

Ex-Boxer Now Fights the Good Fight



Annette King, left, Holly Smith and Josh Rutgers talk before last week's Peach Area Habitat For Humanity Annual Banquet. Photo by Danny Gilleland

By Danny Gilleland
Staff Writer/Photographer

Josh Rutgers rode the bus north from Jacksonville, Florida last week. He was in Fort Valley Tuesday night for the Peach Area Habitat for Humanity Annual Thanks and Share Banquet. Josh came to share.

Josh said he grew up in a single parent home. His dad left before he was born. "I had a real troubled youth," he said. "I was homeless at 16 years old, in prison at 17. A volunteer pastor came to the prison. "I was in the hole," he said, referring to the prison's disciplinary detention cells. The minister began working with Josh, and he became a Christian in 1994.

"When I was leaving prison, some guards were nearby. One of them asked where I was going. I told him I was getting out. He said 'You are just going on vacation. This is home. You will be back.' I knew I never

wanted to return to prison."

Josh became involved in boxing and mixed martial arts cage fighting after prison. He was quite successful as a fighter, competing as a boxer, in Toughman competitions, and Full Contact Bare Knuckle Karate. He also became a certified personal fitness trainer. In 2003 he opened a gym in Jacksonville as an outreach ministry.

"I had a lot of rage within me," he said. "I am not sure where in came from but fighting was like therapy."

As he grew as a Christian, he lost that rage. "You need that rage to be a successful fighter," he said. The last few fights he fought without that anger. "I asked myself, 'why am I here.'" He retired from fighting July 17, 2009 after winning the Cruiserweight Championship.

Josh's first efforts at witnessing were to the homeless. The minister he was working with encouraged him to share his story. He later saw the gym as

a way of reaching kids before they get in trouble. "When I started the gym, a lot of people told me not to integrate my faith into my business." He knew the effect a volunteer's witness had on his life. "That is how my life got changed," he said.

So now, he shares his story "It's not something I can deny or escape, but I try to make the best of it," he said. To let kids know that in a few seconds they can make a decision that changes their lives forever. "I know this is what I need to do and where I need to be. I know God has had His hand in my life for me to be where I am now, coming from where I have been."

The local Habitat folks were also taking time during the evening to honor Agnes Stewart, Lillian Graves, Jacquelyn Demons, and Emily Strong, all Habitat supporters who passed away in the last year. They were also celebrating their fifteenth home built and the fifth home to have the mortgage paid off.

FVSU to Help Local Families With Holiday Dinner

The Thanksgiving holiday is a time when family, friends and love ones gather to catch up on old times and share their dreams of the future around the dinner table. To make sure every family's holiday is a bright one, Fort Valley State University is helping local families who are dealing with the tough economic downturn.

The university, along with Warner Robins' Piccadilly Cafeteria, will provide 20 families with a traditional

Thanksgiving dinner. The families will receive a turkey or ham, cornbread dressing, vegetables, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, and dinner rolls. For dessert, diners can enjoy a delectable sweet potato pie. The university will begin delivering dinners on Tuesday, November 24.

"FVSU knows families are struggling to make ends meet in this tough economy," said Alecia Livatt, development associate, who is coordinating

this year's turkey run, "so, we want to maintain our long-standing support of our local community."

Livatt says that the university hopes to raise more than \$1,500 to feed 20 families. For more information, call the Office of Marketing and Communications, (478) 825-6319.

Contributed by FVSU Office of Marketing and Communications

Hospital Employees Participate In Food Drive



The staff at Peach Regional Medical Center collected food items over the last three weeks to donate to the Feed Center for their Thanksgiving Food Drive. They collected around 800 items. Above, The Rev. Al Sanders and Hospital Chief Executive Officer Nancy Peed with the items collected. Photo by Danny Gilleland



Lena Belle Kay Duke Howard Honored



Pictured left to right are: Joyce Jones, Liz Getz, Jean O'Shields (President), Ann Stoelting (in back), Carole Odom, Minnie Barrett and Betty Hiley.

Town and Country Garden Club met on Tuesday, November 10, at the Kay Center. Town and Country has established a memorial garden in front of the school honoring Lena Belle Kay Duke, a founder of the Kay

School and the first president of the club in 1956. Golden daffodils will be added to the garden this year as a salute to all Senior members in their golden years, and the garden will be updated and cultivated.

Town and Country is in the Magnolia District of the Garden Club of Georgia, Deep South Division of The National Garden Clubs Inc.

Contributed

Air Force Reserve Band to Perform Free Holiday Concert

The Air Force Reserve Command presents its free annual holiday concert by the Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve at the Museum of Aviation December 10 at 7 p.m.

"Throughout this past year, the band has entertained millions of people across the country as well as many of our deployed troops overseas," said Maj. Donald Schofield, band commander. "Right now,

members of the band are preparing to entertain our troops overseas in support of Operation Season's Greetings. Also, many of these band members are preparing to deploy in support of our troops serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. We're thrilled to share the gift of music with our deployed troops and our Middle Georgia family."

The concert is free and open

to the public. The performance takes place inside the Museum's "Century of Flight Hangar." Doors open at 6 p.m. with concert starting at 7 p.m. Seating is limited. For additional information, please call 327-1760.

By: Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command Public Affairs

Allen Temple Begins Construction



From left, Byron Mayor Larry Collins; The Rt. Rev. William P. DeVeaux Sr, Presiding Prelate Sixth Episcopal District; The Rev. Alan Hale Wicker, Presiding Elder, Macon District; and The Rev. Charlie A Hicks II, Pastor of Allen Temple, prepare to break ground Wednesday. Photo by Danny Gilleland

Allen Temple AME Church of Byron held a Ground Breaking Ceremony Wednesday afternoon for their new facility at the corner of Jones Road and Georgia Highway 49. The new facility will include a 7,500 square foot sanctuary and 5,000 square foot fellowship hall.

The original Allen Temple AME Church burned in 2007. It was located on Lowe Circle in Byron. The congregation has been holding services in the Byron Community Center and in other churches in the area since the fire. They celebrated their 153rd anniversary

this past Sunday, November 22 at the Church Of God By Faith in Byron.

Scherer Construction of Middle Georgia was contracted to design and build the new facility. Construction is expected to be finished in the spring of 2010.

Love Light Tree Planned

LOVE LIGHT TREE

Life is a process of giving and sharing. As the holiday season approaches, we are ever mindful of the spirit. Peach Regional Medical Center's Spirit Team in partnership with The Leader Tribune and The Feed Center Outreach Ministry will share the beauty of Christmas by sponsoring the **Love Light Tree**. All proceeds will go to The Feed Center Outreach Ministry in Fort Valley to purchase much needed medical equipment.

A donation of \$5 will illuminate one light on the tree in memory or honor of a loved one. If desired, that person's name will appear in the Leader Tribune. Donations must be received by December 4. A beautiful Leyland Cypress Christmas tree has been donated by Roberts Christmas Tree Farm in Byron, Georgia. The tree lighting ceremony will be held on Thursday December 10, 6:30 at Peach Regional Medical Center.

Tax-deductible donations may be made by completing the below and mailed to the Spirit Team Love Light Tree project, Peach Regional Medical Center, 501 N. Blue Bird Boulevard, Fort Valley, Georgia 31030. For further information contact Tommie Lee Hall at 825-4478 or Rev. Al Sanders at 825-0038.

Your Name (Please Print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Enclosed is \$ _____ donation.

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

Name of Person honored or memorialized _____

Signature authorizing release publication to Leader Tribune _____