CONNECTIONS
The Newsletter of the Together We Can Foundation — Smart Transitions

TWC Annual Fund Chair

We are pleased to announce that Jim Spore will be serving as Together We Can Foundation’s Annual Fund Chair for 2022-23.

Jim Spore is the former City Manager for Virginia Beach and the recently retired President and CEO of Reinvent Hampton Roads.

Jim has been an advocate for disconnected youth and TWC’s work in the city of Virginia Beach and in the greater Hampton Roads Community.

TWC Website

Please visit our TWC Website, developed by our friends at Norfolk’s TechArk Solutions.

Launching a New Middle School Program

For over 12 years the Together We Can Foundation has presented our flagship program—The Life-Work Portfolio Course—to youth in high school and beyond. With its strong focus on career identification, alignment, and preparation, and personal presentation and the cultivation of an effective work brand, this program has racked up impressive outcomes in terms of high school graduation, matriculation to post-secondary education and/or vocational skills training, and employment. In other words, preventing youth from becoming disconnected in the first place.

Over the years we have also experimented with offering the program to younger students (in middle school and early high school), but always found that the focus on career was just a little ahead of the curve for most middle school youth. On the other hand, re-

continued on page 2
search tells us that middle school is one of the places where the seeds of disconnection are sown. If youth do not enter high school with an effective skill set for navigating high school, the outlook is not promising.

This fall, thanks to an Education Seed Grant from The Hampton Roads Community Foundation and a grant from The Landmark Foundation and a strategic partnership with the Barry Robinson Center’s Next Step to Success after-school program, we’ve developed an adapted curriculum targeting just those skills that middle school youth rising into high school most need.

The Smart Transitions Life Journey Portfolio Course is a fun and engaging way of building that skill set utilizing travel-themed self-awareness activities. Like the Smart Transitions Life-Work Portfolio Course designed for older high school and post-high school youth, the Life Journey Course focuses on creating a portfolio that helps each youth explore their personal strengths, skills, passions, values, and aspirations.

The Smart Transitions Life Journey Portfolio Course is designed to help middle and early high school youth between the ages of 14 and 16 transition effectively from middle school to high school with the kind of critical success skills that will help them navigate high school and graduate on time. Specifically, it helps youth develop skills in the following areas.

- **Introspection and Self-Awareness** (creating a strong sense of their talents, skills, passions, values, and aspirations)
- **Social-Awareness** (understanding their place in the community and how to engage with it)
- **Self-Management** (learning how to handle high school with an emphasis on progress over perfection through calendars, checklists, and prioritization)
- **Self-Efficacy** (knowing how to set reasonable goals and how to track and reward progress)
- **Relationship Skills** (acquiring effective skills and strategies for asking for help, especially of adults and teachers)

For information on scheduling a Life Journey Portfolio Course contact Harvest Bellante at hbellante@twcfoundation.org.

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**Artifacts and Souvenirs:**

- **Tour Guides and Fellow Travelers**

**Fellow Travelers:**

1. **Treasure:** (List three good things that might come from reaching your goal)
2. **Allies:** (Identify three people you could turn to for help in reaching your goal)
3. **Challenges:** (List three obstacles or roadblocks that might keep you from reaching your goal)

**My Focused Goal:** (Now write that goal in one sentence—simplify the phrasing of your goal)

**My Destination or Goal:** (Describe in detail what you want to accomplish)

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**Gratitude Tree**

There is compelling evidence from scientific brain studies that the happiest people are people who regularly and easily express gratitude for what life brings them. Use the gratitude tree below to record something for which you are grateful on each leaf.

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**Togetherness Chart**

- **Together We Can Foundation**

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info@twcfoundation.org

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**Smart Transitions Program Manager**

Joe Takach

Cassandra Thompson

Winship Tower

Dr. Nancy Welch

Ninah Pearson:

Human Services Liaison

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**TWC Staff**

Tom Crockett: Executive Director

Tom Marshall: Development and Advocacy Director

Harvest Bellante: Program Director

Heather Fine: Smart Transitions Program Manager

DeMia Lindsey-Mitchell: Smart Transitions Program Instructor

Kelly Crockett: Volunteer Program Manager–Equine Youth Challenge

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**Together We Can Foundation**

www.twcfoundation.org
Field Notes: Jessie West

Jessie West wishes movies would ‘get it right.’ When it comes to depicting college life, she feels like the movies and television spend a lot of time showcasing the social aspects, but not really the educational part of college. In her words, high school students need to realize that they’ll still be expected to be studious and work within a structure.

I first encountered Jessie as a senior in high school when I presented our Life-Work Portfolio Course in her Film and Television production class at Virginia Beach VoTech. I was excited to work with this particular class because film happens to be one of my passions as well. And, since 2015, I have been an adjunct professor at ODU, teaching in their film department. Jessie’s class at VoTech were a great group. They were getting a lot of hands-on experience at school—making short films, commercials, and television spots. They were also graduating from high school with their Workforce Readiness Skills Certification, and their NOCTI Television Production, ‘job ready’ Certification. One of the many reasons VoTech is such a great partner with Together We Can Foundation, is because we know that their students earn many industry-recognized certifications and with our portfolios, we’re able to give them a way to showcase those.

Jessie was already working part-time as a nanny during high school, but with her portfolio in hand, she’s continuing the search for something more substantial. She also continued her education and ended up, on the first day of class, in my lobby at ODU. “I was hoping that was you when I saw it in the catalogue,” she said.

The first day of the semester is always a crazy one, but to turn around and see a familiar face is really fun for me, and it’s a pleasure to get to follow-up with students that I’ve had over the years. I’ve been teaching Jessie now for over a month and it’s been great to see how engaged she is. If I had any advice to give to high schoolers, it’s that they should engage with professors as often as possible and really try to get involved with their campus. Jessie admits that this is tougher than it seems, particularly if you’re a commuter. Not only is it tough to juggle your life between home and school, but it also can be tough to get involved. That said, Jessie has just signed up to a part of ODU’s Film Club, and she hopes to do more.

One of the most impressive things about Jessie is the way she has really internalized the lesson we teach on the very first day of our portfolio class. Jessie says she remembers that I asked them all to discuss their aspirations and where they see themselves at the ripe old age of 30. I love this question because it allows us to really dig deep and think about the lifestyle they want. There’s nothing off the table, but, if you’re going to tell me you want to live in big house on the beach, or in the heart of a city, you’re also going to have to do some realistic exploration of the types of careers and choices that can get you there. Jessie told me that what she took from that lesson was the notion that everything builds upon the choices you make. So, even though 30 seems like a lifetime away, the decisions you’re making are all helping to get you to that place you want to be. To hear this perspective makes me proud and it’s exactly what we want to instill in our students. For Jessie, research has been key, and she already has her ‘stair step’ approach mapped out. She may not be at ODU for all 4 years of her college life, but she’s happy with what she’s getting educationally. She thinks it will give her a great foundation and set her up for a possible transfer to DePaul University in Chicago. DePaul has an agreement in their film program with Wolf Productions, the folks that bring you many of the crime television shows, Law and Order, for example, on TV. By the age of 30, she can see herself working there and living her ‘best life’ as a show runner or writer.

I don’t always get the chance to speak with my students from portfolio classes after they’ve gone out to face ‘the real world.’ And movies are still likely to depict the world of college very differently from the actual experience. But to know from a student like Jessie that our message is sticking and she’s keeping her head about her and focusing on her goals...well, that is enough motivation for me, and the entire staff at TWC, to get out there and keep spreading the word.
Initiatives (noun)
an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation; a fresh approach to something: from the Latin initiare, from initium meaning beginning.

As a part of our ongoing Ready For Work R4W initiative, we are launching a new online resource called CareerClub this fall. CareerClub is information by topic and/or industry in bite-sized portions presented via ZOOM. Designed for youth who are beginning to explore the world of work and want additional information and the chance to ask their questions to experts. Space for each session is limited so scan the QR Code below with your smart phone’s camera app to access the CareerClub Web Page then use the ZOOM links provided to register for the classes in which you are interested. Alternately you can type the following URL into your browser: www.twcfoundation.org/career-club-schedule/. For more information, contact Harvest Bellante at hbellante@twcfoundation.org or (951) 515-0608.

New GET MONEY Guide
Thanks to the support of our friends at the TowneBank Foundation we have completed the third in our series of Smart Transitions Guides. This guide, available at branches of TowneBank and directly from TWC, is designed to help youth learn how to manage money for financial independence.

www.twcfoundation.org
Partner (noun)
a person who takes part in an undertaking with another or others:
from the Latin partitio, meaning partion or a part of or to take a part in.

It may seem counterintuitive to highlight the work of our partner agencies in our newsletter, but we are proud of our partners and believe in the name our founder, Terry Jenkins, gave us: Together We Can. It is through these partner agencies that we are able to serve more than 1200 youth each year with direct service. It is also critical to understand that making a difference means agencies working together to remediate risk factors for and address aspects of youth disconnection.

Addressing and intervening in youth and family homelessness.
Street outreach and intervention from groups like Stand Up For Kids and Seton Youth Shelters. Housing homeless young adults at the Union Mission Ministries, the Judeo Christian Outreach Center, the Virginia Beach Housing Resource Center and Hope U. The Homelessness Hotline for homeless families run by For Kids and the team at Project Hope in Virginia Beach Public Schools addressing the issues that homelessness creates on students.

Ensuring that youth stay engaged and finish high school or earn a G.E.D.
We work with High Schools in Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Hampton, Franklin, and Southampton County as well as the Chesapeake Career Center, the Virginia Beach Technical and Career Education Center, the Norfolk Technical Center, Boys and Girls Clubs, Communities in Schools, and the Barry Robinson Center’s Next Steps to Success program.

Addressing the issues that arise from court involvement, foster care and incarceration.
We are proud to work with Juvenile Detention Centers in Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Norfolk as well as with organizations like the Friends of the Portsmouth Juvenile Court and Friends of the Virginia Beach Juvenile Court, CASA, and Tidewater Youth Services. We also support Tidewater Friends of Foster Care, Connect with a Wish, and therapeutic foster care programs from agencies like The UP Center and the Barry Robinson Center.

Preparing youth to enter the regional workforce successfully.
We work with the Hampton Roads Workforce Development Council and their NextGen Internship Program, The Virginia Beach Summer Youth Employment Program, as well as New Horizons on the Peninsula.

NEXT STEP TO SUCCESS

Barry-Robinson Institute Board of Trustees, rooted in the benevolence and vision of founder Frederick J. Robinson. This new anti-poverty program geared for youth 13-15 years old in Norfolk is a free educational program that empowers youth to build the independent, resilient character they will need to earn success and enjoy happy, fulfilled lives.

www.twcfoundation.org
Donor (noun)
a person or entity who donates something, especially money to a fund or charity: from the Latin donator, from donare meaning to give.

Foundations:
- Agena Foundation
- Hampton Roads Community Foundation
- Landmark Foundation
- Community Leadership Partners of HRCF
- Kate & BC Wilson Family Fund of HRCF
- TowneBank Foundation
- Warden Family Foundation
- Protecting Children Foundation
- Tidewater Youth Services
- Chesapeake Bay Wine Classic Foundation
- The Union Mission

Corporations:
- Barry Robinson Center
- Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters
- Raymond James
- Synchron, LLC
- TechArk Solutions
- TowneBank
- Willis Furniture
- The Miles Agency
- Adjacent
- Beach Commercial
- William Brown Real Estate
- MTS Enterprises

Municipal Funding:
- Virginia Beach Community Opportunity Grant
- Chesapeake Human Services Grant
- Norfolk Human Services Grant

Individuals:
- Pastor Austin
- J.B. Benefield
- Joan Berlin
- Michael Berlucchi
- Samuel Blowe
- Karen Boldt

When our funders and donors support our work they are saying that they support the idea behind the Smart Transitions initiative—to collectively seize the opportunity to engage these youth and truly give them every opportunity to succeed.
**Annual Report, FY 2021-2022**

**YOUTH SERVED BY YEAR**

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>2020-21</td>
<td>919</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
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</tbody>
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**YOUTH OUTCOMES**

- **Graduate From High School**: 90%
- **Pursue Post-Secondary Education or Training**: 75%
- **Find Employment**: 78%

**TOTAL YOUTH SERVED WITH DIRECT SERVICE TO DATE:** 8,486

**TOTAL YOUTH SERVED WITH INDIRECT SERVICE TO DATE:** 62,505

*Service by Municipality*

- Virginia Beach: 488
- Norfolk: 204
- Portsmouth: 33
- Chesapeake: 423
- Suffolk: 12
- Hampton: 33
- Franklin/Southampton Co.: 16

1209

*Best Estimation based on where service was provided*

**Total Income FY 2021-2022:** $445,957

- Foundation Grants 49%
- Individual Donors 26%
- Contribution 6%
- Municipal 14%
- In-Kind 11%
- Fundraising 8%
- Administration 5%

**Total Expenses FY 2020-2021:** $432,799

- Youth Programming 87%
- Fundraising 8%
- Administration 5%
How You Can Help

Over a quarter of our income comes from generous and compassionate donors like you who’ve said no to the idea that some of our youth are disposable and yes to the idea that each generation of young people—our future workforce—is worth investing in.

Without donations from people like you, over 314 youth would not be receiving service this year. That’s 314 youth who would not have: developed a post-secondary transition plan; would not have identified and learned to express an attractive and marketable personal and professional “brand;” and would not have developed the tools and resources to find employment and break the cycle of minimum wage poverty.

In a short while, you’ll receive a letter from our Annual Fund Chair, Jim Spore, asking you to consider supporting the work we do and the continued success we are having with preventing youth disconnection. Please consider helping us reach our annual fund goal for the year with a generous donation.

If you just can’t wait for Jim’s letter, Please consider making a contribution by visiting us online at www.twcfoundation.org and clicking on “donate.” You can also use the QR code to the right and your smart phone to take you right to our donate page. And, while you are there, please consider becoming a recurring donor by marking your donation to repeat each month. Thank you.

Virginia Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) Tax Credits

We currently have NAP Tax credits available for donations. NAP eligible donations of $600.00 or more create a direct tax deduction of 65% of Virginia State Taxes (in addition to the standard state and federal tax deductions). Depending on your income tax bracket and the amount of your donation, you could be looking at a tax refund for your donation (please check with your accountant or financial professional for specifics). If you are interested in NAP tax credits, email tcrockett@twcfoundation.org with the amount you would like to donate.

Tom Marshall: Development and Advocacy Director

Tom Marshall joins the TWC team this fall, helping us make the next big step in serving youth. He holds a B.S. in Public Administration from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Penn State University in addition to a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Duke University. He comes with over twenty-five years of non-profit development experience working for the Pennsylvania Resources Council, Fish America Foundation, The Forest History Society in Durham, NC, the YMCA of South Hampton Roads, Bon Secours Hampton Roads Foundation, the Baltimore Medical System and serving as the Executive Director of the Southeast Virginia Community Foundation.