

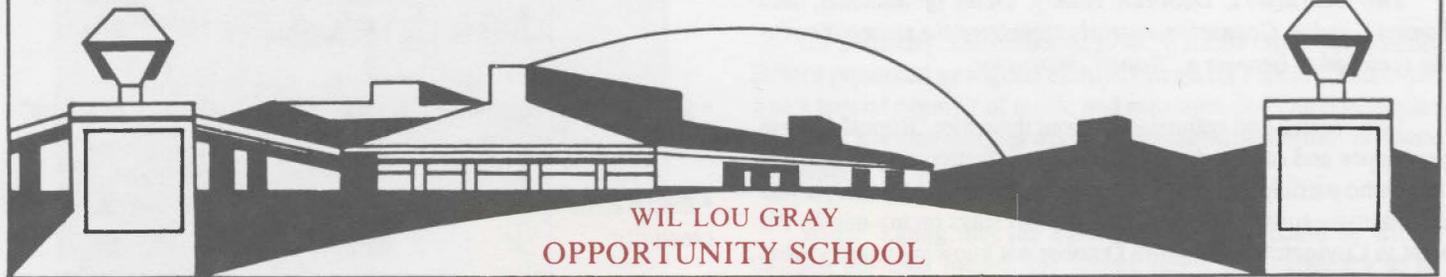
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# THE R & T SPOTLIGHT



WIL LOU GRAY  
OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL

Number 9

RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER

Fall/Winter 1991

(1990)

## *Students Learn The "Ropes" At Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School*



A Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School student climbs onto a horizontal beam in the outdoor "Ropes" course and wonders what other challenges he will face. For more information about the Opportunity School or scheduling off campus groups for the "Ropes" course contact Deborah Haney or Tammy Gordon, (803) 822-5480.

### **The Opportunity School Opens An Adventure Course Geared To Help At-Risk Students**

The Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School has constructed and opened a quality "Ropes" course devoted to helping at-risk youth across the state. The course, located in a beautiful wooded setting on the school's property, presents a series of challenges to individual participants. The course construction was funded by the South Carolina Chapter 61 of the Telephone Pioneers of America, a national volunteer organization made up of Southern Bell and AT&T telecommunications employees.

The "Ropes" concept challenges students both physically and intellectually and promotes trust and team building activities. Students work as a team to move through the course made up of horizontal beams, free spinning ladders, trapeze jumps, a trust fall platform and a number of other obstacles. One of the most challenging parts of the course is a 12-foot smooth wooden wall. The objective is to efficiently get the entire group up and over the wall.

Deborah Haney, Dean of Students at Wil Lou Gray and one of the trained course instructors, describes this type of outdoor course as being one of the best ways to reach at-risk students. Haney has seen remarkable changes in students who participate in the "Ropes" experience. "Students who complete the course find that they can go beyond their expectations and learn in a short period of time to trust their teammates," says Haney. "All we ask is that each individual come and give us their personal best."

# On The "Ropes"

By Tammy Gordon

*Two instructors, Deborah Haney, Dean of Students, and Tammy Gordon, Counselor, recently completed the rigorous training required to become a "Ropes" instructor.*

I am excited and enthusiastic about the entire "Ropes" Course experience and can hardly wait to see satisfaction on the faces of those who participate in these activities. Of course, for me, it was the extensive training for certification that stays on my mind. We went to Covington, Georgia in October not knowing exactly what to expect but came away from it all with a keen sense of self and a high degree of satisfaction. We came together with the other instructors as total strangers and ended up as staunch supporters and friends.

It was the getting to know each other, regardless of background, strengths or weaknesses that proved to be the most fun. Braving the elements, helping each other through fears toward personal and professional success, made us all feel good to be a part of the group.

We walked away from each day's events thinking about what we had done, how much progress we had made and just how much individually we all had contributed toward our own collective achievement. When I look at our "Ropes" Course, I smile, remembering my experiences while looking forward to all of those who will one day share the same fond memories.



**Tammy Gordon, "Ropes" Instructor**

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## Tips For Those Who Would Motivate At-Risk Youth

- \* Show genuine enthusiasm yourself. Don't be afraid to "ham it up" when you're in their presence.
- \* Excite students with ideas which encourage experimentation and creativity.
- \* Use questioning techniques which promote higher level thinking skills. Open-ended questions readily lend themselves to brainstorming.
- \* Listen actively and watch their body language. Allow the student enough time to answer questions and think through situations.
- \* Give genuine praise, but show tolerance of failure.
- \* Reward fresh insight and interpretations.
- \* Expect competence from at-risk youth. Competence promotes confidence and inspires the at-risk student to broaden his/her horizon of self-expression.

Provided By Carol Goodson, Drama Teacher  
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

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## Employee Of The Month

Mrs. Ida H. Gibson was employed by the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School September 23, 1985. She has worked as cook and is currently chef. As nominee for Employee of the Month, her colleagues had the following things to say about her.

"Mrs. Ida Gibson is a dedicated employee who takes pride in her work and is always willing to add the extra touches to make any event involving the Food Services area special. She spends many off duty hours accompanying students on off campus trips. Mrs. Gibson is truly interested in the well being of our students as she makes great efforts for those that do not have enough clothing. She has assisted in employing students and supervising them in the Food Service area.

We are proud of Mrs. Gibson and we salute her as Employee of the Month."



## Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Presents "Hope For Peace"

By Johnny Bartley

On Thursday, December 6, 1990, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School presented a program entitled "Hope for Peace." This event was a special evening of music and messages dedicated to service personnel and their families who were separated during the Christmas holidays.

While hoping that the Persian Gulf crisis could be solved through peaceful means, the school felt it was necessary to do something meaningful for all concerned. The students, staff and visitors joined together in a salute to those who placed loyalty to country over personal happiness in order to defend our nation's values worldwide.

The program featured the St. Andrews Baptist Church Handbell Choir, members of the Airport High School ROTC, as well as music by the band, "Carol and Company." The welcome was given by Bob James, principal of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the message "Hope for Peace" was delivered by Dr. Mary Catherine Norwood, the school's superintendent. The campus was lighted with luminaries and decorated with yellow ribbons. Hot cider, punch and other Christmas goodies were served in the A Dorm Lobby reception area, which was decorated with various Christmas scenes. Students portrayed different holiday characters.

## Orlando Lomax and Monique Pope Are Crowned Mr. and Miss Wil Lou Gray 1990-91.

By: Johnny Bartley

On Thursday, November 7, 1990 on a magical and starlit stage at Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, two students became king and queen for the 1990-91 school year. Orlando Audre Lomax from Greenville, S. C. and Monique Nicole Pope from Charleston, S. C. were crowned Mr. and Miss Wil Lou Gray, after four rounds of preliminary competitions which featured talent, casual wear, poise and evening wear.

For the talent presentations, both students sang their way to victory. Orlando chose "If You Believe" from the movie "The Wiz" and Monique sang "Summertime" from the Broadway play "Porgy and Bess."

The pageant's theme was entitled "Visions of Love." It was directed by Johnny Bartley, the school's OPP Team Coordinator. Technical assistance was provided by Terry Scott, BMW Coordinator. Contestant preparation was provided by a host of staff members and consisted of everything from make-up to the furnishing of gowns and suits. Special thanks go out to everyone for assisting in every phase of the program.

It was a night of glamor, beauty and fashion. Congratulations to everyone involved and best wishes for a very successful reign as Mr. and Miss Wil Lou Gray to Orlando and Monique.

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## Adopt-A-Highway Program

WLGOS Program Coordinators:  
Rubena Marshall and Leroy Fogle

The central theme for the Adopt-A-Highway Program nationwide is to "Keep America Beautiful." Keeping our highways free of trash and debris has proven to be a difficult task for the S. C. Highways and Maintenance Division to consistently maintain. In light of this, the Adopt-A-Highway Program is formed as a community service program to help lend a hand for the upkeep of our highways.

One of our mandated student activity programs at Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School is this service work. We are the first to adopt "Boston Avenue" and you can clearly see the school's name printed on the official Adopt-A-Highway Program sign.

The program coordinators' primary duties are to enhance group spirit and to make sure to observe safety tips while cleaning the highway. Our motivating strategy, to keep the students interested in the program, is to use the point system for their rewards.

**SCHOOL ★ BOARD ★ MEMBER**

*Appreciation Day* 

February 21, 1991

The Board of Trustees of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School has three seats which come up for election by the legislature in 1991. Dr. Louise T. Scott, currently serving as Chairman of the board, and Mr. Vince Rhodes have indicated their intention to seek re-election. The third seat, previously occupied by Walter Dahlgren, has been vacant since his resignation in the fall of 1989.

Each candidate must submit an application to the legislature and meet with a legislative screening committee prior to their being presented for election at a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate in the spring of 1991.

Ten members of the board are elected by the General Assembly for a term of four years. Two additional members are elected by the alumni association for four-year terms. In addition, both the Governor and the State Superintendent of Education serve ex officio.

All elected seats are at large. Board members' terms are staggered so that continuity of service is maintained. Board members are not paid for their services but are reimbursed travel expenses.

Other members of the board of trustees and their terms are:

Hannah Meadors	(1993)	Greenville
Dr. Marvin Efron	(1992)	West Columbia
Frank Hart	(1993)	Marion
Wilhelmina McBride	(1992)	Columbia (Treas.)
Mickey Lindler	(1993)	Columbia (Sec.)
Elizabeth Thraikill	(1993)	Fort Lawn (V. Ch.)
Olive Wilson	(1992)	Williamston
DeVon Belcher	(1992)	Easley
Linda Sledge	(1992)	Lexington



**Mrs. Willa Martin Pierce (left), Dr. Louise Scott (right), Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

**Willa Martin Pierce, Stepmother Of Barbara Bush, Delivers Founder's Day Address At The Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School**

On October 21 Willa Martin Pierce, stepmother of First Lady Barbara Bush, presented a special Founder's Day speech at Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School in West Columbia. Mrs. Pierce, a native of Greenville, is the cousin of the late Wil Lou Gray and continues to maintain close ties with friends and family in South Carolina.

Mrs. Pierce honored Dr. Gray in a special tribute to her work in the area of Adult and Continuing Education and helped the school kick off a Foundation fund drive.

This Founder's Day celebration was the first since Dr. Gray's death. Wil Lou Gray alumni, prominent educators, legislators, business leaders and many of Mrs. Pierce's friends and family members attended the event.

The foundation has set a goal to raise \$500,000 this year to support the important work being done at the Opportunity School to help young people around the state.

## Project "SMART"

By Colletta Jefferson

Last April, a pilot project which is scheduled to be used as a nationwide model, began at the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School (WLGOS) in Lexington County and five other group homes in the state. I am the Project Coordinator for the program at WLGOS. The program has four components which include faculty/staff training in the prevention of alcohol and other drug use, identification and training of peer leaders, involvement of local business leaders in group home prevention activities and project evaluation.

The peer group leaders are one of the vital aspects of making the project a success. The Peer Leaders, Larry Outen, Tim Kirby and Joseph Smith, formed an organization on WLGOS campus called "SMART" (Students Manning A Responsible Team). The plan involves using a school leadership group to help inform students about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol and to develop a creative program that will involve a number of students in educational, motivational and confidence building activities.

The peer leaders attended a leadership training workshop August 7-9 at White Oaks Conference Center, and received training in leadership skills, basic training in alcohol and drug use, listening and communication skills. The students continue to meet weekly with the project coordinator for training as well as other training provided by K.I.D.S. (Kids Independent of Drugs) program.

The peer leaders applied for a Youth Incentive Grant for \$1,500.00 which the group received. The "SMART" team will work with musicians, artists and consultants from the South Carolina Arts Commission to design a logo, stage set, video and/or help write scripts and materials. The students will use art, music and video in designing a factual drug and alcohol awareness campaign.

The peer leaders are really committed to the project and have involved themselves in several activities on campus. Larry Outen, student chairperson says, "The peer leaders are very excited about our project. We have never had the chance to do something like this before and we are having a lot of fun doing it."

Future plans are to have some members of the "SMART" team attend Teen Institute this summer at Presbyterian College. The pilot project will run for three years, and in the third year a curriculum will be developed for use in group homes throughout the nation.

## The Vision And Opportunity Continue On . . . .

### A Tribute To Dr. Wil Lou Gray

By Brenda S. Rawl

I was recently asked to go through the collection of old articles, scrapbooks and pictures stored and displayed in the WLGOS Research & Training Center. My assignment was to find quotes by the late Dr. Wil Lou Gray, Founder of the Opportunity School. What touched my heart during this search was how this one woman loved her state, loved all people and fought for each and every person to have a fair chance to learn to read and write, and make a better life for themselves. She dedicated her life to reaching out to people, encouraging them to learn as much as possible. She didn't wait for people to come to her -- she went in search of them.

One of the articles that I ran across, told about the time she and a preacher were driving along and she drove through a red light. Two policemen stopped her. Before she let them get away, she made one of the officers promise to go back and finish high school. I just imagine these two police officers were so charmed by this delightful, determined lady, they forgot the main reason for stopping her that day.

Miss Wil Lou believed everyone was worth educating and didn't give up even if it seemed someone was set on proving her wrong. She took interest in and became friends with her students. She was never too busy to answer scores of letters from students. She was known to dip into her own pocket to provide scholarships, put downpayments on houses for students, set them up in business, give financial assistance for college, and also give rides to hitchhikers on her way to different meetings.

She loved to entertain and cook for people in her home. She believed in hard work, was early to rise and worked late into the night. She even called teacher's meetings at midnight, probably after figuring out a new way to recruit more students. She had no sense of time and was usually late. She spent much time looking for lost items. She had a difficult time keeping up with her keys, always had mismatched gloves, and lost hats. She knew she had the needed information on a student, but just couldn't locate the file.

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*Got any rivers they say aren't crossable?  
Got any mountains that can't be cut through?  
We specialize in the wholly impossible,  
Doing things no one else can do.  
That's Miss Wil Lou Gray.*

*Dr. James H. Hope*

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Miss Wil Lou was a woman ahead of the times. She had a vision for a better future. She was born in a Christian home in Laurens, South Carolina. She was named after her father, William and her mother, Sarah Lou. Both parents were college educated and gave their daughter the best education and advantages. She grew up realizing the importance of a good education and wanted to give something back to her state.

Her dream began with the first Opportunity School established in 1921 in the hills of Oconee County. The school's assets at this time were Miss Wil Lou Gray, a barrel of flour, a case of salmon, and \$140.00 which went to pay the school's only teacher. The teacher certainly earned her small salary, her job requiring her to wear many different hats. She was even forced to intervene in a feud between two mountain families.

Dr. Gray held these first adult classes once a month in borrowed space throughout the state for the next several years. Her fight for a better education and life for South Carolina scanned through two world wars and the depression years. She wrote her own textbooks for adults because there were few available and traveled by horse and buggy between different schools. Throughout all these and more hardships, she never gave up her dream.



**Dr. Wil Lou Gray, Founder of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, made a difference as a pioneer in adult education for South Carolina and the Opportunity School is proud to carry on her dream. Here she is shown arriving early to help the girls prepare the tables for one of the school's events.**

In 1946, after World War II, the Opportunity School moved permanently to the present location in West Columbia. A nine-month educational program was established. As she approached her 63rd birthday, planning for retirement, she was appointed director of the school. After serving as director for the next decade, she retired in 1957. Also, in 1957, the school was officially named the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School in her honor.

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*This poem was taken from one of Miss Wil Lou's letters to her students . . .*

*I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything  
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.*

*Edward Everett Hale*

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The Opportunity School continues to fulfill Miss Wil Lou's vision as it changes to meet today's educational needs. The school presently serves students at risk of not completing their high school education. It faces many different challenges in today's fast changing world, just as Dr. Gray faced in the days of the first Opportunity School. I believe some of these basic goals still apply today and have carried on through the years.

In one of Miss Wil Lou's letters to her students, she summed it up. "The Opportunity School was organized not so much to teach the printed page as to stimulate boys and girls to make the most of their lives, to become life-long searchers of truth -- to wish to get facts before making a decision, to be able to analyze their own actions in relation to the good of all, to see how a good state can be made only through the cooperation of an informed citizenship."

Dr. Gray's motto, "Why Stop Learning," should echo through each mind today. Education is a team effort, a matter of pride, not only for educators, parents, and communities, but for children to search for a better tomorrow. As I think about some of the many special letters that I read from Miss Wil Lou to her students, this one quote impressed me because of its importance then and now. "Until every parent puts as much value on the other person's child as he does his own, there will never be a really adequate school system." *Let's keep the "vision" and the "opportunity" alive, and build on it -- it takes all of us.*

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# Reflections

## "Must We Hit Kids To Discipline Them?"

### The Issue of Corporal Punishment In The Schools

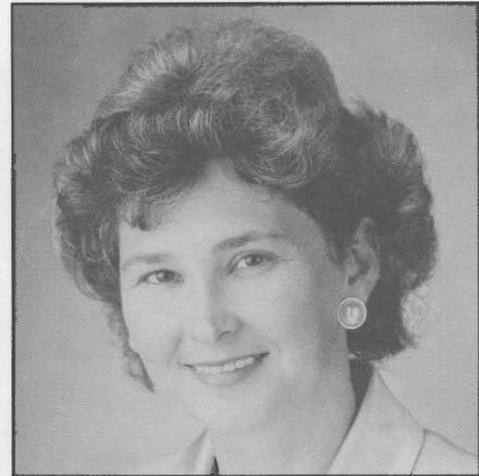
By Patricia W. Agatston

The history of corporal punishment dates back prior to biblical times and was legally used with slaves, prisoners, and even wives until this century. While the aforementioned are now legally protected from such abuse, it is still legally acceptable to physically punish schoolchildren in 30 states of the United States. Although corporal punishment with schoolchildren has decreased recently in frequency and severity, probably due to the growing public outcry against it; it continues to be an accepted form of discipline in many areas of the country, particularly in the South.

Corporal punishment is defined by Adah Maurer, in her book *The Corporal Punishment Handbook* (1977) as: "the infliction of pain upon the body of the child because of an act of disobedience, omission of an assigned task or the commission of an error. It does not include temporary restraint of a child nor the removal of a weapon -- such as a rock -- from a child bent on destruction."

It is interesting that while the proponents of such punishment state that its purpose is to change behavior, the research demonstrates that physical punishment, rather than promoting a positive behavior change, is more likely to produce negative acting out behaviors as well as aggression directed toward either the punisher or innocent bystanders (Bongiovanni 1977). The modeling theory comes into play here as we see that children who are frequent recipients of such abuse become abusive towards others. "Violence breeds violence," so the saying goes, and certainly there are enough individuals concerned about the existing violence in our schools to take a look at this issue.

The American Psychological Association states in its resolution opposing corporal punishment that "corporal punishment intended to influence undesirable responses may create in the child the impression that he or she is an undesirable person, an impression that lowers self-esteem and may have chronic consequences" (Resolution adopted by the Council of the American Psychological Association, January, 1974). Although there are many excellent teachers who never make use of physical punishment as a disciplinary method, as long as it is available even as a so-called last resort, many educators will not take the time to make use of alternatives because these alternatives are often considered too time consuming. However, to ban corporal punishment without training educators in existing alternatives may set up the possibility for failure. A commitment by the school system to teacher training through in-service training and continuing education in classroom management will be necessary to bring about the knowledge of the effectiveness of alternatives and the fallacy of corporal punishment's usefulness.



## Notes From . . . The Center Director

.....

Recently I observed the first group of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School students going through our new confidence building "Ropes" course. The students had been selected by teachers and counselors because they needed additional work on either communication skills, self-esteem or team building.

The students began the process in the chill of the early morning. They were nervous, suspicious and argumentative among themselves and toward the "Ropes" instructors. The day started with simple trust-building activities such as walking a log and gradually progressed to exercises using safety ropes high above the ground at tree top level.

By the end of the day, a team had been born. The students had learned to put aside their differences and work together to solve problems. They were cheering one another on and supporting one another both physically and emotionally until each student made it through every obstacle.

It was just one day in the life of these students, but it was a day of dramatic change. The teamwork and pride that the students felt after completing the "Ropes" course will last a lifetime.

We have case management teams, tutors, special clubs, small classes, life skill courses, vocational counseling and a number of other features to insure that these students have every chance to succeed. The "Ropes" course is just one more way to help the students gain the trust and self-confidence so needed to help change their life and attitude.

Sincerely,

Jane Zenger



**Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Students Work As Teams To Get Through "Ropes" Course Located On The School's Campus While Developing Trust, Building Communication Skills And Improving Self-Esteem**

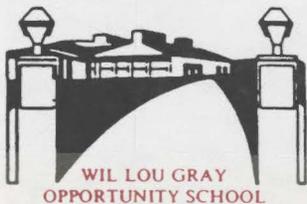
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