aspire *stepup

assisting single parents in realizing education

News from aspire: assisting single parents in realizing education

Welcome to our newest affiliate - ASPIRE of Green Country Oklahoma

Join us in welcoming ASPIRE of Green Country Oklahoma. The new affiliate is based in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is busy building a board of directors. They have secured initial funding and anticipate awarding scholarships for the Fall 2011semester. Be watching for more exciting developments from this affiliate throughout 2011.

Foundation for the Mid South

The Foundation for the Mid South has awarded ASPIRE a grant that will enable expansion into Mississippi and Louisiana. Establishing ASPIRE affiliates in these states will provide local students with an alternative to government-assistance living. Affiliate Scholarships will supplement college government grants and will help students with school and living expenses such as transportation, housing, childcare, medical expenses, utilities, and school fees.

Summer Intern - Josie Merrill

Josie Merrill volunteered for ASPIRE as a summer intern from June to August 2010. During that time she made outstanding contributions to the office and impressed us with her upbeat demeanor and can do attitude.

Josie was originally tasked to help organize the office and filing system. However, it was soon apparent that Josie possessed superior computer skills and was instrumental in compiling an expansive training manual with very little direction or assistance.

We would like to thank Josie for her dedication and the countless hours she freely gave to ASPIRE.

Highlights

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- *Foundation for the Mid South*
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- *Message from a BAE Systems, Inc. Diane Rogers Parisi*
- *Surviving Spouse Scholarship Reception - Arlington, Virginia*
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I Believe....
That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are,
But, we are responsible for who we become.

2010
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Diane Rogers Parisi

A message from BAE Systems, Inc.

Why we support ASPIRE - Diane Rogers Parisi

An African proverb observes that when a woman is educated, so is a community.

BAE Systems has had the honor of working with ASPIRE for the past two years. I was first introduced to ASPIRE through John Suttle, current ASPIRE Board Member, in early 2009 and have had the pleasure of working closely with its staff to develop the Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program. When we were first approached about supporting this worthwhile organization, we jumped at the chance to get involved, understanding the importance of continuing education and giving families a second chance to succeed. As our company began to re-focus its giving priorities, we were challenged with developing a program that would more closely align with our business objectives. We began to look into the needs of our military families and realized that there was a gap in support for surviving spouses. Often referred to as the "invisible women," and left with no tools to care for their families, surviving spouses are often the ones left behind. Benefits are often lost or spent on debt and family obligations leaving widows with no resources to land on their feet and begin again.

As the name indicates, this program was designed to help grieving widows continue their education and relieve them of the financial burdens that come along with raising children on their own. ASPIRE and BAE Systems crafted a pilot program, using the ASPIRE model, in early 2010 and identified its first six recipients. The stories, of tragedy and determination, captured our hearts. The recipients demonstrate selfless determination and a will that drives them on when some would have so easily given up. In September, 2010 BAE Systems had the opportunity to host the first round of recipients for a two-day orientation and reception. Five of the six recipients were able to come to Washington, DC for a very special evening honoring their achievements. It was the first time that the recipients were able to meet one another and hear the stories of the other widows. We planned a very special evening for them beginning with a sunset cruise along the Potomac to our destination, Mount Vernon. BAE Systems' senior leaders and ASPIRE Board members were among the guests to honor the achievements of our recipients. Two of the recipients, Sheena McCloud and Nalini Clark shared their experiences and what prompted them to continue their education.

Many of the scholarship recipients are going back to school majoring in occupational or physical therapy so they can "give back" and "make their husbands proud," as we heard time and time again. We know they already are. These six ladies are the inspiring ones yet they would argue that they have been inspired by their husbands and the experiences they have endured.

BAE Systems is proud to be a part of this very special program and we are excited to see the fruits of this labor with our very first graduate, Rachel Sanders, in December, 2010.

Congratulations to all of the scholarship recipients. We look forward to hearing the many success stories that are going to come from this program and know that they will impact others lives in the same way they have already impacted ours.

To re-paraphrase the African proverb, we know we are helping to educate a community...and generations.

Surviving Spouse Scholarship Reception - Arlington, Virginia

Recipients: Cassondra Singleton, Sheena McCloud, Nalini Clark, Mara Courcy, Sarah Sawyer

2010 Surviving Spouse Recipients & ASPIRE Board Members - Washington D.C. Tour -

Mt Vernon Reception...

Nalini Clark, WWII Veteran, Sarah Sawyer

"This scholarship has made a tremendous difference in my and Lucas' life. I am very honored and grateful. I am one step closer to success and making my husband proud in heaven. Most importantly is to be a good example for my son. Thank you once again!" - Nalini

First Surviving Spouse Scholarship Recipient to Graduate

Rachel Sanders, Surviving Spouse Scholarship Graduate

Rachel Sanders, the first to complete the Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke on December 11, 2010. She received a Science Education Biology B.S. and plans to continue her studies to obtain a masters degree. She desires to teach Biology and Science at the high school level and give each child the advantage of a quality education.

Rachel is the proud mother of twin four-year-old daughters, and is the first in her family to receive a college degree. She is leading her children by example and we celebrate her accomplishments. Her students will benefit from her dedication and commitment as she equips them to become future leaders of our great nation.

- Congratulations Rachel!

Words from the heart… Sheena McCloud

With the support of ASPIRE and funding from BAE my sons Aidan, Landyn and I are able to have a life that is a little less stressful. Our family has had to face tragedy and grief that is like nothing else. Every second of everyday we hope, wish, and dream that he will come knocking on the front door. Each day we are also reminded of the reality, that no matter how hard we do any of these things, part of our heart is gone. What ASPIRE has done for my family is beyond words, they have placed a light at the end of the tunnel to help us learn to build a new life. One with an education and where we survive and do our best to be happy. ASPIRE has not only been there to help with the scholarship but has also been there when I needed someone to talk to or to share my accomplishments with. They are always there cheering me on and reminding me that I am one step closer to being a college graduate. Without the support of the entire ASPIRE and BAE staff the journey to building a new life would be long, narrow, and lonely.

Sheena McCloud with sons Aidan and Landyn

- Sheena McCloud

New Student Orientation

Surviving Spouse Scholarship recipients attended the ASPIRE new student orientation that was held at the BAE, Systems, Inc. headquarters in Arlington, Virginia on September 17, 2010.

John Suttle presenting scholarship check to Mara Courcy

Incoming students were welcomed into the ASPIRE family. They were provided with information about deadlines, calendar of events, and fund administration. Sessions included topics on financial fitness, reducing stress and tips on how to ease the transition into college life from a single parent's perspective.

Recap of 2010 - Pete Metzger

What a year this has been. It's amazing what has been accomplished. In our quest for new affiliates, we have traveled to Missouri, Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas and Kansas. As a result, ASPIRE of Northeast Oklahoma and ASPIRE of Green Country Oklahoma were established. Great prospects on the horizon include: Oklahoma City, Norman Oklahoma, Iola, KS and Jefferson City, MO. We will also begin prospecting in Mississippi and Louisiana at the start of the new year!

A database to track student and donor records was created, and is currently in the testing phase. Our first affiliate website was launched. ASPIRE promotional materials were designed and a comprehensive Tool Kit was completed that includes everything an affiliate needs to set-up and run a scholarship program.

The Surviving Spouse Scholarship Program was established and our first scholarships were awarded for the Fall 2010 semester. Interviews were conducted in Texas, North Carolina, Colorado, and Virginia. The recipients traveled to Arlington, Virginia in September for the new student orientation and a reception hosted by BAE Systems, Inc at Mount Vernon.

These are but a few of the highlights of this past year. Much of what we were able to accomplish is due to the help and assistance of a dedicated and supportive Board of Directors. Without them it could not have been done. Our focus is now on 2011 and all the incredible possibilities the new year holds for ASPIRE. With your help and continued investments, we think it will be our best year yet! Thank you does not begin to express our gratitude to each of you. Together, we can advance a scholarship program we are all passionate about.

With heartfelt thanks, we would like to express our appreciation to everyone at BAE Systems. We could not have asked for a better partner. You have not only touched our hearts, but the hearts of those most impacted by the scholarship…
the surviving spouses and their children.

BAE SYSTEMS

By investing in ASPIRE, you will be providing hope to real people who will be empowered through education. Thus bringing significant change to the under-served and oppressed single parents in our nation. Your gift will live on in transformed and grateful individuals. As we have witnessed over and over, when single parents become financially stable, they wholeheartedly give back to the communi-ties that made their dream of education a reality.

Yes! I want to help ASPIRE provide single parents the opportunity of an education.
Enclosed is my gift of $ _____.

Name on Account (Please Print) : _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Options: ☐ Check Enclosed ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date: _____

Security V-Code (3 digit number on BACK of card): _____

Authorized Signature: _____

____ Please contact me to arrange for a donation of stock.

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Your contribution can be mailed to:
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20 East Center Street
Fayetteville, AR 72701

479.973.0800 (p)
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