

# NetworkNews

FALL 2010



Creating Positive Change for Responsible Living<sup>®</sup>

The Village Network is a private, non-profit, non-denominational organization serving hundreds of boys and girls daily. It was established in 1946 as Boys' Village.

## TVN youth digging their fair award

This is the third year TVN-Boys' Village Campus Day Treatment guys entered a garden club exhibit at the Wayne County Fair and it turned out to be a charm. The group earned the first-place blue ribbon.

"The result is their effort from start to finish," said **Brooke Winkler**, Clinical Therapist for the Day Treatment Program. "They sat down with garden books ... they did the planning. They moved plants around and rearranged the garden until they were completely satisfied with the way it looked."

The garden therapy program has grown over the past three years with the help and dedication of the TVN staff and generous foundation gifts. The Charity School of Kendal, Massillon, Ohio, provided the seed money for the edging program which began with two gardens on the Wooster campus. Grant dollars from The Austin-Bailey Health & Wellness Foundation, Canton, Ohio, and Best Buy Children's Foundation built the Sanford "Stoney" Stonebraker greenhouse.

Today, garden therapy is a year-round program and the greenhouse serves as a working lab to teach job skills in addition to its therapeutic opportunity. Most of the youth have no previous gardening experience, according to Winkler, and some balk at working in the dirt at first, "but it grows on them."

**Bayrel**, 17, was not a fan of getting dirty but he soon discovered "it was fun." He added it was good to win something through work and not through fighting.

**Anthony**, 14, viewed the fair project as something different and looked forward to doing it. He also called the garden club prize a great accomplishment. **Matt**, 17, was proud of the finished garden. "I think it was really different. I've never seen anything like the pattern we did. It was pretty fun to work on it," Matt said.

"The teens in The Village Network's day treatment program have earned a new kind of street cred, one that comes with a blue winners' ribbon."

— Rachel Jackson, Staff Writer, *The Daily Record*



Shrubs loaned from *Deborah's Garden Market* and accessories borrowed from friends' homes help complete the project on a shoestring budget. TVN staff purchased the remaining plants.

### SERVICES

- Residential
- Day Treatment
- Treatment Foster Care
- Community Based
- Alternative Schooling

### LOCATIONS

- Akron
- Canton
- Cleveland
- Columbus
- Delaware
- Lorain
- Mount Vernon
- Newark
- Sandusky
- Uhrichsville
- Wooster

## Dale Edward Thompson

Boys' Village Administrator  
1954-1984

*"Heroes are people who rise to the occasion and slip quietly away."  
– Tom Brokaw*



Dale Edward Thompson passed away at Grant Hospital, Columbus, on Sept. 11, 2010, at the age of 91. It seems fitting Dale left us on a day Americans honor and remember heroes.

"Dale was an 'old school' guy. He believed in getting the basics right and all else will follow," recalled **Bill Schultz**, Dale's successor at TVN. "He built us a strong foundation."

Dale's career with The Village Network, then Boys' Village, began in the 1950s when he took a job as Home Life Director. In 1962, he was named the administrator. During his leadership tenure, he established Boys' Village as the statewide facility serving troubled boys.

TVN had one location, Wooster, and the only program was a residential program. Most of the six cottages on campus today were built during Dale's tenure as chief executive along with the original school. Dale and his wife, Harlene, lived on campus with the boys.

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## Latest career change answers principal's prayers

**Frank Surace** retired after 36 years inside Ohio's school system – 22 of them as a principal. Today, he is the Administrator/Principal for The Village Network-Akron location. What brought him back into the thick of it?

"Faith brought me here," smiled Surace. "I prayed 'put me where I'm needed' and here I am. This is a ministry for me."

TVN works with local school districts at each location. Surace is part of the Summit County Education Service Center and is accountable to Coventry Local Schools. He oversees the education of the boys and girls in the residential program at TVN-Akron. His experience in the education field and in his personal life make him a perfect fit according to **Chuck Baldwin**, Program Director in Akron.

After retiring, Surace took a church trip to Haiti. The visit was a game-changer for him. He refers to it as a "major eye-opener."

"Kids were living in huts, cooking on outdoor BBQ grills, playing with things and toys we would toss in the garbage," he said. "And there was joy. There was peace. There was happiness. It certainly changed my perspective on life."

The troubled and abused youth inside the TVN programs are usually a year or so behind their normal studies. They are angry and distrustful. Teaching them the value of an education is not the first order of business, according to Surace. Developing a rapport and earning their trust must come first.

"The program works," he said. "The school piece and the therapist piece work well together. It is right-on for the situation."

Surace admits some days are harder than others and there are confrontational times, but that is where his years of experience as a principal come in handy. Keeping the kids on track and teaching the importance of "the next level" are keys to working with all middle and high school students, not just this group, he added.

The highlight of his career with TVN was June's graduation ceremony. Surace and his team of four teachers and two tutors, along with the program staff, held a full- edged graduation ceremony complete with music, gowns, caps and student speeches.

"We had the full pomp and circumstance, and we invited everyone," smiled Surace. "We had parents, siblings, special guests and staff. And I have never heard more sincere or inspiring speeches."

The TVN-Akron graduates are part of the 30-plus boys and girls across all the TVN programs receiving high school diplomas this past year. The agency's graduation rate was 92.7% – nearly twice the national average. One Akron graduate was one of a few TVN students going on to college.



"Everything I do here with these kids I've done before in my career," Surace said with conviction. "Tough kids, academic challenges, ones that crossed the boundaries are in every neighborhood. Here, they get the opportunity to go back, to have a better life."

The Ball of Knowledge is the brainchild of teacher Beverly Oaks. When the kids answer correctly at review time, the paper is taped to the ball. This is the fourth year for the Ball of Knowledge and the biggest one to date! Mrs. Oaks is still searching for a plastic case large enough to hold it.

## Cassie's story – a family reunited

Cassie's life story is not unusual. It's a narrative often heard. It's one of dysfunctional families, early pregnancy, abuse and drinking problems. But this one has a happy ending. Today, Cassie is living in an Amethyst Program home in Columbus, and her children are with her.

**Cassie**, a recovering alcoholic, is the mother of four children. Her children shuffled from family member to family member and in and out of foster care. Cassie knew the chances of raising her children were not good. With the urging of a friend, Cassie finally accepted she had a serious problem and needed professional help.

She entered the Amethyst Program. Amethyst provides gender-specific alcohol and drug treatment combined with supportive housing for homeless women.

Cassie's children went under the protection of Franklin County Children Services and entered The Village Network Community-Based Foster Care Program in Columbus two years ago. The purpose of TVN's Community-Based Program is to keep siblings together in stable foster care while working with the entire family to achieve permanent arrangements.

"Our primary goal is to help birth parents and families learn, grow, heal and change in ways to enable them to achieve healthy family interaction and patterns of living," said Susie Parr, TVN-South Regional Director. "Our foster families are trained as an extension of the biological family and serve as a mentor and model for birth families."

TVN's unique foster care program combines concepts from the Hull House Association Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program and the agency's model of Treatment Foster Care, according to Parr. For Cassie, it was the answer to her prayers.

Cassie reported she no longer felt alone and isolated. For the first time, she felt an agency really wanted to help her get her children back. She was invited to join the foster family at community events and outings with her children and the foster mom gave her ideas on discipline. She asked for advice and support from TVN staff and entered family therapy to work on problems.

"We were all so happy to be together," recalled Cassie. "My children started looking different once they had hope



they could come home. Even their skin color looked better."

In July, Cassie's first child joined her in the transitional housing program, called RSVP, provided by Amethyst. The rest of her children joined her in September. RSVP is one of the only transitional housing programs in Columbus for women.

With the family united, Cassie and the children are excited about their future. The family will stay under the support of the Amethyst Program, while Cassie attends a two-year college to study holistic health. TVN will stay involved and provide counseling for a minimum of six months or longer.

"There will always be hurdles. But now I know how to get over them and I have confidence I can be a good mother," she said with a smile.

## Fighting Scots tackle campus weeds

Over 100 College of Wooster incoming freshman, the "Fighting Scots," pulled weeds and cleaned up the landscaping at TVN-Boys' Village Campus as part of their college Orientation Service Project. TVN was one of five area non-profits chosen by the college for the freshman community service program.

TVN has been privileged to work with volunteers for over 30 years. At the most recent volunteer luncheon, Executive Director **James T. Miller** thanked the group of men and women for supporting the mission and for their ownership in promoting responsible living and positive change in troubled children.

He also announced the agency's hiring of a full-time volunteer coordinator to maximize the strength of group and expand the membership to additional TVN locations. The opportunity to engage the communities to help provide hope for at-risk boys and girls drew **David Wilson** to the position. He started in September.

Wilson brings years of experience in the non-profit leadership field with knowledge in alumni relations and volunteer services. His first task at TVN is to provide a pathway for volunteers that will match talents and expertise with specific need at the locations.



Students take a water break during the recent College of Wooster Volunteer Day.

If you are interesting in learning how your talents can directly and indirectly assist TVN's mission, contact David at **[dwilson@thevillagenetwork.com](mailto:dwilson@thevillagenetwork.com)** or **330.202.3811**. As the program develops, more information will be available on the website at **[thevillagenetwork.org](http://thevillagenetwork.org)**.



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## Dale Edward Thompson

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"In those early days you knew all the staff and all the kids," added Schultz. "Administrators were involved in teaching and recreational activities back then."

The stories of how Dale personally reached out to the boys are too numerous to count according to current Executive Director **James T. Miller**.

"Many of our Boys' Village alumni attribute Dale Thompson as literally saving their lives," added Miller.

Dale's commitment and service continued into his retirement years. He continued to participate in TVN celebrations and activities – especially the golf outing. He loved golf!

Dale's presence on campus is still visible and not just in the old photos that line the walls in the Administration Building. The original school still stands and is currently under renovation.

Thanks to the generosity of individual donors, service clubs and foundations, the original cottages are updated and refurbished. The Thompson family house now serves as one of the cottages.

Dale was an eyewitness to the growth of the agency. He watched with pride as it matured into today's organization of 11 networks serving boys and girls in residential, day treatment, treatment foster care and alternative school.

TVN's evolution into an award-winning child treatment agency is a testimony to the courage and dedication of our predecessors like Dale. And it is the result of hard work and devotion of today's team of professionals, our Board and generous supporters.

Dale's family has graciously established The Village Network as one of the official recipients of memorial gifts. TVN will create an on-grounds memorial from Dale and his friends to the youth at TVN by building a fishing deck at the bass pond on Boys' Village Campus, Wooster.

Join us in creating the fishing deck by mailing donations to **The Village Network, Box 518, Smithville, Ohio 44677**. In the memo line, please note *Dale Thompson Memorial*. Secure, online donations are accepted at **thevillagenetwork.org** under the *You Can Help* tab at the top of the page.

Thank you for your consideration and generosity.