

MORT FRYMAN | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT FILE

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reproduction flag of the Composite National Standard Regimental Colors of the U.S. Colored Troops. The banner is a replica of the ones issued in 1864 by Union Gen. Benjamin Franklin Butler to the U.S. Colored Troops in commemoration of their victories at Wilson's Wharf, Suffolk, Petersburg and New Market Heights.

At 6:30 p.m. March 9, Alexander will deliver the history lecture, "Victorious Afro-Union Troops at the March 9, 1864, Battle of Suffolk." The event is being given in celebration of the 145th anniversary of the battle.

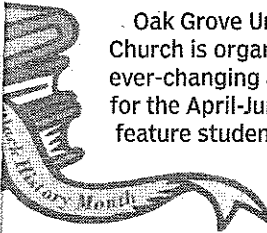
The events are free. Call the library at 410-7058 or the Bells Mill Society/USCTD at 547-5542 for more details.

DEVELOPING AN ART SHOW

Oak Grove United Methodist Church is organizing its ever-changing art exhibits for the April-June show. It will feature student, amateur and professional photography. Church arts coordinator

Mickey Lane already has commitments from photography programs at Hickory and Great Bridge high schools. Winners and entries from the 2008 Chesapeake Arboretum photography competition will be on display, along with professional works by Ron Loving, Robert A. Boyett and Stacy Nyikos.

Others interested in exhibiting should contact Lane at 547-2319. The opening reception is April 25.



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Ice skater helps train Special Olympics kids

By Christy Barritt
Correspondent

GREENBRIER

Inspired by the Disney movie "Ice Princess," Casey Shepard began taking ice-skating lessons at the age of 7 at Chilled Ponds in Chesapeake.

Three years later, Casey is still skating and has received medals at many regional competitions. But the 10-year-old has found another love in the process: Special Olympics.

Each Sunday, Casey volunteers with the Special Olympic training at Chilled Ponds.

"I try to help," said Casey. "The Special Olympic athletes just make me feel like family. They're so easy to work with. They never give up or say I can't do that. I've trained kids who get frustrated because they can't do a spin, but these people - they never give up. They're the happiest people."

She got involved after meeting a Special Olympic athlete named Nate while at the rink.

"He has Down syndrome and he's such a nice person," said Casey, a fifth-grader at Greenbrier Intermediate. "He and I just became amazing friends. Then I found out that there's this group called the Special Olympics. They're just amazing people."

Casey's coach, Jenna Pittman-Bracone, admires her student.

"The fact someone her age would be willing to devote their time to people with special needs is very special," said Pittman-Bracone. "As far as skating, she has passion for the sport. That she is willing to give back that passion to help with charity is wonderful."

Casey recommends volunteering to everyone.

"So many times you hear about the bad stuff in the world," said Casey. "You never know about the good stuff. Volunteering helps you to come together and make a better world."

Her parents are Garry, an accountant for Hoffman Beverage, and Kim, a teacher at Indian River Middle. She also



CHRISTY BARRITT

Casey Shepard, former Miss Chesapeake, Outstanding Preteen, volunteers each Sunday with Special Olympians at Chilled Ponds.

has an older brother, 12-year-old Nathan.

Casey, who recently gave up her crown as Miss Chesapeake's Outstanding Preteen, skates four times a week and would like to be an Olympic champion one day.

She showed her ability to persevere at a Yorktown meet when her performance music CD didn't work. Most people assumed she wouldn't skate without it. "Casey waited until all the girls went through and she went up to the judges and said, 'I want to try and skate without my music,'" Kim said. "They said OK. She went out there and got second place. She lost points for not having music. I was so proud of her for just going out."

Casey explained: "I thought, there's no way I can't skate. I've worked too long and hard to get here. It was frustrating, but I did well."

Kim is pleased by her daughter's volunteer work.

"Her passion for the Special Olympics came together mainly because she met Nate here," said Kim. "She just got close to them and said, 'Mom, they're really amazing people.' I'm really proud of her and her community work. I think it's important. Neither of my children want for much. We try not to spoil them, but they need to give back, too. She does a good job."

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