

PATHFINDERS MONTHLY

Newsletter of the Office of Grants and Program Review
November 2006

Dr. Shela VanNess Pioneers Area Mentorship Program for Children of Prisoners

Nearly 2 million children in the United States have an incarcerated parent. These children face tremendous challenges; not only are they separated from their parent, but they also must often contend with economic hardships and social ostracism and are more likely than their peers to engage in risky behavior. Studies have shown that children of incarcerated parents who have mentors are less likely to use drugs or alcohol and initiate violence and are more likely to attend and perform well in school. In addition, mentoring programs can provide these children with opportunities to develop a trusting relationship with a supportive, caring adult and a stable environment that can promote healthy values and strong families.

To match children of prisoners with appropriate adult mentors across the country, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Administration for Children and Families developed the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program in 2003. This year, Dr. Shela VanNess,

Associate Professor in UTC's Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Geography, secured a grant of \$136,972 from the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program. Dr. VanNess will use this grant – one of only 76 awarded nationwide – to implement the Pathways Program, a mentorship program for children of prisoners in Hamilton County.

Dr. VanNess has engaged community partners to recruit and train mentors and offer friendship, guidance, emotional and academic support, and opportunities for personal growth to the children of Hamilton County prisoners. Major partners include the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Chattanooga, which will provide scholarships to enable participating children to take part in Boys & Girls Club activities, Girls Inc, Chattanooga Endeavors Inc., and several other community organizations. Dr. Dorothy Williams, Associate Professor of Social Work, will interview local prisoners in order to locate eligible children in the

Hamilton County area and establish contact with their caregivers. This year, the Pathways Program will match 125 children ages 4 to 18 with trained adult mentors who will maintain weekly face-to-face and telephone contact. In addition to building a lasting friendship with a caring, supportive adult, participating children will receive academic support, learn new problem-solving skills, and have opportunities to interact with other children of prisoners on a regular basis.

Through the efforts of Dr. VanNess and community partners, at-risk children in Hamilton County will have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, become involved in their communities in a positive way, and achieve their full potential despite the challenges they face. The Pathways Program is a vital outreach initiative that will benefit Hamilton County's at-risk youth and raise UTC's profile as a force for positive change in our community.

FUNDED GRANTS AND RESEARCH
NOVEMBER 1, 2006 – NOVEMBER 30, 2006

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & COMPUTER SCIENCE

MR. RICKY HORN AND DR. RON BAILEY

Tennessee Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners	Equipment for Engineering Lab	\$9,450
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COLLEGE OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

DR. GENE EZELL

Covenant College	State Teacher Training Center	\$1,600
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DRS. JANE REAGOR AND TONY LEASE

Tennessee Board of Architectural and Engineering Examiners	Equipment for Interior Design Program at UTC	\$2,278
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ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

MS. REXANN BUMPUS

Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation	Peer Counselor Program	\$ 27,900
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