



ENVISION

Greetings from the CEO

To God be the Glory for ALL of the things that He has done!

I am so excited and grateful about the goodness of the Lord, and what He has done for this ministry. As we close out 2003 and enter into 2004, I pray that our hearts and minds are focused Him!

The year 2003 brought many wonderful people and resources to S.I.S.T.A.S. I am thankful for every mentor who has made a commitment to her mentee, and has tremendously made an impact and grateful for each volunteer who is as equally committed to sowing into this ministry, and has gone the extra mile. To every mentee who sacrifices one lunch per week for group mentoring sessions, thank you! Parents, thank you for embracing the mentoring relationships and allowing us to enter your daughter's life. You can't imagine just how much I appreciate you... Thank you for your support!

S.I.S.T.A.S. is more than just a ministry...we are a family! I have so much love for each of you, and admire the love that you have for one another. I anticipate seeing each of you

at the fellowships, where we can talk "girl talk," share our accomplishments or concerns, eat good food and have a good time. It gives me such joy to see the mentees enjoying themselves as well. Many of the girls can't wait until the 4th Saturday of the month. This is also a time for them to be the children that they are, and not have a care in the world. Most importantly, it's a time for us all to learn something new and share the love of God with one another.

As we reflect on 2003, S.I.S.T.A.S. has been blessed, and has been a blessing in many ways. At the end of 2002, we blessed the Herring family with a wonderful Christmas. In February, we hand made 30 "Pillows for the Homeless." We thank Walmart for their generous donations and Miss Nikki Guy (Mentor) for teaching us how to use a sewing machine. In March, we taught the mentees to take care of, love and respect their bodies through sessions on STD's, Health and Hygiene, Etiquette, Positive Attire, Fitness and Nutrition Workshops. Thank you Mrs. Tamika Hyman, Mrs. Arnita Shelton, Mrs. Kimberly Simons, Miss Keana Wilkes, Miss

Coretta Johnson and Miss Paige Thomas (Mentors and Volunteers) for sharing with us. Miss Maya Johnson (Mentor) taught us how to defend ourselves during our Self-Defense Technique session, while I prepared our girls for the fundraising event with Table Etiquette in April.

In May, we had our first Mother's Day Fashion Show Fundraising Event at the La Fontaine Bleu. This major event introduced our mentees to alternative dress, positive self-esteem and confidence. God was truly glorified as Mrs. Cheryl Jackson (Heaven 1580 AM) served as Mistress of Ceremonies, and Rev. Belynda Gentry ("Go ye" Ministries) delivered a powerful Word. Let us not forget Mrs. Jodie Johnson (Agape Couture) and Miss Coretta Johnson (Lines and Curves) for a fabulous production. Felicia Deitrich showcased her beautiful crochet designs; Footprints Dance Ministry, vendors and sponsors also added a special touch to the occasion. We celebrated graduations and promotions at Uno's in June

This summer, the Willing Workers Ministry blessed our
(Continued on page 2)

S.I.S.T.A.S. Mentoring

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Fall/Winter 2003



Check out page 3 for exciting information on the new S.I.S.T.A.S. website!

Inside this issue:

CEO Greeting	1-2
S.I.S.T.A.S. in the News	2
Prayer Corner	3
Testimony	3
FYI	3
S.I.S.T.A.S. In the Know	3
Back-to-School	4
Holiday Baskets	4
Coins for Christmas	4
Upcoming Events	5
Celebrate	5
Kidz Corner	5

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, organization volunteer or mentee, please contact Mrs. Wendy Gray at 301-780-5650 or write to SISTAS, P.O. Box 575, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20773 or log onto www.Sistasmentoring.org.

(Continued from page 1)

teen mothers, as they attended an Annual Border Baby Shower. The mothers left with several bags full of baby items.

It is one of my goals to expose our mentees to as many positive opportunities as we can. Also in 2003, the girls received community service hours as they volunteered time to make pillows for the homeless, and to help out during the Health Fair at the First Baptist Church of Glenarden. Miss Denise Joseph coordinated the donation of sixteen (16) computers that were donated by Raytheon. She and Mrs. Vendetta Luther also coordinated computer training for our mentees, which takes place at the First Baptist Church of Glenarden began in January 2004. And the

blessings continue. The Computer Ministry of the First Baptist Church of Glenarden also made a monetary donation to purchase Teen Study Bibles. "Go ye" Ministries is sponsoring Sophia "Pinky" Copeland for the 2004 Cotillion. Lastly, but certainly not least, the Praise and Worship Ministry of the First Baptist Church of Glenarden helped bring in the spirit of giving, as they planned a special outreach in December. This outreach allowed the girls to make holiday gift baskets for their loved ones.

S.I.S.T.A.S. received its first mini-grant from Bowie State University, which will be used for Tobacco Prevention among our youth. The December 4th edition of the Gazette (Upper Marlboro/Forestville) newspaper featured S.I.S.T.A.S. We blessed the Crowder

family this past Christmas through our "Coins for Christmas" drive.

I would be remiss if I didn't honor my ever so great husband Eric, for his love, support and unselfishness! I Love You!

It is my prayer that you will continue with your roles and responsibilities, and that you will grow closer in your mentoring and committee relationships. I also challenge you to grow stronger in the Lord. "Commit your works unto the Lord and your plans will succeed" (Proverbs 16:3).

Welcome new mentees, mentors and volunteers. Enjoy this journey and see God's goodness!

Wendy Gray, Founder and CEO

S.I.S.T.A.S. in the News

S.I.S.T.A.S. featured in Upper Marlboro, MD news section of the Gazette.

"Mentoring program makes a difference for Forestville girls"

By Tiesha Higgins
Staff Writer
Dec. 4, 2003

When Kamilah Baldwin looks in the mirror, the view she sees is very different from what it was two years ago. "I was the type of person that would skip class, curse out teachers and I wasn't doing my homework," said Baldwin.

Today, the 17-year-old junior at Forestville Military Academy is well-mannered, motivated and responsible.

Baldwin credits the changes in her to an Upper Marlboro-based organization called SISTAS, a nonprofit outreach program for girls aged 12 to 17 designed to build self-esteem, reduce teen pregnancy and encourage girls to finish school. Baldwin is one of nine girls in the program at Forestville.

Founded in 1998 by former teacher Wendy Gray, SISTAS stands for Sisters Integrating Staying Together Always Surviving. "It's our hope and our goal to develop the girls into the leaders of tomorrow," said Gray, who has run SISTAS full-time since 2001.

The organization focuses on conflict resolution, leadership, respect, attitude, health,

self-image and community service. For the program, girls are paired with an adult female mentor who calls them weekly and spends quality time with them at least once each month. To create a safe haven for the girls, mentors are required to commit to the program until their mentee graduates from high school.

"We've seen girls that have been so hard to reach and they've learned that there are people you can trust," Gray said of the importance of the mentors.

Gray, an Upper Marlboro resident, personally visits Forestville Military and H.D. Woodson High School in the District weekly for a group session with the girls during their lunch period. The mentors, participants and parents gather once a month for an array of workshops covering topics like self-defense, hair care, sign language and fitness.

Right now the mentors are helping the girls with applications for government summer jobs.

Gray and her husband, Eric, who runs his own clothing line called Ready for Battle, currently fund the organization out of their own pocket -- more than \$400 per month. However, she said they never end up short.

"Whenever you're doing God's work, he will certainly provide a way," she said.

As proof of that, 16 of the girls received

personal computers from Massachusetts-based Raytheon last summer. And the program just received a \$6,000 grant from Bowie State University for a prevention program.

SISTAS mentors said all you have to do is look at the girls to see that the program is working. "Before we working on bullying and aggression, now she's calmed down a lot," said mentor Maya Johnson of her 12-year-old mentee Nineeka.

With a new self-image, Kamilah's changed in other ways too. Tomboyish hairstyles and baggy jeans were her usual attire. Now she styles her hair, wears clothes that fit and says she carries herself differently. "[This program] was a miracle for me," said Kamilah.

For more information on SISTAS, call 301-780-5650 or write to SISTAS, P.O. Box 575, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20773.

Article featured on The Gazette website at www.gazette.net.

Prayer Corner

Written by Tanisha Bazemore

Gracious Father,

I come to you in thanks for this wonderful and glorifying year for without you I would not have had the opportunity to see it through. My God your faith has kept me strong and focused on the duties that you have set for me in S.I.S.T.A.S and throughout my other activities this year.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to give back to the young ladies of S.I.S.T.A.S. by being a committed mentor/mentee/volunteer. My Father you gave me a path and I followed it. Sometimes things may get hard but my God you are my direction, strength and my fortress when I feel lost or weak. You give me the strength to mount up like an eagle and fly again. Continue to use me Lord and give me direction to fulfill my purpose to S.I.S.T.A.S.

Thank you Lord, for the many successes S.I.S.T.A.S. has achieved this year by giving back to the community, young teenagers; and most of all their loving and caring spirits for the girls in our program. My Lord let the love of this program spread throughout our schools, communities, churches and homes that every young girl will want to be a "SISTA."

Let us continue to seek your guidance and fulfill all the visions you have given our protégé for this program. Where we lack knowledge and wisdom my Heavenly Father give it to us that we can seek out your purpose. My Lord throughout this holiday keep us all safe and in remembrance that you, Jesus Christ, is the reason for this season. For you, my Lord is the greatest gift we can have. I love you Lord and may you continue to bless S.I.S.T.A.S. and all those involved.

Amen.

Testimony (as told by Auh'netta Knox of Forestville Military Academy)

"My experience from being in the S.I.S.T.A.S. Mentoring Program has been wonderful, exciting and most of all helpful. I learned a lot by participating in this program. It has helped me to seek self improvement i.e. I have learned how to control my temper and my attitude. I can honestly say that it is something for me to do in my spare time and most of all, it keeps me out of trouble.

The part that interests me most about the program is being able to meet new people. Since I'm on the Planning Committee it gives me the opportunity to voice my opinion about the upcoming events. If I had the opportunity to influence my peers, I would tell them to join the program. What interest me the most about this program is that only positive things can come from being in this program. Oh yeah, and plus my father likes it to and it's hard to please him."

For Your Information...

•The Underprivileged Kids Foundation is giving away Food and Clothes every 1st and 3rd Saturday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, to anyone in need. Please contact Mr. John Kemp, 7221 East Ride Drive (MLK Blvd, Rte 704), Landover, MD.

Announcing the launching of Sistasmentoring.org.



Visit us and get up-to-date information on S.I.S.T.A.S. happenings!

S.I.S.T.A.S. in the Know: Interesting Black History Facts

What is now known as **Black History Month** was first celebrated as a weeklong observation, Negro History Week, beginning February 1, 1926. It was created by educator and historian, Carter G. Woodson to educate blacks and whites about the contributions of African-Americans to American life and culture. In 1971, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History expanded the celebration from the second week in February to the entire month.

On February 1, 1960, four students from North Carolina A&T College started a sit-in movement at a Greensboro, NC, five-and-dime store to protest social injustice and segregation. By February 10, the movement had spread to 15 Southern cities in five states.

Ralph J. Bunche became the first Black person awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1950

James Weldon Johnson and **James Rosamond Johnson** composed "The Black National Anthem," *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, 1900

Madame C. J. Walker, hair care and cosmetics pioneer is the first Black female millionaire

Fannie M. Jackson, educator was the first Black female college graduate in the United States

Back-to-School Pool Party!!

Submitted by Kimberly Simmons

On September 27, dedicated mentors, volunteers, and nine girls between the ages of 12 and 17 gathered at the home of Mrs. Arnita Shelton for a Hawaiian-style, back-to-school pool party.



Although it wasn't the warmest day in September, you'd never know it. Everything from the smell of hot dogs grilling to the smiling, happy faces alongside the pool to

the sounds of gospel music filling the air said that it was summertime. Yet, the day was about more than the celebration of the summer...it was about fellowship.



Following the backyard barbecue, hours of swimming, and loads of fun and laughter, each girl was presented with a gift, a small stuffed animal, a token of love and sisterhood to remember the day by.

Extra special and heartfelt thanks to Ms. Shelton for opening up her home to the S.I.S.T.A.S. family for this wonderful fellowship event!



Holiday Gift Baskets Fellowship Event



On Friday, December 12th, about 45 mentors, mentees, volunteers and members of the FBCG Praise and Worship Ministry came out for a special fellowship. With blessings from the FBCG P&W Ministry and Dollar Tree, the mentees were able to make beautiful Holiday Gift Baskets for their special love ones. A sense of joy and excitement filled the air as the girls learned that they were actually able to do something nice for those who have done so many wonderful things for them over the years.

Before the actual basket making began, we enjoyed good food, music, conversation and a video from the fashion show. Many of the baskets were filled with scented candles, picture frames, scented lotions, bubble bath and sponge lofas to name a few. After the baskets were made, each girl went home with a little goodie bag herself. Each mentee received an "Armed and Dangerous" devotional book, which the mentors and volunteers spent quality time learning about God's Word. Through the teachings, understanding and prayer, the girls are now able to refer to this powerful book for ways to resolve issues and conflicts.

Coins for Christmas—Crowder Family Christmas



"Tis' the season give" is what God loves from His children! This Christmas, we were able to bless the Crowder family with clothes, board games, video games, home arcade games, coats, money, books, a gift certificate, bikes (S.I.S.T.A.S. and Underprivileged Kids Foundation), a computer (Ms. Denise Joseph and Raytheon), and beds (Ms. Brenda Chapman and Ms. Vivian). Ms. Crowder received several job leads, and is very optimistic.

Ms. Crowder's sacrifices, humility and obedience to God entitled her children to enjoy a wonderful Christmas. We are thankful that we were able to bless a family that is truly in need, and pray that the Lord will continue to place us in a position of giving to those who are less fortunate. I believe that God blesses this ministry, because we love to help others!

Upcoming Events/Activities



Professional Development and Fellowship Calendar

December 2003	Holiday Gift Baskets	FBCG
January 24, 2004	CPR and First Aid	Hyattsville Library
February 28, 2004	Custom Designs and Sewing	Largo-Kettering Library
March 15-19, 2004	Tobacco Prevention Week	Forestville Military Academy
March 27, 2004	Sign Language	TBA
April 24, 2004	Career Day—Effective Communication	TBA
May 9, 2004	Mother's Day Event	La Fontaine Bleu
June 2004	Summer Retreat	Williamsburg, VA



November Birthdays

Wendy Gray (CEO-Founder) 11/12
 Renee Sumpter (Mentor) 11/27
 Erica Williams (Volunteer) 11/07

December Birthdays

Tanisha Bazemore (Mentor) 12/15
 Dana Jones (Mentees) 12/13
 Sharmicka Wilson (Mentee) 12/19

January Birthdays

Nineeka Phillips (Mentee) 01/10
 Rachel Cooper (Mentee) 01/21
 Renee Wright (Mentor) 01/07

And a belated Happy Birthday to those who celebrated in the months of July, August, September and October.



Kidz Corner

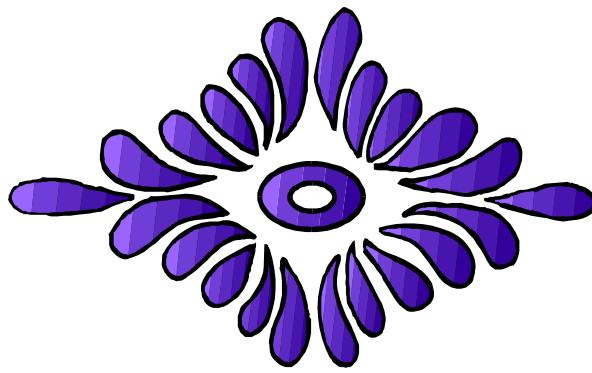
FAMOUS BLACK AMERICANS

Sojourner Truth
 Charles Drew
 Jackie Robinson
 Harriet Tubman
 Duke Ellington
 Clyde McPhatter
 Bill Pickett
 Allison Davis
 Erroll Garner
 Thelonious Monk

V	U	K	N	O	M	S	U	O	I	N	O	L	E	H	T	S	G	T	D
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E	H	U	N	O	S	B	R	F	Y	J	D	E	S	L	C	L	N	U	S
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Y	A	L	L	I	S	O	N	D	A	V	I	S	O	B	J	R	E	L	L
D	U	N	D	N	O	S	N	I	B	O	R	E	I	K	C	A	J	J	C

Henry Tanner
 W.E.B. DuBois
 Martin Luther King
 Ernest Just
 Jesse Owens
 Benjamin Banneker
 MA Reiney
 Nat King Cole
 Joe Louis
 Scott Joplin

Editor-In-Chief: Ana M. Threatt • Supervising Editor: Erika Lee • Copy Editor: Kimberly Simmons • Production Coordinator: Erica L. Williams • Staff Writer: Tanisha Bazemore



To Wendy,

Woman of Faith

*Exuberant beauty and grace
Ever increasing as years pass.
You are a woman of substance,
Elegance, and class.*

*You are a woman with a purpose
Designed by the Heavenly Creator.*

*Today we honor you
And lift your name in prayer.
May you be indulged in His blessings,*

*Embraced by His love,
Showered with His mercies,
Raining down from above.*

*All these things we pray for you
In the midst of your current trials
And the heartache you're going through.*

*So when you don't believe you'll make it through the test,
Remember you are a woman of faith
Release, let go, and let God handle the rest.*

*Written especially for you by L.N. English
On behalf of the S.I.S.T.A.S. Newsletter Committee*



In order of appearance (From Left to Right):
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Production Coordinator: Erica L. Williams
Supervising Editor: Erika Lee (not pictured)