**RYVES YOUTH CENTER Magazine**

“Miracle on 14th Street”

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**Director’s Message from Jim Edwards**

This past year many miracles have blessed Ryves Youth Center. Thanks to a grant from the ISU Center for Community Engagement, this magazine is just one new program that will help accomplish our mission. Another new program is our trauma-informed, at-risk teen mentoring. Funding for this program is through Catholic Charities USA and the Department of Justice. Volunteer mentors are being trained and have committed to a one-year match with a teen. Our hope is that through new programs and activities like these we will be able to help more youth.

Although the doors of Ryves Youth Center are open to all children, our mission is to serve those most in need. Many of our children live in poverty. Others face hunger, homelessness, personal loss, and parents who are addicts. All of these conditions could cause them to fail. Ryves Youth Center works with many organizations and volunteers to create programs and services that focus on increasing the strengths and assets of our children.

Looking back on 2015, I find that Ryves Youth Center has many guardian angels. Some are public, while others request anonymity. If not for these people and organizations, the children at our youth center would not have the opportunities that help them grow into successful adults. I would like to thank every one of our guardian angels. If I miss someone, that does not lessen my gratitude for your help.
Many local organizations have made this year a success: the United Way of the Wabash Valley, the Wabash Valley Community Foundation, the Rotary Foundation, the Ryves Community Optimists Club, the Terre Haute Optimist Club, the Breakfast Optimist Club, the Providence Medical Group Billing Office, Terre Haute Lodge #19, Kartland Foundry, Indiana State University, the Terre Haute Visitors and Convention Bureau, the City of Terre Haute, and others, along with many generous individuals. Without each of them, our mission as well as our children would suffer.

Just as important as donors are volunteers. We have volunteers who help daily, while others come once each year. You would be surprised how many adults walk into my office telling me memories of their childhood at Ryves. Each visit, they bring up special volunteers who touched their lives. Often, these volunteers have left the area and will never know their positive influence. Trust me, when you volunteer you are changing the world, one child at a time. Nelson Mandela said it best: "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

As you read the stories in this issue of the Ryves Magazine, please think about how many volunteers, organizations, and donors it takes to touch these young lives. As we look forward to 2016, we need caring people to improve the quality of life for our children.

A Finnish Guest, Ville Muttonen

Terre Haute is 5000 miles from Finland, so I'm far away from my home. I came here for my last internship before graduating in December with a baccalaureate in Social Work. I used to work at a foster care home, so I thought Ryves Youth Center would be a good place to do my internship.

So why am I here at Ryves Youth Center? Two years ago some teachers and students from ISU, who were visiting my school, spoke to my class about Ryves. I learned many good things about Ryves from their visit. I had always wanted to travel to the US and explore the culture, and after hearing them speak about Ryves, I decided to contact Jim Edwards.

Ville Muttonen, a welcome intern
from Saimaa University of Applied Sciences in Lappeenranta, Finland
During my 8-week internship I've learned much about how to work with at-risk youth. The children here are similar to those back home. They need a lot of guidance and support. The staff and volunteers at Ryves Youth Center are doing an important job. I've been amazed by the many activities Ryves offers to kids as well as the dedication of the volunteers. In Finland we have similar youth centers, but they are not as big as Ryves and don't offer as many services. I've gained new friendships from both my co-workers and the kids. I think the kids had a lot of fun talking with me because I have a funny accent since English isn't my national language.

I think the best part of Ryves Youth Center is how much security it provides children who possibly have insecurity at home. It gives the kids big smiles and allows them a place where they can just be kids.

This 8-week training has been an awesome experience that I will remember for the rest of my life. Someday I will be back at Ryves Youth Center because I want to see the kids growing up and I want to see all of my co-workers again too. During my internship I've learned much about the importance of volunteer work. When I get back home I will definitely do some kind of volunteer work with kids who need help. I recommend everyone to volunteer and donate if you are able because there always will be someone somewhere who needs help.

I thank Jim Edwards for this opportunity. I also thank my co-workers for their friendliness. Last but not least I thank the kids for how they made me feel welcome. I'm happy to go home, but at the same time I'm sad to leave here. Ryves will always have a piece of my heart.

Español, Connie Elmore

To help Ryves Youth Center assist Hispanic families and children, Connie Elmore has been tutoring Ryves staff members in Spanish language and customs since 2009.

Connie has been an instructor and tutor at Indiana State University since 1999. She has received awards and recognitions from First Year Initiative of Residential Life and from National Panhellenic Conference, among others, for her high standards of teaching and her dedication to student achievement. Currently she is working in ISU’s Center for Student Success. Connie also does volunteer tutoring in English for those in ministerial roles in church settings.

Ryves Youth Center strives to provide services to all groups of families and their children. Jim Edwards and Jim Pinkstaff have worked hard with Connie to improve their ability to communicate with Spanish-speaking children and their caregivers as an important part of helping people who live under difficult circumstances.
**Griffin Bike Park**, Cecilia van Wijk and Ray Dolle

Ryves Youth Center has an ongoing relationship with the founders of Griffin Bike Park. Dona and Gene Griffin aim to provide mountain biking opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, with learning opportunities for children. Founded in celebration of the core values of Freedom, Family, Friendship, and Community, the bike park was created and named in honor of their son, Sgt. Dale R. Griffin, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and gave his life in Operation Enduring Freedom. Many elements of the park have military themes. The course that we rode is the least difficult path for beginners, called Basic Training.

Dona and Gene have continued to provide opportunities for Ryves youth, such as inviting them to a presentation by “the Real” Forrest Gump, Sammy Davis. This show was a fundraiser for Griffin Bike Park, as well as an event to honor our military heroes.

As told in the two stories that follow, our youth enjoyed these learning experiences, which they would not have had without the Griffins.
A Wild Ride, Lakota Bays, age 16

When I went to Fowler Park on October 3, I wasn’t expecting a wild experience, but when I arrived at Griffin Bike Park I thought to myself this wasn’t so bad. It was fascinating for me and my Scout brothers. Did you know Dale Griffin was an Eagle Scout? Since the 16-mile bike park is still being developed, we saw parts of the park that were still wild and haven’t yet been made into the course. On the right side, it was all grassy and still looked like a forest. The left side was completed and had defined paths. It was like looking at a picture. The wildest part was going down the steep hills with sharp curves. I can’t wait to go back when the park officially opens in 2016. All I thought about after leaving the park were the memories of my wild ride.

The Real Forrest Gump, Hailey Bennett, age 11

On October 8, I went to this show that we had free tickets for at the Indiana Theater. We watched a video about Sammy Davis and how he won the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War. It made some of us cry a lot. Even though he was hurt, he saved his friends in the battle by carrying them through the water. It was so touching. Sammy Davis had a lot of answers for everyone’s questions. I asked him how he survived the war. He told me he could not quit because he had to save his brothers. He knew his brothers would have done the same for him. I also liked the theater we were in because it was huge, and the walls had gorgeous colored lights. It was so cool.

Activity Club, Beverly Lawson, age 16

I started the Activity Club to improve the communication between the children and me as well as between themselves. The club meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5:30-7:30pm. We do a lot of activities, such as art, dance, games, and puzzles. During our first meeting, we designed hats. The children used materials like ribbons, grass, stickers, and glitter to create unique hats. After that, we played board games and Tic Tac Toe, and some of the kids worked on puzzles. We have a lot of fun with our group, and I hope to keep it going for a long time.

Bike Repair, Jack DisPennett

If your bicycle needs fixed (flat tire, bent wheel, non-working brakes, unsteady seat, rusty chain, or other mechanical problems), contact Jack DisPennett to arrange a day and time to bring your bike to Ryves Youth Center to get it fixed for free. Be ready and willing to help with the repair on the day that you bring in your bike.
**Science Club**, Katie Hall

The Ryves Youth Center Science Club was started by students from the IU School of Medicine to spend time with the children in the community to get them excited about science and careers in science. The club comes to Ryves Youth Center on Wednesdays from 5:30 to 6:30pm. First, we take a few minutes to teach the children about the experiment for that day and how it is related to technical jobs. Next comes the fun part! The experiments we have done include launching rocket film canisters, growing slime, making lava lamps, and studying bones, and we have much more fun science planned!

![Sydney Jewell learning rocket science](image1)  ![Blast off! Katie Hall, her assistant, and Kyra Norris](image2)

**Preschool**, Pam Otte

In August, Ryves Preschool began a busy new school year with thirteen preschoolers. Each month is dedicated to special themes. August was about “Back to School,” “Getting to Know You,” and Birds and Dinosaurs. September themes were “Community Helpers,” “Farm to Table” projects, like the food groups, and the Equinox. October was even busier. It was Fire Prevention Month, and we took a field trip to Fire Station #3. In class we practiced “Stop, Drop and Roll” and pretend 911 calls. We also visited South Vigo High School, courtesy of the DECA club, for Harvest/Halloween fun! The Preschool hosted its annual Halloween Open House on Friday the 30th. We
had games, goodies, and a ghoulish good time. Our themes in November included the Harvest, Veteran’s Day, Pilgrims and Native Americans, and “An Attitude of Gratitude.” December was all about Christmas and Hanukkah traditions, and Winter behavior of humans and animals.

We have continuing programs, such as the Vigo County Public Library’s “Mother Goose on the Loose,” with reading, music, and movement activities every month. We also have the ISU Sunshine Therapeutic Play Group that visits us every Friday.

Our goal is to provide a safe and secure environment for our children, and to facilitate student-centered learning opportunities while having fun. Each month we have certain letters and colors to explore. We work on name and letter recognition (pre-reading), coloring, and other fine motor skills (pre-writing), on shapes, days of the week, and months of the year. As well as academics, social skills training is a high priority. All preschoolers need time to learn appropriate behavior, such as having manners, sharing with peers, respecting adults, listening, and following directions. Ryves Preschool’s long-range goal is kindergarten readiness.

Ryves Preschool is open year round, from 8:00am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. We do not close for summer break because our students come from at-risk families. Some children live in shelters; others live in multiple family living situations; all live in poverty. Ryves Preschool also ensures that children do not go home hungry. We serve breakfast, lunch, snack, and dinner. In addition, all students take home a bag of food each Friday in the “BackPack” Program.
We welcome anyone interested in volunteering and spending quality one-on-one time with our fun-loving, energetic children.

Miss Pam’s Preschool: Brooklyn Heckman, Curtis Massutti, Ka’Marion Johnson, Mason Crockett, Cameron Cooper, Huntyr Leek, Lucas Helton, Damian Heckman, Summer Crockett, Nadia Hayes, Aniyah Milton, Grace Leek, Lucas Helton

Tutors, Roc’Keyah Lord and Jim Pinkstaff

Now going on three years since I first started tutoring at Ryves Youth Center, I must say that my perspective has drastically changed. When I started, it was difficult to find children who wanted to be tutored. The other tutors and I would often have to entice the children with sweets in order to get their attention. It became even more frustrating when Jim Edwards would come into the tutoring area and see that most of the tutors were not working with a child. However, the dynamics of tutoring have gradually improved partly because after being here for so long the tutors have grown an unbreakable relationship with the children. The children no longer anxiously look at
the tutors as someone who is intruding on their space, but rather as a mentor who can be trusted. The children have come to realize that the tutors want to help them improve their math, reading, and spelling while having fun at the same time. This trust has made my job much easier, and it is a pleasure working with so many intelligent youth. I am so proud of them when they show me good grades on their report cards.

Ryves Youth Center provides a place for students to receive help in Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies, and other areas. Students get one-on-one instruction tailored to their individual needs. Children have the opportunity to work on their homework with the volunteers and staff as well as get extra tutoring.

For the past 3 years, we have been working with ISU Federal Work Study students to implement our tutoring program. This year we have an excellent group of tutors. Our reading tutors are Stacia Young, Dannielle Reichert, and Christal Pickell. Our math tutors are Alexandria Inman and Alexis Davis. In addition to reading and math tutors, we also have site managers who help coordinate tutoring and educational activities. Site managers also help with reading and math when available. Our site managers are Travis Norman, Kendal Mohr, Roc’Keyah Lord, and Jennifer Sedam.

Deming School has provided us with training in Everyday Math, as well as access to the school’s Everyday Math website. Students who struggle with math often work with
flash cards as well as worksheets. Travis Norman and Roc’Keyah Lord have developed some math games and activities to make learning enjoyable.

Our children have access to every book in Vigo County’s Elementary curriculum as well as most of the Middle School books. We have also secured an extensive library of upper-level math and science textbooks as well as teacher’s editions to those books from Rose Hulman’s Homework Hotline.

With the Champions Reading Program, we offer reading help to struggling students. Emphasis is placed on word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The Champions Reading Program was developed by St. Mary-of-the-Woods Elementary Education chair Sonja Franz. Tutors are trained in administering reading assessments, facilitating reading-level appropriate lessons, and tracking the progress of the students. Students in the Champions Reading Program also have the opportunity to use the library and computer lab as well as play reading/word building games. We utilize many of the same websites as the school cooperation. Over the summer, Benjamin Franklin Elementary School donated some of their classroom materials, which have been adapted into our reading program.

Michelle Egy, Roc’keyah Lord, and Natalie Norris in the library
*Holiday Photos*, Jim Pinkstaff and Jim Edwards

![Girls Club Halloween Party, India Bennett](image1)

![Hailey Bennett and Stacia Young (a tutor)](image2)

![Haunted House, or Jim Pinkstaff (aka Batman) disguised as the Joker](image3)
Two Thanksgiving platefuls of turkey, stuffing, potatoes, green beans, noodles, gravy, cranberry sauce, and a bread roll

Thanksgiving Dessert, Brionna Gaines, India Bennett, and Makayla Gaines
Merry Christmas!  Brendon Bower, Jimmy Massutti, Kloie Dean, Tom Bruce, Sydney Jewell, a volunteer, Curtis Massutti, and Tim Wood