

TRANSFORMED

January 2025

The Magic Behind Christmas

Repacking Christmas presents for Alkulana campers and their siblings is truly an experience filled with gratitude and humility. What moves me isn't the bags filled with gifts, the amount of behind-the-scenes coordination required on the part of many dedicated individuals, or even the chaos that inevitably comes with the whole experience. Each year, I am more and more aware of two things. First, parents have entrusted us with the care of their Christmas morning, with the responsibility of making it special for their little ones, which is an honor and a privilege. Second, someone took time and resources out of their busy day to Christmas shop for a child they've never met. Those two things never fail to amaze me.

As we sit amongst the bags and bags of gifts, we go through each one. We double check clothing sizes and we ensure siblings from the same family are getting similar amounts of presents, and we repack the gifts into large, Christmas themed bags. We also mention each child by name, thinking back on memories of them from camp in the summer. One of the joys of doing this is that we know most of the children who will be receiving the gifts, so we can imagine their joy opening them on Christmas morning. The families don't typically ask for much. The wish lists are simple and clear. A winter coat is a common request, or a new blanket or pillow. Some ask for a video game, others just want a gift card so they can pick something out for themselves. It's easy to take these things for granted. If I needed a new blanket for my bed, I would simply go out and buy it, and I forget too often how privileged I am to be able to do that.

As I read one wish list this year, I was surprised. The little girl whom the list was for didn't want a toy, or art supplies, or a video game. She wanted a dress. And as I unpacked the bag of gifts for her, I pulled out the most beautiful little dress, bundled carefully in tissue paper, perfect for any occasion. I found myself tearing up, thinking of how happy she would be on Christmas morning when she unwrapped this dress that had been so carefully picked out for her. Someone who has never met her, and likely never will, took the time and care to do that for her.

If you've ever taken the time to shop for a child at Christmas, whether it's through the River City Faith Network, through your church, or through other community programs with the same goal, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I truly can't say it enough times. Through the support of so many people in the Greater Richmond community, we were able to provide gifts for many families, all of whom will be touched by the care you've provided for their children. You may never know the true impact that this has on a family, but it is greater than you could imagine. You aren't just buying gifts, you're becoming part of the magic behind Christmas, and you're building a memory for a family that they will cherish for a lifetime.



Kate Wakeland, Camp Alkulana LEAD's Coordinator



RCFN Christmas JOY

**413 Children
150+ Families
34 Churches
and YOU!!!**

Connecting with our River City Faith Network Leadership

*Introducing our Board, Committee and
Support Team Members*

Pamela D. Vaughan (Pam)

Church Hill Christian Wellness Center
Support Team Chairperson



I am a divorced single parent of a 30-year-old daughter (Ashley). I have been employed by VCU for the past 25 years and hope to retire next year. I worked for AT&T for 17 years prior to going to VCU. I love helping others and have made missions a part of my life. As a child growing up in the small town of Emporia, VA, I dreamed of being a missionary until I realized there was no income involved, but that did not deter me from helping others as much as I could.

As a member of Mount Tabor Baptist Church for 30 years, I have served as the missions' coordinator and participated in a range of activities. I have also served on the finance ministry, usher's ministry and youth ministry. One of my proudest accomplishments is organizing the adoption of a Somalian family to Mount Tabor Baptist Church in December 2004. I nurtured this family for the past 20 years and consider them a part of my family. I became a surrogate mother and grandmother to them and their children. I've watched them graduate high school, college and start their own families. I am happy to have given my only daughter the siblings that she always wanted.

I have been involved with RBA, now RCFN, for over 20 years working with 3 other CHCWC Directors but none like my "Bestie" Rev. Glinda Ford. I was happy when asked to join the support team that was being formed to assist the directors of the centers. Since I have participated in the Back to School, Christmas Store (Christmas Joy), Bible Study and other community activities over the years, I have developed relationships with members of other congregations and the patrons that benefit from the services provided at the center. I wholeheartedly believe that the Church Hill community has been blessed to have a center of this nature to assist during some of the most challenging times. Working alongside other team members and having an opportunity to be hands on gives me much joy. Seeing the faces of smiling kids and adults when they feel that someone sees and cares about their wellbeing is priceless. It allows me to fulfill my childhood dream.

CONNECTING OUR LIGHT

Missional Collaboration and Community among our RCFN Churches



As we begin the New Year, we look forward to gathering our church leaders and volunteers to create and develop opportunities for collaboration and community. We will take your suggestions from our Annual Meeting conversations and put our efforts toward food security, housing, mental health, generational ministry collectives and the peace and welfare of our city. If you were unable to join us for our Annual Meeting discussions and are interested in participating in the conversation, please contact us at office@rbaonline.org or 804.329.1701.

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Electronic Service Requested

*Working together until
Metro Richmond is...*

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JANUARY 2025



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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
RICHMOND, VA.
Permit No. 3022

JANUARY 2025

Dates to Remember

Jan 1	Holiday - Offices Closed
Jan 7	Staff Meeting
Jan 11	Gracie Kirkpatrick Memorial
Jan 11	CHCWC Support Team mtg
Jan 14	OHBC Support Team mtg
Jan 14	Camp Support Team mtg
Jan 21	RCFN Board mtg
Jan 25	SRBC Support Team mtg

Blessings for the Journey

We are grateful for the ministries of

Rev. Terry Sharpe, Senior Pastor

Hatcher Memorial Baptist Church

Pastor Sharpe has served churches across VA for nearly 5 decades,
including planting Western Hanover Church.

and

Rev. Dr. Jim Townsend, Pastor to Senior Adults

Huguenot Road Baptist Church

Dr. Townsend has served among our Richmond area churches for
more than 25 years in discipleship ministries.

Thank you for your presence among us and we wish you the best
in your new season of retirement ministry!

OUR SINCEREST SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF

Mr. John Hughes

Husband to Susan Hughes, who serves as RCFN Ministry Placement Committee Chairperson and Board Member.
His memorial service was held at Richmond's First Baptist Church on December 21st.