

PEOPLE

‘Snow Ball’ fetes Gifford youths believing and achieving

BY MARY SCHENKEL
Staff Writer

Eloquent ambassadors of the Gifford Youth Achievement Center charmed guests at the GYAC Snow Ball last Saturday evening at the Oak Harbor Clubhouse, thanking supporters and sharing their future hopes and dreams. After mingling with the students during a cocktail hour, guests enjoyed a delicious dinner and learned about expansion plans for the nonprofit, which opened its doors in 1998.

Freddie Woolfork, Public Relations & Facility Operations director, said that Chairman Emeritus Dr. A. Ronald Hudson, with the late Dan K. Richardson and Rev. Dr. William Nigh, sought to counter an African-American graduation rate that had plummeted from 92 percent in 1969, when Gifford High School was a segregated school, to 23 percent in 1996.

Through numerous community-wide collaborations and the efforts of GYAC teachers, mentors and



Suzanne and Adam Bolinger. PHOTOS: MARY SCHENKEL

volunteers, students are learning through afterschool and summer camp programs, and members of the community are offered a wide range of intergenerational activities.

“Today, 21 years later, we’re still focusing on education,” said Woolfork, thanking supporters for their financial backing and trust in GYAC. “It really takes teamwork to make the dream work. And that dream has helped us to raise that 23 percent

graduation rate to 81.9 percent.”

Poised and articulate, Angela Bruckner, a junior at Indian River Charter High School who hopes to become a culinary artist, shared a typical day as a GYAC ‘Dream Chaser,’ noting that after getting a snack, “I do my homework. I get help, I give help; I get experience, I give experience, and whatever advice I might have in my 17 years of life.”

Thanking GYAC staff for their efforts, she added, “I have a long way to go. I’ve come a long way, and I wouldn’t be here without them.”

“We know how powerful and life-changing it can be for students who participate at GYAC,” said executive director Angelia Perry. She said that in 2016 the board opted to address having to annually turn away upwards of 60 students due to space limitations, and thanked supporters for enabling GYAC to expand their transformational work through the construction of a 14,000-square-foot addition.

“Tonight what I’m proud to an-

nounce to all of you is the Gifford Youth Achievement Center Dream Weaver Campaign,” said Scott Alexander, honorary campaign chairman. In addition to a \$5 million goal to support construction, technology and three years of expenses, they also want to establish an additional \$2 million endowment to provide long-term financial support. “What I’m happy to report to all of you, is that against that \$5 million goal, we’ve already raised \$4.5 million. It’s definitely true what they say: great things happen inside the doors of GYAC.”

After a brief video highlighting GYAC student achievements, Todd Fennell, board chairman, said, “I think you can see, there is so much excitement about what GYAC has accomplished, what it’s done in the past, but most importantly, where it’s going in the future. It’s not just the facility today and it’s not just the kids today. This is an investment for the long term.”

For more information, visit gyac.net. ■



Parkinson’s Awareness Conference

Monday, February 11, 2019
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM



Featuring guest speakers:
Alison Kraus, PT, DPT, NCS
Board Certified Neurologic
Physical Therapist
UF Health Rehab at Fixel Center
for Neurological Diseases



Lisa Warren, MHS, OTR/L
Site Manager
UF Health Rehab at Fixel Center
for Neurological Diseases

Day of Hope Caregiver Conference

Tuesday, February 12, 2019
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Featuring guest speaker:
Vicki Drumheller, MS, RN, BC, CCM

In addition, the afternoon session
will feature speakers from the
Alzheimer & Parkinson Association;
A Healthier Me Health & Fitness Studio;
Bay Street Pharmacy; and Yoga By Nicole



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PEOPLE



Freddie Woolfork and Angelia Perry (back) with Augustin Deleon and Jhovanny Vite (front).



Alicia Maneiro, Trudie Rainone and Jasmine Davis.



Myles Gill, Angela Buckner, Tatiana Wallace and Stacy Gill.



Todd and Kathy Fennell with Elizabeth and Dane Ullian.



Brian Curley, Louise Kennedy and Andrew Kennedy.



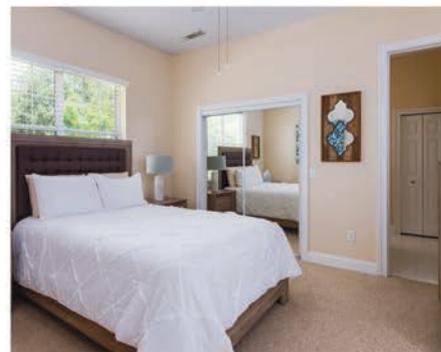
John and Carla Matthews with Elke and George Fetterolf.



Eddie Hudson and Maj. Eric Flowers.

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