneka Valdois; **DORMITORY SUPERVISOR:** Ashley Penner; **SECRETARY:** Barb Hedges; **MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR:** Scott Hilburn; **THERAPIST:** Dr. Jessica Kersner; **ATHLETIC DIRECTOR & CASE MANAGER:** Kristi Colvin; **TEACHERS:** Irl Gilliland, Marla Johnson, Jerry Nininger, **COACHES:** Ernie Penner, Andrew Epp; **PART AND FULL TIME DORM STAFF:** Hadessah Eaton, 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.

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We have had cherries, peaches, pears, and right now an abundance of apples. We will be making apple cider soon, and if there are some left, you are welcome to come and pick.

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Here is Dorm Staff member, **Melissa King**, with students, **Jordan, Aubrey and Carolina**. We appreciate our golf carts at VVCA. This one was given to us by the **Kansas Bible Camp**, and the other one was given by **John Thelander**, from the First Baptist Church of Salina. They are fun to drive, save gas and enable us to move around faster on our large campus.



Carole and I drove to Colorado to visit our son **Danny**, his wife **Stacy**, and their two sons, **Ethan** and **Saul**. **Stacy** is the **Adult Formation Coordinator** of their Church, **St. Michael's Episcopal**, and this picture was taken in her office. **Danny, Ethan** and **Saul** are also very involved with the music, worship and operation of the cameras and sound system of the Church. We especially enjoyed their 65-rank pipe organ. A special feature of their Church is also the large glass windows in the front of the sanctuary, giving a beautiful view of the Colorado Mountains.

For the 53rd consecutive year we will be back at the **Kansas State Fair** in Hutchinson, September 5-14, with a booth along the south corridor of the Meadowlark Building. We will again have copies of our book, **Essays and Short Stories from my Heart**, if you would like to have one. Stop by and see us!