

look!



[amestown step team Chaotic will perform at the National Folk Festival. (Photo courtesy of Chaotic.)

Children are Folks, Too!

By now you've heard that Captain Spaulding is coming to town, right? Your children have been staying awake at night out of sheer excitement... What? You don't know Captain Spaulding? What about the beautiful high-diver Dardenell?

Well, hurry over to the Children's Area at the National Folk Festival, by golly, and meet these famous stars of the Alberti Flea Circus with the help of impresario Jim Alberti! While you're there, listen to Gambian musician Papa Susso play the kora. Watch hot taffy-like candy transform into animals and other fabulous creatures in the hands of Masaji Terasawa.

In addition to these scheduled performers, the children's area will host games, make-and-take crafts and interactive demonstrations. For example, after Chaotic, the 2005 Virginia step champion team, shows off its dynamic routine, members of the group will teach kids some moves. In keeping with the spirit of the folk festival, which honors the rich variety of cultural arts in the United States, Richmonders whose native language is not English will help children learn how to write their names and say "Hello!" in a new language.

The Children's Museum of Richmond is coordinating the children's area at the National Folk Festival, which will be open 12-5 p.m. on October 8 and 9. All Festival events take place on Brown's Island and Tredegar Ironworks and all are free. Call 788-6466 or visit www.nationalfolkfestival.com for more information. -ALR

After the Storm In the days after the disastrous Hurricane Katrina, many Richmonders gave generously of their money, time and resources. The long-term need for generosity, however, is still becoming evident as organizations develop relief plans.

Renata Rafferty, author of the book "Don't Just Give It Away: How to Make the Most of Your Charitable Giving," offers some tips on giving donations.

- Never respond to telephone or email solicitations.
- Beware of "sound-alike" charities—when in doubt, verify a charity's legal status at www.guidestar.org or with the local Better Business Bureau.
- Specify on your check how you wish your donation to be used.
- Refrain from collecting material items until a charity has agreed to accept such articles.
- As attention is focused on Katrina relief, don't forget other charities that meet ongoing community needs.

Rafferty reminds us to consider giving to local organizations that are receiving displaced people. In Richmond, both **United Methodist Family Services** and **St. Joseph's Villa** are prepared to host families from the affected areas. UMFS is reaching out to children who were in the foster care system. Working through a sister agency in Louisiana, the Richmond organization has pledged to take up to 20 children on its campus and to place 30 children in treatment foster homes.

St. Joseph's Villa is prepared initially to house 33 to 45 children and family members for up to two years on its campus. The organization plans eventually to provide housing for 60 to 70 more people, after acquiring emergency response housing units. The Villa is committed to keeping family groupings intact and is equipped to serve children with special needs.

Richmonders who wish to contribute monetarily to the efforts of UMFS should call Jane Odberg at 254-9463. Odberg stresses that contributions through UMFS will go directly to the Children's Special Fund of the Louisiana sister agency working to place children at UMFS.

St. Joseph's Villa is accepting financial and in-kind donations. Tangible items such as school supplies, household products and furniture can be brought to the Villa Donation Center at 8000 Brook Road. For more information on items needed, call 553-3202. To volunteer time, call the Volunteer Office at 521-5577. Financial contributions to the attention of "Hurricane Relief" should be sent to St. Joseph's Villa, 8000 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23227. - *Angela Lehman-Rios*

Stroll Through Richmond History At home with your baby and craving some intellectual stimulation and company? Check out About Town Moms, brand new to the Richmond baby scene. Founded by local entrepreneur and mom Keshia Case, About Town Moms offers stroller-friendly historical neighborhood walks, private museum tours and cultural adventures—all geared to educate you and introduce you to other moms.

Eager to give About Town Moms a try, I set out with local mom, Elizabeth Cram, and our newborns to take the Church Hill Historical Tour, reasonably priced at \$12. After we easily parked in front of Patrick Henry Park where the tour began, Keshia greeted us with a warm smile, introductions and a goody bag filled with water, candy, a gingerbread cookie and various handouts and maps of the area.

Keshia's master's degree in art history with an emphasis on Richmond architecture makes her the perfect tour guide. By the time the group of eight moms fully assembled, we were already impressed with Keshia's organization of the walking route and knowledge of how Church Hill began.

"This is great! It's educational, relaxed and fun," Elizabeth commented. The hour flew by as Keshia pointed out numerous Church Hill landmarks and explained their historical significance. And unlike a typical tour guide, she was flexible to stop whenever a baby needed attention from mom.

For tour descriptions and schedules, see www.abouttownmoms.com or call 218-6265. - *Libby Carty McNamee*

Good Vision is More Than 20/20 If you think of eye charts when you hear about vision tests, you've only got part of the story. The test for 20/20 eyesight doesn't catch many other vision problems—for example, with eye coordination or depth perception—that interfere with a child's learning. Vision problems are frequently mistaken for learning disabilities or attention-deficit disorders, according to the College of Optometrists in Vision Development website, www.covd.org. It estimates that nearly one in four children has a vision problem "significant enough to affect academic performance."

Parents and teachers who notice that a child frequently loses her place when reading, confuses similar-looking words, or complains that her eyes hurt after reading may wish to have the child undergo a comprehensive vision exam by an eye-care professional. If a vision problem is diagnosed, a prescribed program of vision therapy can likely correct it. The website mentioned above has more details, including information about symptoms, treatments and doctors. - *ALR*