

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT

In the early stages of working with the Boys & Girls Clubs, the Values Institute conducted 17 focus groups with parents, staff, board members, volunteers and members of Boys & Girls Clubs in diverse locations around Virginia. The objective was to identify and define the values or virtues that the organization most wanted to pass along to its members.

As a result of these focus groups, additional discussions with leaders in five Boys & Girls Clubs organizations, and more than 300 validation surveys, the Clubs adopted a set of values that they decided to embrace as their core values. Values in Alignment would be the process by which the organization would infuse the values into the culture of the Clubs and would pass along to their youth members through modeling and teaching.

Those values are integrity, responsibility, respect, self-esteem and compassion. Desired behaviors associated with each of these values were defined. These values and associated behaviors were shown to a variety of individuals who have a strong interest in core values for organizations. Many provided feedback, including John Allison, Chairman of the Board of BB&T.

Mr. Allison noted that the list of values lacked an essential element: Ambition. He recognized that in addition to providing a "safe place for kids," the Boys & Girls Clubs should emphasize the importance of each staff member and each child to "strive to improve conditions of one's existence." That counsel led to a strategy to promote achievement and ambition as a core value, and to develop a set of tools to teach goal setting.

Mr. Allison was asked to review the curriculum, particularly the part that focused on achievement and ambition. He says the most important message that can be given to at-risk children is that they need a sense of purpose. Excerpts from his response follow:

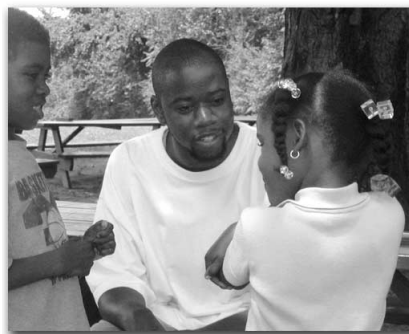
"Human beings are goal directed... The children must grasp that they have a right to enjoy their personal happiness provided they

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## A YOUNG MAN'S SUCCESS STORY: HOW ACHIEVER BECOMES ROLE MODEL FOR OTHERS

"When you dream low, you get low," remarked Michael Williams, the 2005 Youth of the Year among the Boys & Girls Clubs in Virginia.

Williams traced his roots to age 18. "I was given up at six months. My mother called the Hopewell Social Services to tell them that she was headed for New York and was leaving the kids in the house. From there, my two brothers and I were split up to live in group and foster homes. I lived in more than 100." The experience could have led



Williams astray. An older brother is in jail.

But a woman interceded 11 years ago. A foster mother Williams calls "Mom" nurtured him and provided guidance. Ultimately she adopted him. That mother, Linda Drummond, now seeks a tutor to assist him with his studies. Williams

credits his pastor, Leroy Cherry, as another force in leading him on the right path.

Irma Monroe, who submitted the young man's name among the dozen candidates for the award, called him a team player, who has won the respect of the younger children in the Petersburg Boys & Girls Club. He volunteers at the front desk to help the staff greet the youth as they enter. Quentin Brown, the Club Director, spoke admiringly of Williams' help to nine-year old members in the arts and crafts program.

Williams sees himself as a role model. "Kids mimic behavior. I stay clear of drugs, walk to work, and clean up around here," he said at the Club on Halifax Street. He went on, "I avoid anything wrong in front of a child." He aims to be the example Monroe claims him to be in her submission of the nomination for the award.

The future is very much in the young man's mind. "I could anticipate there's no tomorrow, never be anything, and don't care." To the contrary, he envisions college, so he could get a "really good job." To get there, he works hard at his studies. Last year he passed the SOLs and earned a place on the honor roll at Petersburg High School. "I try to get past foolishness," he said in depicting his dream to become a civil engineer to design bridges and roads. In route to the career to which he aspires, he will enroll in a trigonometry class as a senior this fall. ■



## The Values Institute of America

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“Our purpose is to develop strong moral and ethical cultures in communities throughout America by assisting individuals and organizations to identify, communicate, and put into action values that build character in young people, the future leaders of our country.”

### THANK YOU

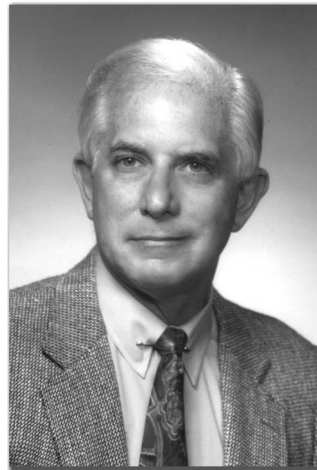
**For support of the Values in Alignment curriculum development, special thanks to BB&T Charitable Foundation, Anheuser Busch Foundation and U.S. Bancorp Foundation. Thanks also to The Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia, The Jubilee Fund at the Schwab Fund for Charitable Giving, and the Robins Foundation for their support of the Values in Alignment project. To make a gift, send checks payable to: The Values Institute of America, 5511 Staples Mill Road, Suite 300, Richmond, Virginia 23228. We appreciate your support.**

## VALUES INSTITUTE BOARD MEMBER RECEIVES BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS MEDALLION AWARD

In March 1999 the Boys and Girls Clubs of Richmond conferred their medallion on Richard November to join the 10 others on the Clubs' life member honor roll to “help youth to achieve a richer and fuller life.”

November feels rewarded for his dedication to the Clubs in adding a “spark to kids' lives. You get a sense of satisfaction in seeing kids progress and graduate from VMI.”

November has long held a special place in his heart for youth. As President of the Jewish Community Center he led the drive to establish the construction of Camp Hilbert for children after seeing the original facility washed away by a flood on the James. Then he led the venture to buy 180 acres for a replacement facility in Goochland County.



As a Board member of the Fidelity Federal Savings Bank he grew itchy on hearing “plenty of talk” to plan a community event. He volunteered to chair a committee that asked the United Way to solicit proposals for grants. The Boys and Girls Clubs won out. In 1991 November established an event consisting of a golf tournament, raffle, and auction to raise \$33,000 for the Clubs. For 10 years he

continued to chair that philanthropic enterprise, which now yields \$110,000 annually.

This Values Institute Board member cites a favorite aphorism; “What we are born with is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God.” At Board meetings November contributes his gift in repartee and wit. His extemporaneous sense of humor is prompted by the occasion. When he detects an opening, he seizes it. “You've got to know when the opportunity is there.”

He sees the work of the Board as a slow process that requires endurance. The pace has picked up. He said, “I can see its ultimate impact. The values will make a difference in the children's lives.”

For November, results are what matter. He has no claims for his intellect, but asserts, “You have to know what you are. I'm able to ascertain what I can and can not accomplish. Integrity comes first. It's a principle from my parents, and the Jewish faith, as well as others, is built on it.” He cited an instance as a home builder when he had been acknowledged for honesty.

Another value, self-esteem, holds equal relevance. “It's just as important. The other virtues - respect and compassion - follow from self-esteem. It's hard to cope, and the kids will wilt without it. I don't care who you are. You're going to make mistakes.” November believes self-esteem makes survival possible in a volatile world. ■

A Sense OF Values

Newsletter of the Values Institute of America

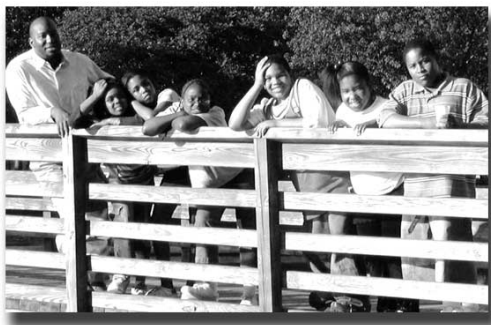
## CURRICULUM TRIAL CONDUCTED IN THREE LOCATIONS



*In Richmond, at the CapitalOne Club, Ian Williams of VCU's Life Skills Center, guides a discussion of values during the Values in Alignment Curriculum Trial.*



*Nile Wagley of VCU's Life Skills Center oversees a team exercise during the VIA Curriculum Trial at the Elkton Club.*



*Joe McDaniel (l), a recruiter for Regent University, stands with some of the members of the Chesapeake Club who participated in the Values in Alignment curriculum trial that he led.*

## AFFIRMING THE VALUE OF ACHIEVEMENT COUNTERACTS BIGOTRY OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

In 1970 Edward Banfield wrote a book entitled *The Unheavenly City*. In the preface he opined that many readers would conclude the author was an “ill-tempered and mean spirited fellow.”

Banfield viewed capitalism as a beneficent force that caused a general rise in the standard of living. He envisioned capitalism as the route to end urban poverty in the sense of hardship. But he depicted one class that could prove an exception.

The author observed a class at the bottom of the economic rung, a status attributable to its culture. The “lower class”, he contended, lives from moment to moment, and “impulse governs behavior.” The individual in that culture works only as “he must to stay alive and drift from one unskilled job to another. He takes no interest in his work.”

Banfield contended that the student of low capability and motivation - coming from that class - seldom benefits from education of any kind. To keep the student in class beyond the ninth grade only triggers delinquency. The “service ideal” of the upper class - that tends to be “altruistic” - underwrites and mandates compulsory high school attendance. Rather the “low class” student should be given a diploma at the end of ninth grade that recognizes “the palpable reality of his situation - that he will work with his hands all his life.”

The author concludes that readers should acknowledge the existence of cross-cultural differences. Recognize the “present orientedness” of the student of low capability and motivation, whose poverty “might come from his or her unwillingness to take account of the future.” On graduation he or she should be given the means, such as public transport, to get to work. In the 1970s the tobacco industry provided employment for young people with ninth grade educations.

In the decades since the publication of *The Unheavenly City*, Richard Sharp came to Richmond to become ultimately the Chairman of the Board of Circuit City. His first civic commitment turned to the Boys and Girls Clubs. In an interview he traced his years with Circuit City, at one time the fastest growing company in the region. Although the company had expanded from a few hundred employees to thousands, automation reduced the number of unskilled jobs as it has in the region’s tobacco businesses.

Now Sharp, Chairman of the Boards of Carmax and Children First Virginia, focuses on the education of youth, primarily those raised in environments where Banfield discerned the lack of an orientation towards the future. When queried about the perception of mothers in those sectors in the evaluation of school choice and quality, Sharp bristled at the questioner, “That’s what President Bush calls the bigotry of low expectations.”

Rather than accommodate that bigotry today, the Values Institute turns to the wisdom of John Allison, mothers like Linda Drummond who adopted Michael Williams, and Values Institute Board member Richard November, who, taking pleasure in seeing Boys & Girls Club youngster graduate from VMI, holds, “What we become is our gift to God.” ■

**IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ACHIEVEMENT**

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earn that right through productive work. In order to be successful and accomplish their purpose, they must be ambitious. They must systematically pursue achievement by constantly improving their capacity to accomplish their goals.”

Mr. Allison believes ambition in regards to rational values, i.e. getting a good job, owning a home, raising children properly, etc. is critically important. He cautions against teaching the children to give away what they have of value, thereby sacrificing to their detriment.

“Certainly, they need to understand not to try to take advantage of other people through the use of force or fraud. However, they do not need to learn self-sacrifice, but how to act in their own long-term rational self interest. They need to learn to trade value for value, freely initiating win-win relationships with other human beings thereby improving together.”

Mr. Allison states that by having a clear purpose and using their minds to accomplish their purpose, the children’s self-esteem will increase, which will make them productive citizens and happy individuals. ■



# A Sense OF Values

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Assisting individuals and organizations to identify, communicate and put into action values that build character in young people.

