



# Jessie's Gift

Providing mentoring services to children in the Albion Public Schools

Fall 2008

*Greetings from the Longhurst family! We hope this letter finds you all happy and healthy.*

*This is the first of many Jessie's Gift newsletters, all which will include updates on program, stories from both the mentees and mentors and information on upcoming events. For those of you not already familiar with Jessie's Gift, it is an endowed fund created by the Longhurst family in 2005 in memory of Jessica ("Jessie") Driscoll Longhurst. The fund is to be used to develop, provide, grow, promote, study and celebrate effective mentoring services to children in the Albion Public Schools.*



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## Donate

If you are interested in making a donation to Jessie's Gift, please send check or money to this address:

Albion Community Foundation  
203 S. Superior St.  
Albion, Michigan 49224  
Attention: Jessie's Gift Mentoring Activities

You can also log on to [www.albionfoundation.org](http://www.albionfoundation.org) to pay by credit/debit card. Make sure you select the "Jessie's Gift Endowment Fund" under the "fund designation" selection.

Note that 100% of the donations go directly to supporting mentees attending Albion Public Schools. Your gift is very much appreciated and will make a difference in the lives of many!

## Website

We are in the process of building a Jessie's Gift Website, which can be found at [jessiesgift.org](http://jessiesgift.org).

This past December, we held our third annual holiday party for the mentors and mentees of Jessie's Gift. After playing fun games and munching on the nutritious cuisine of pizza, cake and gummy bears, the mentees opened their gifts of art kits and candy. Although the food and gifts no doubt made the evening special, perhaps the most memorable part of the night came when Lynn, Jessie's mom, talked to the group about what it meant to "dream big" and how by believing in yourself, great things can happen.

During every Jessie's Gift party, Lynn tells the story of how Jessie once spoke to her about her own big dreams.

"Jessie was in her junior year at Albion College and preparing to go to Australia for a study abroad program. One day we were talking and she told me she'd like to be a president of a college, like Dr. Peter Mitchell, the president of Albion College. Jessie worked in Dr. Mitchell's office for two years and saw what a great impact someone in that position can have on the lives of many students. After talking to Dr. Mitchell about her post-college plans, she decided that, after she graduated, would attend a law school with a specialized focus in higher education.

After telling me her plans to be the President of a college, Jessie paused for a moment or two and then asked, 'Mom, do you think

that I'd be dreaming too big if I said I wanted to be the Governor of a state, like Jennifer Granholm?' My response to her was, 'Jessie, you can be whatever you want to be. You can be a governor of Michigan or you could even be the President of the United States. You just have to continue to dream big.'"

Lynn then reminded the mentees and the mentors that although Jessie wasn't able to live out her dreams, they still have the chance to dream big to make great things happen. She then played a song by Ryan Shupe and the Rubberband, "Dream Big" which has motivating and inspiring lyrics. With the help of the mentors, mentees can learn how to dream big.

**"You just have to continue to dream big."** —Lynn Longhurst



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## Jessie's Gift

Albion Community Foundation  
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Albion, MI 49224

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### News from Jessie's Gift, Fall 2008, continued



## Sigma Nu hosts charity basketball tournament to benefit Jessie's Gift

In April, the Sigma Nu's of Albion College held their fifth annual Charity Basketball Classic at the Kresge Gymnasium. For the third consecutive year, proceeds from the fundraiser were donated to the Jessie's Gift mentoring activities funded through the Albion Community Foundation. This year's event raised nearly \$11,000 through the purchase of tickets to the event, advertising, and sales of Charity Classic t-shirts.

This year's event featured music from local musicians and was made special by the attendance of sixty children being mentored through the Albion Public Schools.

Members of Albion College men's basketball team and sisters of the Alpha Xi Delta sorority led the kids through relay races and other group activities.

The Sigma Nu's basketball team lost a close one to the brothers of Alpha Tau Omega, but the loss did not dampen the excitement and success of the evening. The Longhurst family is grateful to all who took part in this fantastic event, especially Brian Homacek, chairperson of philanthropy for Sigma Nu, and Peg Turner, who arranged for the children to participate.

Jessie was very close to the brothers of Sigma Nu while a student at Albion College. They thought of her as a sister. In 2006, the Sigma Nu's planted a tree with a sign stating "In Loving Memory of Jessie Longhurst—Our Only True Sweetheart."

## Photo gallery

One of the ways mentors help children is by providing help with schoolwork. Shown here are Jessie's Gift mentors Erin Lusk (top photo) and Emily Wilson (bottom photo) at school with their mentees.



## Mentors benefit too!

While we've always known the great and positive impact that mentoring can have on children, we're learning more about the benefits it has to the mentors themselves. This past year, many of the Albion College students who served as mentors told Jessie's Gift leaders Len Berkey and Barbara Keyes that they plan to continue giving and helping others long after they graduate from Albion College. They also mentioned that graduate school acceptance committees and future employers are impressed with their commitment to mentoring.

Two of them commented:

"I feel that the mentoring program has been a blessing for the mentors as well as the kids. I have had the opportunity to learn and grow alongside my mentee as we built a relationship over this past school year." —*Asleigh Munch*

"It was a great opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child as well as learn more about Albion as a community." —*Emily Laurence*



## A growing program

This September, the students of Starr Commonwealth will experience the benefits of mentoring, as they begin to work with children in the Albion Public Schools through Jessie's Gift.

"Helping others is an integral part of their treatment, and through mentoring, they will be able to develop and increase their social interest," says Jessie's dad, Jim Longhurst. "Having the responsibility of mentoring children is an opportunity for the Starr Commonwealth students to use their strengths in a positive and productive way."