

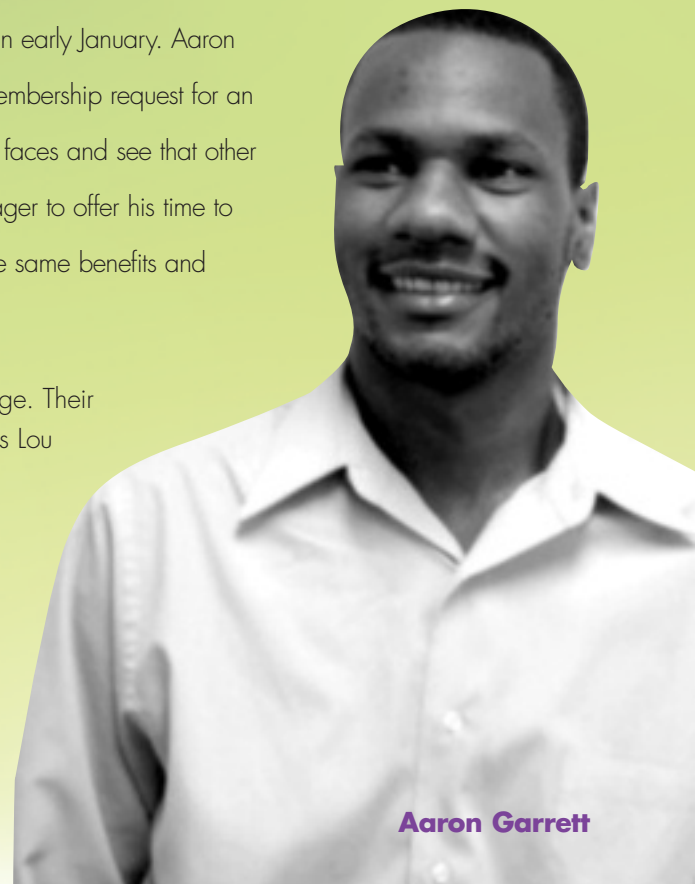
# Helping the Human Spirit Blossom

**"I know how much I got while in SOS [Children's Villages Illinois] and want to give that back.** How can I help?" asked Aaron Garrett, membership

coordinator at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, on a phone call in early January. Aaron reconnected with SOS Children's Villages Illinois (SOSCVI) when he saw a membership request for an SOSCVI family on his desk at work. "At the museum, it's great to see the kids' faces and see that other people benefit from the work I do." Aaron, recently resettled in Chicago, is eager to offer his time to children living in SOS Children's Villages Illinois with hope that they receive the same benefits and experiences he did while living there.

In 1995, Aaron and his four younger brothers moved into the Lockport Village. Their mother suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and wanted to ensure that her sons stayed together. The Garrett-Wyatt family was one of the first families in SOS Children's Villages Illinois. For Aaron, the transition into life at the Village presented some initial obstacles. "I was so used to being responsible for my brothers. Before we came to SOS, I took care of them, I took care of the house. I did the cooking, the cleaning, all of those responsibilities. I expected that to continue at SOS. I remember saying, 'Oh, my brothers don't eat that. I'll make dinner, I know what they like.' Minnie, our foster mom, told me she would take care of it, to go outside and play. I didn't realize just how tightly I

*continued on page 6*



**Aaron Garrett**

## OUR MISSION

**At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we build families.**

**We provide a stable home in a supportive, community environment designed to help children in need grow into caring, productive and self-reliant adults.**

### Administrative Office

216 W. Jackson Blvd., Suite 925  
Chicago, IL 60606  
Phone: 312-372-8200  
Fax: 312-372-8202

### Lockport Village

17545 Village Lane  
Lockport, IL 60441-7634  
Phone: 815-740-7280  
Fax: 815-740-7282

### Chicago Village

7600 S. Parnell Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60620-1841  
Phone: 773-783-0500  
Fax: 773-783-0600

### Board of Directors

Sheila O'Grady, President  
Lynn Kiley, Vice President  
Laurie Holmes, Secretary  
Terry Athas, Treasurer  
Rosemarie Andolino  
Lee Benish  
Rosie Burke  
Darren Collier  
Steven Davis  
David Hoffman  
Anne Kaplan  
Maureen McKeough  
Kathleen Nelson  
Jeff Riemer  
Paul Thompson  
Ted Weldon  
Jim Wolfe

### Does SOS have your e-mail address?

Don't miss out on event announcements and SOS news. Send your e-mail address to [kreilly@sosillinois.org](mailto:kreilly@sosillinois.org), and we'll make sure you're on the list.

[www.sosillinois.org](http://www.sosillinois.org)

# Cultivating Courage



By SOS Children's Villages Illinois CEO Tim McCormick


Sometimes the simplest, most uncomplicated encounters with others reveal the most profound insights. Let me share one such encounter. A little while back, I happened to be going into the Village Community Center. There were quite a few of the SOS Children's Villages Illinois (SOSCVI) foster moms coming out of the hall after a training session. Most of them looked like any of us would after a two-hour training session, but one mom stood out. She appeared more upbeat and positive than her colleagues, and her smile was a bit bigger than the rest.

As I was greeting everyone, I mentioned how happy and confident she appeared. Her smile got bigger when she stated, "It happened today." I asked her what she meant. To be honest, I was expecting that a great insight or a breakthrough in teaching had occurred. The mom looked at me with shining eyes as she stated, "She smiled today! My little six-year-old girl who has been with me for three months smiled for the first time today!"

I was humbled by what I heard. The power of such a simple action, the smile of a little girl who once lived in fear and uncertainty, reveals something much greater: the triumph of the human spirit.

I reflected later that day of how our desire to make a difference is often a slow, tedious journey. Yet, it is our continued commitment to take action that ultimately brings these moments of triumph. I also realized how imperative it is to keep our eyes open, so as not to miss the small, yet substantial miracles that occur while helping the human spirit blossom.

As you read this newsletter, I encourage you to keep your eyes and hearts open to how, together, we go about the process of nurturing the human spirit and cultivating enthusiastic, energetic and passionate children eager to learn and grow. Each of us, in our own special way, creates a process for a young injured life to find the courage to smile once again. I believe that from one simple moment of joy, the children find courage to then move beyond the pains of abandonment, abuse and neglect. They begin to see the world anew and rejoice in the seemingly limitless opportunities.

Although at times the task before us seems most challenging and complex, we should let the image of a proud mom who carries the reflection of a six-year-old's smile in her own eyes serve as a testament that, when there is one smile, another is sure to follow. By giving our time, talents and resources to help the children in SOS Children's Villages Illinois smile, each of us is helping the human spirit blossom. 

# In this issue

Helping the Human Spirit Blossom ..1

Cultivating Courage.....2

Voices of Volunteer Leaders.....3

A Larger Radius of Impact.....4

Calendar of Events .....4

Village Voices.....6

International Women's Day .....7

Together We Triumph ..... 7

You Can Help A Child Blossom .....8

# Voices of Volunteer Leaders

The Voices of Volunteer Leaders section of each newsletter will highlight individuals who serve SOS Children's Villages Illinois (SOSCVI) in a volunteer capacity. In this section, these volunteer leaders will share their insights and experiences with SOSCVI. SOS Children's Villages Illinois is excited to welcome Rosie Burke and Kathleen Nelson, two of our newest Board members. Rosie and Kathleen bring a wealth of knowledge and experience that is sure to benefit all members of the SOS family.



**Rosie Burke** has worked in healthcare for more than 30 years, dedicating half of this time to behavioral health issues nationally. Until recently, travel has played a large role in Rosie's work life. Rosie, like the children living in SOSCVI's Chicago and Lockport Villages, values the stability of home. "I'm finally here. I'm settling in, I get to know my neighbors, I am able to make and honor commitments to get involved in the community." For Rosie, the commitment to become a board member for SOS Children's Villages Illinois is a transition she embarks upon enthusiastically. Oftentimes, children who enter foster care deal with complex social and emotional difficulties. "I want to see the transformation in our children as they grow and thrive as future contributors to our society."



Though **Kathleen Nelson** is new to SOS Children's Villages Illinois as a Board Member, she became acquainted with SOSCVI during the planning and construction of the Chicago Village. During that time, she worked in the Department of Planning and Development for the City of Chicago. As a mother of two young children herself, Kathleen was personally impacted by meeting a foster mom in the Chicago Village. "She is the first foster parent I've ever met. To see those beautiful little babies she is raising and how much she does for the children... it just shows that to be a foster parent, you must have a lot of love in your heart."

SOS Children's Villages Illinois appreciates the hard work and dedication of all of our volunteer leaders. Check this section in each newsletter as we highlight some of the amazing individuals who volunteer their time and energy to make the SOS Children's Villages Illinois a place the children can call "home." 🧑



# A Larger Radius of Impact

**Interview with  
Jeanne Gang,  
Architect of the  
Lavezzorio Community  
Center, Chicago Village**

**Q:** With many of your projects, you work to include materials already present at the site. Were you able to do this with the site for the Community Center?

**A:** The site at 76th and Parnell was donated by the City and was a vacant piece of land between two railroad tracks. Although the land was cleared and there were no materials at the location for us to work with, we were able to see the benefits of the site itself. The land layout

allowed for a north and south entrance and exit, which created a safe cul-de-sac environment.

**Q:** Did the design of the Community Center building change as the project progressed?

**A:** The overall goal of the Center was to create a bridge between the surrounding neighborhood at large and the Chicago Village. One constant was that we wanted

## Calendar of Events

### May

- Chicago Village Foster Parent Appreciation Month (events take place throughout the month)
- Lockport Village Parent Appreciation Luncheon organized by Kathy Hines, volunteer (also, agency foster parent appreciation activities – TBD)
- Spring Planting and Cleaning Party at the Villages with volunteers from M3C Fellows at DePaul University – May 7, 10AM-2PM
- Lockport Village Photography Show – presented by Lockport High School students through the Cameras for Kids Foundation.

### June

- Dining and Conversation: An Evening to Remember: June 1, 2011
- Lockport Village Graduation Party (8th and 12th grades/GED) and tree planting ceremony (high school) – June 3 @ 5:00 pm

the building to have a level of transparency and openness. Our question then became: how do we achieve that?

When designing a project that will utilize donated materials, you must be very creative because there is the chance you may not get the donation. Therefore, we knew we had to keep the potential of the actual material used. To do this and allow creativity required an extreme amount of planning and knowledge of the material.

We were supposed to receive a large brick donation, and so plans were created based on that. Later, it was found that we would not be able to get that donation. Yet, altering the design in some sense, allowed the building's materials to be more pure and more exciting to work with. We had different mixes of concrete and wanted to bring out the natural state of each of them, which created the different bands of colors you see on the sides of the Center.

**Q:** Did this project have an impact on your work?

**A:** I am often recognized as the architect who created the Aqua Tower. People think that because I have created a building of immense size, somehow that work would impact me greatly. What I found was that the Lavezzorio Community Center was a more transformative experience because a community center has a larger radius of impact. Since the Village was built and the Community Center finished and utilized by those who live nearby, the neighborhood has been developing. The change has taken place in buildings being rehabbed, as well as individual community members making visible improvements to their own homes and businesses. It feels like a very different type of validation. Being able to work on a project where social service is the focus is rewarding, but the validation extends beyond that when you see positive change in a community.

**Q:** Did anything else with the Community Center project stand out for you personally?

**A:** As a designer, I felt this project gave me the opportunity to discover new qualities in natural concrete. Concrete starts as a liquid fluid, which then cures and becomes solid. In this building the fluid quality allowed us to push the boundaries; and when you can see a core material in a new fashion, it really is a source of pride for an architect. 🧑‍🎨



Photo Credit Chris Kitahara

## July

- Lockport Village White Sox game organized by Freedom Life Church

## August

- Chicago Village Annual Back to School BBQ

## Summer Break Activities – June to Mid-August

- Lockport Village – outings, field trips, bike hikes, nature hikes, arts and crafts, games, Wet & Wild Fridays, bowling, special activities, fishing and beach trips

## September

- Lockport Village Balloonfest: September 17, 2011



# Village Voices

"I used to be very shy and quiet. I had trouble talking to other kids. Now, I have a lot of friends in the Village. I'm free to be myself." *Latasha, age 13*

**"I think about who I want to be when I grow up. I learned that I want to be a doctor because I want to be a person who helps other people."** *Allison, age 9*

"It sounds weird, but I have a personality now. I have free time; I get to choose what I like, what I want to do... My main responsibility is to be ME." *Nikki, age 14*

**"I've learned that I control my own situation. The decisions I make every day can either open up new opportunities or have negative consequences. I have the power to choose."**

*Marissa, age 16*

"Before [I came to SOSCVI] I really only liked one thing, but now I've been exposed to a lot more and like a lot of different stuff." *James, age 11*

**"I'm nicer to my sisters. I think about what I say and what I do - it affects other people, not just me."** *Zeke, age 13*

13

## Helping the Human Spirit Blossom *continued from the cover*


was wound until someone else took over the responsibilities. At SOS, I got the chance to really live, to be a kid. We [my brothers and I] really blossomed during those five years in SOS."

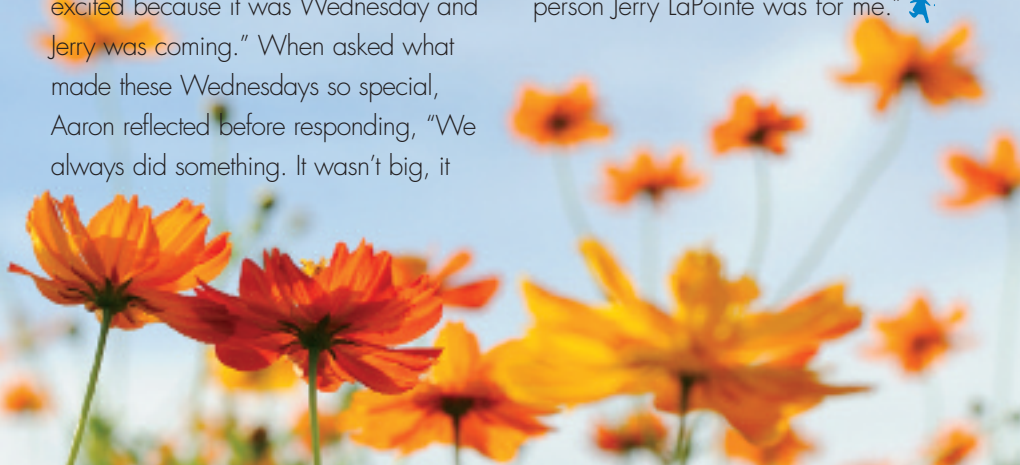
Aaron's mom passed away in 1998, and he and his brothers continued to live in the Lockport Village for two more years until family members petitioned the court for custody. When they left in 2000, Aaron went to live with his grandmother and his brothers went to live with his uncle. The transition itself was very difficult for the boys. For the first time, the brothers were not all living under the same roof. "That really caused a rift. We weren't sharing all the same experiences; we didn't have the same treatment. It has made it more difficult to relate, but we're all working on rebuilding that bond."

Aaron still reflects very positively on his experience at SOSCVI and goes out to breakfast every month with Jerry LaPointe, a volunteer who worked very closely with Aaron. "He came every Wednesday, and I mean every Wednesday! There was a blizzard once and he still came! I know it sounds cheesy, especially considering that I was 14, 15, 16 years old, but I'd wake up every Wednesday and even before I got out of bed, I'd smile and just get really excited because it was Wednesday and Jerry was coming." When asked what made these Wednesdays so special, Aaron reflected before responding, "We always did something. It wasn't big, it

wasn't expensive, but he always took us to do something new. It was great to leave the Village for a little bit and spend time with someone who introduced us to so many new things."

Aaron attended the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, then transferred to and graduated from DePaul University. Aaron has worked at the YMCA in membership and marketing and spent some time in advertising in New York. "As a child, SOS was the first time we didn't move in a year. We stayed there for five years. I've moved around a lot afterwards for school and work. I haven't had that stability before or since SOS. I always think about how that stability made a difference for me and remind myself to keep working for it. At SOS, I finally found home."

Regarding his future involvement with SOS Children's Villages Illinois, Aaron said, "It's great for kids to be exposed to people in different careers and achieving different types of success. It makes kids aware of so many different opportunities. I'd love to be one of those people." SOS Children's Villages Illinois was clearly a place that helped Aaron blossom. It is most rewarding to see him share his talents and enthusiasm with others. "I never realized it until now, but I could be for a child the person Jerry LaPointe was for me." 



# Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Marks 100<sup>th</sup> Year of International Women's Day

## SOS Children's Villages Illinois Celebrates Foster Mothers' Impact


With a longstanding interest in women's issues, it is fitting that Hillary Rodham Clinton honored the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8, 2011, with a series of talks and events. International Women's Day (IWD), originally called International Working Women's Day is a major day of global celebration of women.



**Secretary of State Hillary Clinton**


Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the secretary, the week-long series of events (March 7-11) highlighted the achievements and aspirations of women around the globe.


International Women's Day has been observed by the United Nations since 1975. The celebration is aimed at recognizing the role women play in bolstering international peace and security. As an organization that relies on local women in 132 countries to raise orphaned and vulnerable children, SOS Children's Villages joins the global recognition of the impact of women in the lives of children. The family-based care at SOS Children's Villages revolves around the love and warmth of mothers, who serve as the bedrock of its programs.

SOS Children's Villages Mothers are selected because of their deep love for children. They are professionally trained in child development and psychology. Once hired, they run individual households of up to 10 boys and girls. Raising children who have been traumatized by poverty, abuse, war and/or natural disaster is challenging. SOS Children's Villages mothers have the passion, patience and perseverance needed to help such children blossom into productive and loving adults. 



SOS Children's Villages Illinois is grateful for the support from actor Christian Bale. Christian Bale, recent Oscar winner for best supporting actor in "The Fighter", also fights for child welfare. He knows that a stable family – which SOSCIV believes is vital to healthy child-development – helps the human spirit blossom.

Christian Bale is a committed supporter of SOS Children's Villages Illinois. In 2010, Bale came to visit the Chicago and Lockport Villages on multiple occasions and attended the SOS Children's Villages Illinois Dining and Conversation event. In addition to donating time and resources to SOS Children's Villages Illinois, Bale also shared his insights and experiences with children and adults living in the Villages. Children and staff alike raved about Christian both during and since his visit. "He's really a very kind, down-to-earth guy and very dedicated to the cause. You can't help but like him!" 

The on-going support Christian Bale provides heightens awareness of the SOSCIV program and the children in our care who have been abused, abandoned and neglected. When a family can establish healthy, loving connections, we all triumph. 

SOS Children's Villages Illinois  
216 W. Jackson Boulevard, Suite 925  
Chicago, IL 60606

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
LIBERTYVILLE, IL  
PERMIT NO. 195



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS  
**every child deserves a HOME**

## You Can Help a Child Blossom

SOS Children's Villages Illinois has been fortunate to have incredible volunteers, such as Jerry LaPointe (see Spirit of Service Comes Full Circle) and many more, who have helped our children transform their lives. At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we are always in need of volunteers who want to help the human spirit blossom. The following are ways you can get involved at each Village.



### The Chicago Village

> **After School Tutor:** Tutoring will be done with the youth in the home. Volunteers are needed on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

> **Home Helpers:** Home Helpers assist the foster parent in the home with tasks from dinner preparation and laundry to assisting children with homework.

> **Birthday Party Volunteers:** Organize bi-monthly birthday parties and raise funds for birthday gifts (\$10/child).

### The Lockport Village

> **After School Tutor:** Tutoring takes place after school and evenings Monday – Thursday in the Recreation Center.

> **Reading Enrichment Volunteers:** Work with emerging readers and youths with reading problems. Volunteers must be certified teachers.

> **Mentor:** Mentors play a vital role in the lives of our children by serving as friends and role models for children living in the Villages. Days needed TBA

> **Recreation:** Summer and school holidays, 2 -3 weekly, June to August 15

> **Birthday Party Volunteers:** Organize bi-monthly birthday parties and raise funds for birthday gifts (\$10/child).

For more information about volunteering and getting involved in the village, check out our website at [www.sosillinois.org](http://www.sosillinois.org)