

# Miss Ruby's Kids

*Enabling parents to inspire a passion for learning in their children*

(843) 527-8560

www.missrubyskids.net

success@missrubyskids.net

## Miss Ruby's Kids volunteer launches new summer tutoring program

*By Mary Floyd*

Meet Teresa Peterson, a *Friend of Miss Ruby's Kids* and an energetic volunteer who, with the support of Shelia Sullivan, Children's Librarian for the Georgetown Library and an MRK Board Member, has launched a pilot program to tutor county children aged 2 through 6 participating in the library's *Summer Story Time* outreach effort.

Since *Miss Ruby's Kids* is completely devoted to the goal of early childhood literacy, its volunteers and the expertise they bring with them seemed like a natural collaboration with the library's summer effort.



*Teresa illustrates a concept during a tutoring session*

Teresa is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, with a B.A. degree in Early Childhood Education, and a M.Ed. degree in Reading and Language Arts with many and varied experiences related to children and literacy.



*Celie talks about vocabulary with one of her five-year-old students*

The children she selected for this pilot tutoring program are four-year-olds who have completed pre-kindergarten and five-year-olds who have completed kindergarten. Their families may also provide new clients for *Miss Ruby's Kids*, since younger siblings of the participants may well be candidates for the *MRK* program. To date, the children meet in groups of five or fewer with *MRK* volunteers on Tuesday mornings.

There are eight children enrolled in the program who meet on an alternating basis with volunteers Celie Travis, Sarah Wilson, and Teresa Peterson through the month of July. Teresa and Shelia anticipate that by next summer more children will be identified and enrolled. They expect this year's pilot program to expand throughout Georgetown County and be implemented in all of the county's libraries. They also look forward to including graduates of *Miss Ruby's Kids* in future summer sessions.

This innovative summer tutoring program, made possible by the energy and enthusiasm of Teresa Peterson and her group of volunteers, is just one – the most recent one – of the ways in which *Miss Ruby's Kids* is making a difference in the lives of Georgetown County's youngest children and their families.

## Second graduation for Miss Ruby's Kids: School alumna participates



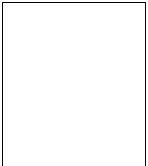
On Sunday, May 21, *Miss Ruby's Kids* celebrated its second graduation ceremony, honoring eight 3 and 4-year-old students and their families who completed its 2-year program and are ready to embark on a pre-kindergarten curriculum this fall. The ceremony was held in Holy Cross Faith Memorial Chapel and featured a solo performance by Sergeant First Class Pleshette Greggs, whose lovely mellow voice, singing "Jesus Loves The Little Children" and "I Believe I Can Fly," filled the chapel and the hearts of her listeners. On that May afternoon, Pleshette had returned to the place where she was a student not too many years ago.

Pleshette attended *Miss Ruby's School* from the age of 3 through the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, following her grandmother, aunts, and other members of her father's family who had also been students of Miss Ruby.

Her recollections of those years are powerful. "We all believed we were excellent! She pulled excellence out of us. I'd lie in the grass outside the cafeteria and dream about a medical career... becoming a psychologist. Yes, she gave us



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Georgetown, SC 29442



tough lessons, but that's because she knew we could do it – girls and boys, there was no gender difference in her expectations of us!"

Sadly, that sense of confidence, of "Never Say I Can't, Always Say I'll Try" began to erode when Pleshette entered public school in 1979. Because she found the public school less challenging, she says, "I didn't challenge myself. I wasn't excelling and I knew it. I could find no one to mentor me." She ultimately graduated from Georgetown High School in 1987 but did not go on to college, not yet.

She was determined that wouldn't happen to her son.

"I decided my boy was going to feel the same kind of excellence Miss Ruby gave me. We spent our vacations in the library. We packed our peanut butter and jelly and spent the day in the museum." (*Pleshette's son, Justin Greene, is now a rising senior at Georgetown High School and plans on a career in pediatric medicine.*)

Good fortune re-entered Pleshette's life in the form of an Army recruiter in 1990. "The military has been God's blessing to me," she says. She spent 2 1/2 active years in the service. Returning home from Korea and joining the Army Reserve, she was able to finance four years at Coastal Carolina University and graduated in 1997 with a degree in psychology. She continues to serve in the Reserve and is about to embark on a second graduate degree, this one in theology, from Erskine Theological Seminary.

Pleshette can see the dream she had, lying in the grass outside *Miss Ruby's School*, gradually taking shape in her life. The 3-year degree program Pleshette begins this fall will prepare her to serve as a military chaplain. "I was born to be a counselor," she says. "I want to share God's word with people who are searching. I want to bring whatever gift I have to any table where I'm invited, to help the people who

are doing God's work in the world. I believe I can do anything I put my mind to now. I believe I can be Chaplain to the United States Senate someday!"

The seeds that Miss Ruby Forsythe planted 30 years ago have fallen on fertile ground in the life and career of this charismatic woman who willingly shares her gifts – her musical talent and her spirituality – with **Miss Ruby's Kids** and the Georgetown Community at large.



*"Our children, like almost all children, loved books and learning. We are proud of Miss Ruby's Kids because it encourages a love of learning in Georgetown County's youngest children."*

*–June and Ed Hard*

## Program news

**Test scores** are in for children who graduated this spring. The average pre-program rank was in the 22<sup>nd</sup> percentile on the Test of Early Language Development for the eight students graduating this year. The average exit rank following the two year program was 69%. One of the program goals is to move the children closer to the norm, 50%. It is gratifying to see such positive results.

Miss Ruby's Kids is now an **independent 501(c)(3)**! Many thanks to Holy Cross Faith Memorial and the United Way for their sponsorship and their role in nurturing us along the way and to all the other people who have had a part in moving us along the way.

**We've moved yet again** to pursue our goal of serving all of Georgetown County! Check out our new office upstairs at 829 Front Street, Unit E in Georgetown. The new phone number is **527-8560**; the **new mailing address** is PO Box 1007, Georgetown, SC 29442.

## Last things

We just didn't have room to properly acknowledge new members and renewing members in this newsletter. Apologies! We will catch up in September.