



Bulletin

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'Most Terrible Thing' Becomes Source of Comfort And Opportunity For Former Student

"I thought it was the most terrible thing that ever happened," said 21-year-old Steadman Blake, calmly reflecting on how he felt five years ago when he learned he was coming to live at St. Christopher's. "But then, when it was finally time to leave last summer, I just wanted to stay."

Steadman aged-out of agency programs last June. Fortunately, his good feelings for the agency were mutual, and earlier this year St. Christopher's hired Steadman as an intern in the maintenance department. While no longer a campus resident – Steadman commutes daily from Far Rockaway in Queens, more than two hours each way on public transportation – he is thankful for the opportunity to work and to continue being around St. Chris.

Steadman's case is a bit unusual, since few former residents get internship offers. But as Russ Gilmore, director of operations, said, "We don't stop caring about

our students just because they have to leave the program. That's not who we are. In Steadman's case, we saw a tough family situation and an opportunity to continue having a positive influence on someone who would be receptive to our effort. So our team sat down to figure out what could be done."

Steadman had come to the staff's attention as a reliable and capable worker when he was a student participating in the agency's ACE/HOP program, a vocational program that provides students with supervised on-the-job training. [You can read about ACE/HOP in last spring's newsletter, available online at www.sc1881.com.] The notion of his working in the maintenance department at Dobbs Ferry didn't require much persuasion of staff managers – or of Steadman.

"This is an opportunity to get out of my mom's house, earn some money, and get some ex-



Former St. Christopher's resident Steadman Blake, now working where he was once a student, hopes to work in politics. He cites President Kennedy as his inspiration.

perience," he said purposefully, adding that he's also pursuing his G.E.D. when not on the job. He knows the internship is temporary and won't last past next fall, when he will enter an independent liv-

ing program in the Bronx.

Happy as he is to still be at St. Christopher's, Steadman is thinking about his future, which he

(continued other side)

St. Christopher's, Inc./Greenburgh-North Castle UFSD

Milestones of 2009

- ▶ Clark Academy (Dobbs Ferry), Greenburgh Academy (Yonkers) and REACH (Jennie Clarkson campus) combine for 72 High School graduates. Several graduates earn the coveted New York State Regents Diploma. Thirty-four graduates go on to post-secondary education.
- ▶ Greenburgh-North Castle School District names Dr. Edward Placke, formerly the New York State Education Department Assistant Commissioner, as Superintendent of Schools.
- ▶ With interest from around the state in our groundbreaking success with the most fragile children, we begin expanding our REACH program to 48 beds and taking day students formerly in "home instruction."
- ▶ The NYS Education Department and New York City ask St. Christopher's and Greenburgh-North Castle UFSD to develop a new school for upwards of 100 additional children. We are looking at sites in Southern Westchester.
- ▶ In September, we implement *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (PBIS), a proven "evidence-based" behavior management program built on positive reinforcements.
- ▶ With tremendous student participation, we create a 1.5-acre organic farm on the Valhalla campus, producing more than 500 pounds of vegetables for the Food Bank for Westchester -- and half as much again for St. Christopher's own kitchens! Next year we aim to produce more than two tons of vegetables for the Food Bank and homeless of Westchester County, while retaining 30% for our own use. This innovative program is featured on Cablevision News 12.
- ▶ We begin renovations to transform the old gym on our Dobbs Ferry Campus into a new Visual and Performing Arts Center. Other campus changes include adding a security office, clearing instructional space, and creating a new Teaching Kitchen Lab to enhance the Culinary Arts Program.





Dedication to Family And Education Inspire Longtime Board Member, School Board President Anne Crudge

Family plays an important part in the work we do at St. Christopher's, since we know our success often hinges on gaining the support, co-operation, or participation of families in helping our students learn to succeed in school, society, work, and personal (family) life.

It is an appropriate coincidence, and perhaps fate, that one of our longest serving board members, someone active in both the agency as well as our school system, has herself an enduring family connection to St. Christopher's.

Anne Crudge is vice president of the St. Christopher's board of directors and president of the Greenburgh-North Castle UFSD school board (if you've been a thorough reader of this newsletter, you've seen her name in every issue in the box at the bottom of the back page). Her official involvement with St. Christopher's goes back nearly 30 years, but even before that, she had come to know the agency well. Her mother, Emily Chambers, was a board member and president during the 1970's. Anne became active in the agency after her mother passed away in 1981.

"Things were different then," she said in speaking about her mother's years on the board. "The school was not as significant as it is now. St. Christopher's was an agency that cared for New York City kids with emotional or family challenges. Education was important - and personally, I think it's the most important thing you can provide anyone - but it wasn't the focus it is today."

The importance of family and education were clearly paramount in Anne's own upbringing, especially when she lost her father as a teenager. According to Anne, her mother made it "her priority to provide for the education of her two kids."

"My dad had attended Columbia on a scholarship," she said, so the transformative value of education, for oneself and for others, was something she was brought up to recognize, appreciate, and encourage.

Even more than one might expect, Ms. Crudge is an educated and worldly woman. She attended Vassar, a premier and, at the time, women's-only college, followed by an exchange program in England. She established a



Anne Crudge, board officer to both the agency and school district, relaxes at home. A portrait of her mother and former St. Christopher's board president Emily Chambers, hangs behind her.

career in television news, focusing on documentaries and working many years with CBS (in what many would call the heyday of network television), then later with PBS and CNN.

Anne is also the widow of Vernon Crudge, a top international airline executive at British Airways, Boeing, and other industry giants. It's safe to guess that her passport has been stamped more times than most have even been opened. Though she didn't bring it up herself, a fellow St. Chris board member mentioned that Anne is a licensed pilot, though he said she confessed to not getting behind the controls much anymore.

Even with her accomplishments and experience, Anne is an approachable, warm and welcoming person. In meeting her, one immediately senses her bedrock calm and confidence, which makes conversing with her pleasant and comfortable. There is nothing superficial about her, and she speaks easily with sincerity and passion about her causes.

For example, in addition to her work for St. Christopher's and GNC, Anne is on the board of Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology in Queens, an involvement stemming from her late husband's affinity for aircraft and flying. She has served there nearly 15 years, and looks forward to, among other things, the annual Vernon Crudge Scholarship award, given to one student based on merit and leadership

qualities.

Education and family commitment clearly mean a lot to Anne, and it helps explain why she is so upbeat about what's happening at St. Christopher's and GNC schools, especially with regard to the leadership changes that have brought both Dr. Robert Maher and Dr. Edward Placke into the St. Chris/GNC orbit.

"We've made enormous strides in the last three years," she said. "To the benefit of students, we've made a lot of progress integrating the services of the agency and school." [Our last issue's story on the new PBIS program described one of the ways this is being done.]

"This has been a most remarkable period. The agency and schools are in the hands of dedicated, professional people. Dedication is so important."

Anne would know, since it was dedication that led her to a position on the GNC school board. She originally served on the school board as the representative for St. Christopher's. When the school board president resigned, she was recruited for the post. "It is supposed to be a 'pro tem' position," she said with a smile, meaning more ceremonial than activist. While that was three years ago, she insists her continuing role has been minor.

Her colleagues are less reserved in commending her leadership and contributions of time and energy. "She is always there at meetings, a consistent and contributing presence," said Richard Pino, St. Christopher's board vice president. "You know her dedication to the students goes down to her bones."

Striking a similar chord, board chairman Dr. Aran Ron said, "I can't say enough about her level of devotion. She's not only there in the good times. She has the willingness to work through tough problems, too. It's an uncommon quality."

In October, when St. Christopher's honored Anne at the annual Golf Outing, Dr. Maher saluted her selfless service with this well-known but apt tribute: "...that which we do for ourselves dies with us, but that which we do for others...remains...and is immortal."

Anne says she has but one regret in looking back -- or forward -- on her work for St. Christopher's and Greenburgh-North Castle. "I don't spend as much time visiting students as I might like, to let them know that I care about their success and happiness. That is something I wish to change," she said.

Our students, once they got to know her, would most certainly feel the same way.

Steadman Blake...(con't.)

hopes takes him to college and into politics.

He explained, "When I was younger and got grounded for getting into trouble, I watched TV. One day a movie was on, *Days That Shook The World*," about President Kennedy and the assassination. When he saw it, Steadman said, "I was inspired." His rapt expression would make you think he had seen the movie just yesterday.

Happily, Steadman brought that inspiration with him to St. Christopher's, and last year, when he was doing volunteer work at a Dobbs Ferry senior center, he had the chance to see some of the political conventions on TV. "It was great. I enjoyed it."

While it may sound ambitious to aspire to a career in politics, Steadman does possess one essential political talent: he has a remarkable memory for people and names. There isn't a person working at the Dobbs Ferry or Jennie Clarkson campuses that he doesn't seem to know by name.

Like many who have left high school, Steadman says finding friends isn't easy, and that none of the neighborhood kids he knew are around now.

"It's tough," he admits, though he knows there's no going back and that he's not a kid anymore. Now when he's at work and sees how students react to all the guidance and help they receive, he says to himself, "They don't know how good they've got it."

What a difference five years makes.



The Clark Academy gym served as Grand Dining Hall on the Tuesday night before Thanksgiving, when students and their families, 300 in all, feasted on turkey and seasonal fixings as guests of St. Christopher's. In an annual tradition, executive staff donned aprons and served the guests. Entertainment included several student performances.

See it all on video at www.sc1881.com/

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