

Happenings...

- Welcome students of Ortona Elementary School to the Great Kids family!
- Great Kids opened its Tutoring Center in November, 2004. Children are bused from three local elementary schools to participate in the "I Can Read" program. Children work one-on-one with a tutor in addition to using "Hooked on Phonics" computers programs.
- Farewell and Good Luck to Carl Fremaux who is moving. 'GRAMPS' (his 'title' at Great Kids) has been a faithful mentor for more than five years.

Our Tribute to Gramps

*One hundred years from now,
it will not matter what kind of
car you drove, what kind of
house you lived in, how much
was in your bank account, nor
what your clothes looked like.
But the world may be a little
better because you were
important in the life of a child.*

(author unknown)



At right is a photo taken in our new computer lab, located at 50 S. Yonge Street (across from Sparkle and Shine Car Wash) in Ormond Beach.



The Quest

Reaching and connecting with at-risk children in a way that develops their minds, bodies, and souls.



A Publication of Great Kids Explorer Club

Jan. 2004

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Look What You Did!

You helped Great Kids provide over 250 Christmas gifts and 77 Holiday Food baskets.

A Parent Shares...

Last summer, following the beach baptism of her daughter, a Great Kids mom shared her faith story with Sandy. As they sat on a beach bench together, she was overflowing with emotions.

She and her family had moved here from New York after the September 11th World Trade Center explosions. Her husband was a delivery driver, working primarily in the business district. On that particular day he was to make a delivery to the World Trade Center. But due to an accident (he spilled coffee on himself), he had to go home and change his uniform, thus his life was spared.

They would soon have another mouth to feed, and it was already difficult to provide for their family. They packed everything they could fit into the family car and headed to Florida, where a friend would put them up until they got on their feet. They landed jobs and enrolled their two girls in school. Things were starting to look up. But then, pregnancy complications erupted... the baby was stillborn. This put her over the edge. The young mother was angry with God. She knew He existed, but didn't think He was there for her. The girls were having a hard time adjusting, and were referred to Great Kids. By this time Christmas was just around the corner.

One night the distraught mother found herself looking out over the ocean, asking... "God, *WHY?*" She knew she should be thankful—after all, her husband was alive, but she couldn't get past the pain of losing the baby. As she stood on the sand, looking up at the sky, she saw a sign—a shooting star. When she returned home, she was told someone from Great Kids had called and they would be delivering a Holiday dinner and gifts for the girls, including bicycles for both girls (thanks to a generous toy donation).

As we sat together now, watching several Great Kids playing in the surf, she shared how that act of kindness and love helped to restore her faith...

that God loved her too. This is an example of what Great Kids is all about... *relationship and love.*



A BIG Thank You to Our Supporters!

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Our Volunteers Make The Difference!



Our volunteers work in a structured program to help children improve in reading, math, and study skills, as well as learn how to work together as a team.

Becoming Beautiful Doing God's Work

Insights by Carol Cuppett, a Great Kids volunteer for more than five years

I have been a mentor for Great Kids for six years. I have grown and learned lots about kids in those years. Sometimes I got discouraged and wanted to quit, but God was always pushing and never let me go. He knew how much I loved children and how much a smile on a child's face could light up my day. So here I am, six years later, serving and still loving it. It's not all smiles and hugs though. It's tough work and sometimes quite challenging. But the joy that we can bring to a troubled child's life makes up for all the difficult times.

To tell you a little about what these six years have been like, I would like to share an entry from my journal. This writing is inspired by daily assigned scriptural reading and has been a remarkable journey with Christ. "And I want women to get in there with the men in humility before God, not primping before a mirror or choosing the latest fashions, but doing something beautiful for God and becoming beautiful doing it." I Timothy 2, from *The Message*

"I'm not a 'primper' God, and you know I don't chase the latest fashions... but often when I go to worship I do catch myself primping and worrying that I'll not fit in or look right. How often do I ask my husband, Jim, 'Does this look okay?'"

I'll never forget my first trip on the bus to church. It was crowded and Jim and I had to sit separately. I sat down with a well-dressed women and said hello. Trying to initiate a conversation, I said "someone has some really nice perfume. It smells wonderful." With an arrogance and curtness that shut me up for the rest of the trip, she answered, "It's just cheap cologne, if you ask me." So much for trying to make conversation! I was put in my *place*.

But at Great Kids, I never feel uncomfortable about how I look or what I wear. The most important thing is for me is to be there... "doing something beautiful for God and becoming beautiful doing it." And I think I am "becoming beautiful" as I work through my selfishness and become more humble and patient. I am learning to relax and enjoy time with the kids.

I still have a long way to go, but God is with me, and I am becoming more beautiful as He molds me into His humble servant. Thank you God for your patience and thank you Great Kids for giving me a special place to grow in my love for Christ.



My Great Kids Great 'Leap of Faith'

Insights by Judy Monaco,
a volunteer for more than four years

Early in 2001, Great Kids Explorer Club became incorporated and received its tax-exempt status from the IRS. Knowing my previous involvement with volunteer organizations and limited grant writing experience and armed with my "spiritual gifts" results, the Director of Lay Ministry at First United Methodist, Sherry McElveen, invited me to join her for lunch. I was to meet Sandy Rakes and learn more about the Great Kids Explorer Club. At the conclusion of lunch, Sherry asked me to get involved by assisting Sandy, then a volunteer, to build up a board of directors and apply for some funding grants.

After a crash course in what Great Kids was all about and witnessing the unflagging enthusiasm of "Miss Sandy" and "Miss Donna", I was hooked on the program. It was as though God drew me to this new adventure, kicking and screaming because "I had too many other things to do." Those early years were the lean years, where I would lay awake at night worrying about where the next nickel would come from to pay the expenses. Sandy kept telling me, "God would provide," and boy was she right! I will never forget the board meeting where we voted to hire Sandy at half pay and increase Donna to full pay. "Where would the money come from?" But we, as a board, took that leap of faith.

And look where that leap of faith has taken us. We have expanded to four centers, have our own administrative offices, community and state recognition, and a budget of more than \$120,000. Over the last four years I have experienced many revelations about Great Kids. Foremost is God's undying love and support, providing us with resources to expand Great Kids to reach more children and their families.

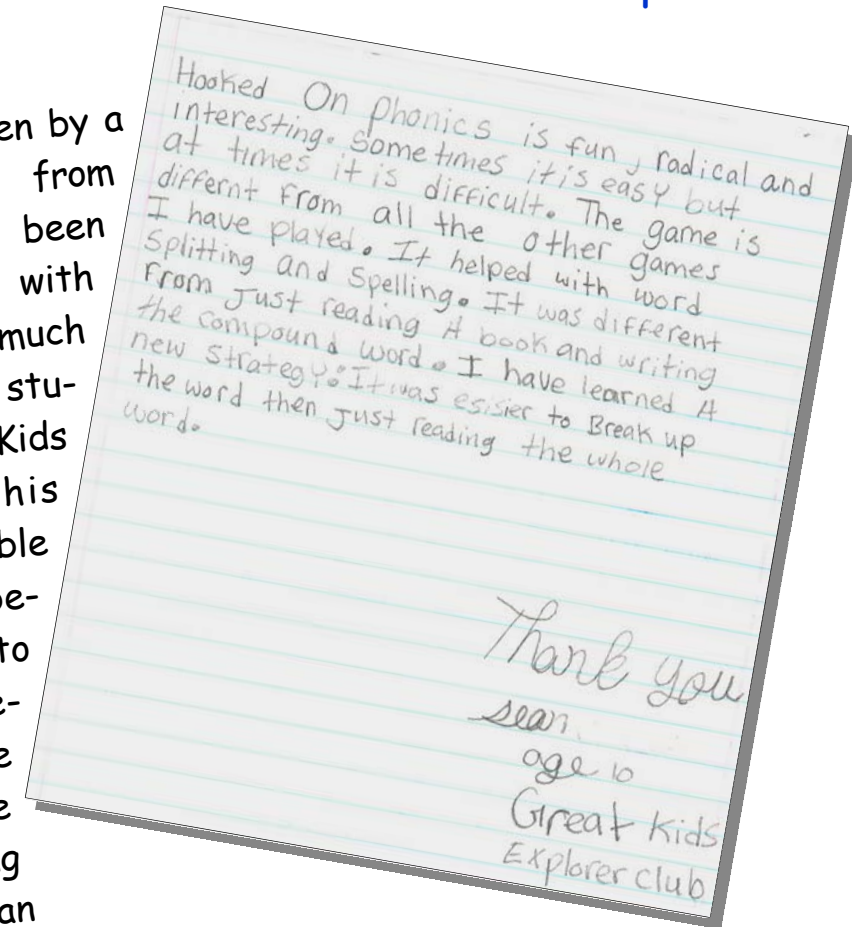
Secondly, I have witnessed the generosity of many faithful believers in what Great Kids is doing in our community, not only through the dedicated volunteers who work directly with the children week after week, but also the many persons who support the organization financially.

Thirdly, I have come to know two super ladies, Sandy and Donna, whose vision and hard work have made Great Kids what it is today. I have 'morphed' from the 'doubting Thomas' to an enthusiastic supporter of the vision and mission of Great Kids, and each day thank God He moved my heart to say "yes" to that invitation for lunch four years ago.



A Great Kid Speaks...

This letter was written by a 3rd grade student from Osceola who had been struggling greatly with reading. Through much hard work by the student, the Great Kids tutors, and his teacher, he was able to go from a 'D' below-grade-level, to a 'B' on-grade-level, in just one year. On a scale of 0-5, (5 being the best) Sean scored a 4 on the FCAT last school year in the 'reading' category. He has since 'graduated' out of the program.*



*Sean's proud grandmother was quite happy to share this information with our readers!