



December 2006

A newsletter for students, alumni and friends of The Memphis Challenge



The Executive Director's Echo

Cassandra Hughes Webster

We all have so much for which to be thankful, including our health, sound minds, and a future with promise. Although poverty has not been eliminated

and crime and illiteracy surround us, I ask: "What are you doing to make a difference?" Usually, if we are not personally involved, there is little motivation to do anything.

So my challenge to you is this: Do not wait until someone you know has been victimized, a friend has fallen on hard times, or a child you know is held back a year in school. Make yourself a promise in 2007 to do all that you can to be an *agent for change*. How can you make this a reality? Resolve to be a model for others among your peers, neighbors, college friends or citizens in your community. *Think of the power of one, and that it all begins with you!*

Recently, I was touched by an article I read in "O" magazine about a young lady named Lisa who was moved to action after reading the plight and devastating conditions of the women in the Congo. Not only did their story bring tears to Lisa's eyes, but she took action! She set her sights on a 30.16 mile run, with the goal of raising enough money to sponsor one woman for every mile she ran. At \$354 a year, that translated into more \$10,000. Lisa's quest did not stop there. She set up **runforcongowomen.com** and is coordinating runs all across the United States, Berlin, and London. To date, Lisa has raised more than \$50,000. Now that's an example of one person making a difference.

What motivates Lisa? "Simply remembering the details of the horrors that the Congolese survivors encounter ... that made running 30 miles nothing."

My challenge to you is to find an organization or service project about which you can become passionate, in order to make a difference and give back a portion of what others' helping hands have enabled you to achieve.

Happy Holidays and may the New Year bring the fulfillment of your dreams of a touch, a word, or action that brought a positive influence on our community.

Introducing the New Challengers

MC Class of 2007

Brittney Bibbs

Arielle Fair

Bishop Byrne High School

Kayla Brooks

Cordova High School

Jessica Bowen

Edverette Brewster

Donald Coleman, Jr

Clytisa Drinkwater

Wynter Foley

Dustin Fulton

Lauren Harmon

Keiondra Harris

Timothy Howze

Santa Patton

Dionne Wallace

Angelique Williamson

Central High School

Aftan Barber

Lindsey Brown

Damon McGuire

Craigmont High School

Jade Wallace

Germantown High School

Cordera Woodard

Hamilton High School

Shauntazia Shorter

Hillcrest High School

Kevin Armstrong

Kingsbury High School

Chelsi Bullard

Melrose High School

Jerry Ivery, Jr.

Middle College High School

Phillip Shaw

Raleigh-Egypt High School

Claire Gentry

Ridgeway High School

Brigitte Githinji

St. Agnes Academy

Brea Bowers

St. Benedict at Auburndale

Jasmine Bolton

St. Mary's Episcopal School

Keadrea Wilson

Whitehaven High School

Dawn Bowen

Sydney Collins

Jerricka Hall

Charles Shannon

Cicely Sharp

Bryson Whitney

Ainsley Willis

Laura Zapata

White Station High School

Kembral Nelson

Wooddale High School

2007 Junior MC

Kandice Ford

Alycia Taylor

Danielle Whitlow

Bishop Byrne High School

Frederick Curry

Zamyra Lambert

Central High School

Cory Atkins

Tacara Davidson

Andrew Golden

Amber Lee

Anthony Maples, II

Kaliv Parker

Brittany Patterson

Daijia Shields

Sheridan Taylor

Brenie Williams

City University School of

Liberal Arts

Kayla Burton

Collierville High School

Vanessa Bell

Decresha Chase

Anthony Fizer

Elizabeth Kennon

Janelle Ramcharan

Brittany Watkins

Jessica Webster

Hamilton High School

Tyrone Thomas

Houston High School

Meredith Franklin

Brittany-Rae Gregory

Hutchison School

Kimberly McGrew

Kingsbury High School

Branden Asemah

DeVondria Byrd

Quincie Lee

Velma Maclin

Samila Meriwether

Arrielle Parker

Courtney Sawyer

Jasmine Scott

Middle College High School

Shawn Ervin

Ridgeway High School

Sharda' Fields

Aeron Glover

Ricky Richardson

Chavez Scott

Whitehaven High School

Julian Boyd

Ebubechi Okwumabua

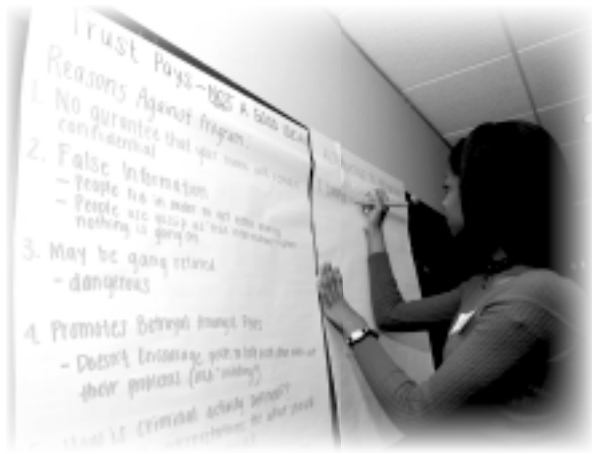
Chartzi Spell

Ashleigh Taylor

White Station High School

Trust Pays

By Lindsey Brown, Senior, Craigmont High School; DeVondria Byrd, Junior, Hollis F Price Middle College High School; Brigitte Githinji, Senior, St Agnes Academy; Ashleigh Taylor, Junior, White Station High School



It's third period in all area Memphis City and Shelby County high schools. Suddenly, an argument starts in the restroom between two sophomores. By fifth period, everyone is talking about the bathroom brawl. John Doe decides to call Trust Pays, a new school-wide initiative where students call to report violence and earn cash for their "anonymous" information. Doe hastily dials the seven digit haven, unconcerned with his lack of information and involvement with the situation. His only concern is buying the new sneakers at the mall this afternoon.

This is just one problem that Trust Pays will face if implemented into the school systems in Memphis. This program's main objectives are to decrease school violence and improve student conduct. Students are given the chance to tell trusted adults valuable information, which would then be forwarded to the principal, save the provider's identity. The student would then get a monetary reward of around \$200 depending on the information. Sounds ideal, right?

The program is excellent in theory. Realistically speaking, however, it is not foolproof. Most problematic is the monetary incentive. This enticement on its own is a Pandora's Box waiting to be unleashed on the student body. It teaches students to do the right thing for the wrong reasons.

Another reason that TRUST PAYS is not a good idea is because reporting criminal behavior is considered as snitching on other students. "Stop Snitching" has been a student creed for many years. Students are not likely to go against other students if there is any possibility that they will jeopardize their relationships with their friends. We spend more time with our peers and friends than we do with

our families. It is hard to believe that any student would endanger this relationship for any amount of money.

Ponder the confidentiality aspect. How can one be assured that his/her identity will remain anonymous? How can one be assured that the person who receives the information is trustworthy? A position of authority does not assure a commitment to the program. All one has to do is read the paper or watch the news to learn how people in responsible positions abuse their authority and power.

TRUST PAYS goes against the purpose of schools, which is to educate. What can one learn that will help him/her become a better citizen? How can one use what is learned from TRUST PAYS to create a successful future? Students cannot apply anything that we learn from this program to our future. It is only good for the moment or the situation.

People constantly say, "Do the right thing." Doing the right thing is good, but should people be rewarded for it? Giving away money would be sending a message telling kids that you should do the right thing, but only when

you are getting something in return.

There are several viable alternatives to Trust Pays. If we used the same dollars to implement programs such as mandatory Peer Mediation Training, Conflict Resolution Training, Anger Management Training, and Moral Reasoning Training, we can craft an impact that would last a lifetime. By focusing on ways to correct the problems that high school students face today, the school system can understand its students better. Simply increase the number of adult and peer counselors. Possibly, establish more little brother/sister big brother/sister programs.

Many teens today are given the idea that they have no meaning in society. Their socioeconomic situations hinder them greatly. The only alternative, they feel, is to turn to crime. Giving teens self-confidence enables them to be better students. Moreover, when they are given an environment in which they can expand their minds, they are more likely to succeed and thriving teens are less likely to cause violence. TRUST PAYS is an excellent program. Students in Memphis and Shelby county schools, however, need more than a quick fix to their problems. Only after the basic needs of the student body are met, can such programs can be instigated.

Memphis 101: Class is in Session

Shawn Ervin, Ridgeway High School

On November 7, the Memphis Challenge family was involved in a program entitled "All Shook Up, Memphis 101." On that night at the Orpheum Theatre, we learned about the rich history and culture of Memphis.

The Challenge family was informed that Memphis is in the top 10 registered historic cities in all of America. Our two guides took us through a timeline that ranged from the 1700s until 2006. Our minds were joggled from trivia questions that we would have never guessed in a million years. For example: Did you know that the first self-service market was founded here in Memphis in 1918? Mr. Clarence Saunders came up with this idea, here in lonely ole' Memphis as he opened up Piggly Wiggly. This city that we've grown to cherish was once torn down after the yellow fever of 1855. Some thought



that Memphis would never flourish again but yet and still we bounced back from that adversity. Memphis has grown into a metropolitan that is running better than ever and is still making ground breaking moves for future generations.

Welcome MC Intern



The Memphis Challenge is pleased to welcome Ashley Hunt, as our 2006-2007 Intern through the Grizzlies Academy. Ashley is a senior at the

Grizzlies Academy. Her favorite quote is, "Live life to the fullest, and live it wisely." Ashley says, "The Memphis Challenge is a great organization. I love what they are doing to help juniors and seniors around Memphis. I think this program gives them hope, great help, and encouragement on achieving their goals and making the best decisions for their future." Ashley adds, "Memphis Challenge has opened my eyes to a new horizon. This internship has showed me that there are great people out there who really care about our education and if we succeed in life. In many ways they have opened me up into seeing that anything and everything is possible you just have to have patience and be able to believe in yourself. Mrs. Webster and Ms. Dozier have showed me many things and I enjoy being an intern for them."

Memphis Challenge Goes High Tech!

Thanks to a generous donation by Mr. Tony Okhiria, president of LanOne, Memphis Challengers can now browse the Internet for college research, complete school and Memphis Challenge assignments, and check email in the new Memphis Challenge Computer Center. Mr. Okhiria was recently recognized by the *Memphis Business Journal* as one of the Top 40 under 40. He started LanOne in 1998 with two employees and has grown to 12. He donated four computers complete with Windows 2000 and Microsoft Office software to bring technology to our Challengers. Mr. Okhiria gave dynamic advice to those who attended the grand opening of the Computer Center. The students were Arielle Fair, Wynter Foley, Charles Shannon, and Cordera Woodard. Mr. Okhiria impressed upon them the importance of making a good impression each and every time. He said, "perception is reality" meaning how someone sees you is their reality – leaving the students with something to ponder. Memphis Challenge is proud to call LanOne a partner in "inspiring and developing future Memphis leaders."



The Young and The Restless

By Yolanda Dozier, Program Manager, The Memphis Challenge

What do you get when you have 17 eager but timid teenagers and an exciting group of seasoned professionals? If you guessed the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program (TYLP), then you are correct!! On Monday, November 6, 2006, The Memphis Challenge, in partnership with Pacesetters Toastmasters held the first session of the Fall program. Pacesetter Don Lamb is the coordinator, leading the way in introducing the fine art of leadership skills and public speaking to Challengers.

TYLP is an eight-week program designed to develop communication and leadership skills through practical experience. Participants will serve as officers, give both prepared and impromptu speeches, and

evaluate their peers – similar to Toastmasters meetings. The students have been impressive in both their speaking styles and interesting and informative speech topics. The first round of speeches included topics such as Childhood Obesity, School Uniform Policy, a review of Finding Nemo, and a recap of Memphis history.

This partnership has a two-fold purpose

as conducting a Youth Toastmasters Leadership Program is one of the requirements toward receiving an Advanced Communicator award which Mr. Lamb will receive soon and it opens up a whole new world to a dynamic group of high school juniors and seniors.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Shelley Dunn and Brad Coker of Regions Bank,

who opened the doors of their training room to house our Fall session! The Fall TYLP meets Mondays November 6 – 27, December 4 – 18, and January 8 at Regions Bank, 4894 Poplar Ave. We will also hold a Spring session beginning in February 2007. We will recognize the completion and achievement of both the Fall and Spring classes in April or May.



Members of the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program with coordinator Don Lamb

PROPS & Praises

2007 National Achievement Scholarship Program Semifinalists: These Challengers are among the 16 Memphis City Schools students selected from over 130,000 applicants.

Angelique Williamson, MC Class of 2007, Central High School
Keadrea Wilson, MC Class of 2007, Hamilton High School
Cordera Woodard, MC Class of 2007, Whitehaven High School

Jessica Bowen, Senior, Central High School, recently delivered a stirring speech at the annual Facing History and Ourselves banquet in front of 800 of business and community leaders.

Marjorie Cowan, MC Class of 2006, Vanderbilt University, is a participant in the Alpha Phi Alpha's Annual Miss Black and Gold Pageant. She was also selected to participate in an alternative Winter Break program which is a community service project during a week of winter break. Marjorie was one of 30 students chosen to participate. Her group of 10 will serve a women and children shelter in Philadelphia.

Clytisa Drinkwater, MC Class of 2007, Central High School, was recently inducted into the Charles P. Jester Chapter of the National Honor Society.




Justin Glenn, MC Class of 2005, Vanderbilt University, will be going to South Africa in May as a scholar in the Delegation on Medicine of the International Scholar Laureate Program.

Chemetra Patrick, MC Class of 2004, Christian Brothers University, was inspired through the work of her summer internship at Hope and Healing to teach an aerobics class. The class, now offered six days a week, is now part of CBU's student life and is her work-study job. The classes include intense stretching, step aerobics and cardio.

Upcoming Events

DEC 22 **MC Holiday Brunch and Alumni Gathering:** 11:00 am at The Broadway Club, Orpheum Memphis

JAN 9 **Mapping Your Success** (juniors)
4:30 pm - 6:30 pm

JAN 16 **Parent's Workshop**
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm 

JAN 23 **Cash, Debit, or Credit: How to Manage Your College Finances** (seniors)
4:30 pm - 6:30 pm

JAN 27 **ACT Workshop (Feb 10 Exam)**
9:00 am - 2:00 pm



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Mission: *The Memphis Challenge endeavors to reach outstanding Memphis-area minority students, assist them in attaining admission to nationally recognized colleges and universities, and place them in internships with Memphis-area firms. The ultimate goal is for these students to accept the Memphis Challenge and return to Memphis in the future as community leaders.*