

A New Family Grows Together

YORK DAILY RECORD ■ THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008

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DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS — BL BOWDCH

Drs. Elizabeth and Alvin Revell met Makaya (at front), then a teenage refugee from the Congo who was living in York, at the African/American Love Feast a few years ago and later adopted him as their son. Elizabeth will speak Sunday at the 14th annual event, which honors community service and youth leaders, on the theme 'Save the Children.'

A new family grows together

Homeschooler mom to speak at Love Feast

By MELISSA NANN BURKE
Daily Record/Sunday News

Elizabeth S. Revell is 61. Her husband, Alvin, 75.

"Believe me," she says, "we were not out there looking to adopt a kid." But there he was. And from the beginning, the Revells knew they were part of a greater plan.

The story starts three years ago when Elizabeth, a psychologist, was providing therapy pro bono for some residents at the Friendship House, a temporary home for immigrant refugees in York.

She and Alvin, who live in Hellam Township, gave a ride to one of her patients and a friend, Makaya, to the annual African/American Love Feast, an event that honors individuals for community service and youth mentoring.

At dinner, they sat at the same table and ended up laughing an awful lot. Afterward, they went home, but stayed in touch with the young boy they liked so much.

Weeks after the Love Feast, Makaya called the Revells, grief-stricken. His mother had died from antibiotic-resistant TB.

Growing up in a country racked by rebel and militia violence, it wasn't Makaya's first brush with tragedy. His father and 8-year-old brother were killed in 2002 during an attack on his family. Their home burned.

Makaya, the oldest of five, fled. Alone, he made his way to the United States later that year, seeking asylum. His case is still pending with U.S. authorities, Elizabeth said.

"Over there at that time and still today with the violence going on, at his age he would have been inducted into something," Alvin said. "Or if not, he would have been dead by now."

The Revells and Makaya started hanging out a lot. Parental instincts kicked in: They became more protective of him and worried about his welfare. They became concerned he

BIOGRAPHY

Name: Makaya Sheshen Revell
Age: 21
Born in: the Congo
Lives in: Hellam Township
Family: adoptive parents Alvin and Elizabeth and three brothers who live in the Congo
Education: valedictorian, Achievement House Charter School (2007); freshman, Harrisburg Area Community College
Hobbies: soccer, karate, drumming

IF YOU GO

What: 14th Annual African/American Love Feast and Recognition Dinner
When: 2 to 5 p.m., Sunday
Where: Holiday Inn Holdorns, 2000 Loucks Road in West Manchester Township
Cost: Adults, \$35; children 12 years old and younger, \$20 (\$40 at the door)
For details: 848-4472 or 846-4419

wasn't challenged by the public school he attended.

"We were getting more and more involved in Makaya's life. We decided to have him come live with us," Elizabeth said.

"Around that time, we said, 'What the heck? Why don't we adopt him?'"

And they did.

They enrolled Makaya in a home-school program based in Brya Mawr. He earned As and the highest average and became valedictorian at graduation. His senior class presentation was on Mobutu, the dictator who ruled the Congo for 32 years.

The new family went to drumming circles, where Makaya could

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LOVE FEAST HONOREES AT A GLANCE

The following honorees and their respective organizations will be recognized Sunday at the 14th Annual African-American Love Feast and Recognition Dinner.

They have devoted time to helping York's youth, schools, charities, congregational activities or community-betterment efforts — all to "Save the Children," the theme of this year's Love Feast.

Here are brief descriptions of their efforts and lives:

Isiah Anderson Jr.

Age: 37
Home: Springettsbury Township
Family: wife Heather and four sons
Occupation: chief administrative officer, Three Cord Youth Services LLC
Service: coaching youth sports, youth mentoring, motivational speaking



Message to youth: Develop a passion and guard it with your life.

Organization: Three Cord Youth Services LLC is a private, for-profit education and counseling service.

Programs include New Hope Academy Charter School, a middle and high school

of approximately 500 students; Challenge Academy, an alternative education program that emphasizes academics, character education and behavioral change; and the Day Treatment Program, which works with children ages 12 to 18 who are referred by the county's children and youth and juvenile probation departments.

Robert "Nate" Jamison Jr.

Age: 35
Home: Manchester Township
Family: wife Joy and children Robert III, 5, Shekinah, 1
Occupation: social studies teacher, William Penn Senior High School in York
Service: adviser-in-training, Young Life ministry; deacon and youth pastor, Fairview Full Gospel Missionary Baptist Church in York



Message to youth: Have a passion for Christ and enjoy your youth. Have fun.

Organization: The 17-year-old William Penn Gospel Choir is a mixed-voice, extracurricular chorus of about 40 students who rehearse twice a week and perform at various churches and events. Faculty advisor Jamison, a 1989 graduate

of William Penn Senior High, was a founding member of the choir in 1980.

If it gets the OK from school officials, the choir might become Victory Ensemble and a for-credit class next school year.

Deborah Pinkney

Age: 55
Home: Springettsbury Township
Family: husband Alphonso and children Jerome, Anthony E. and Ashakee and daughter-in-law Kisha
Occupation: caregiver
Service: president and founder, Pinkney's Vineyard of Faith Ministries; foster mother; evangelist and youth director, Bethel Commandment Church of the Living God in York



Message to youth: Remember now thy creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Organization: Founded nearly four years ago, Pinkney's Vineyard of Faith Ministries is a faith-based group home for adolescent mothers and their babies. The girls learn how to be self-reliant, nurturing parents, attain financial self-sufficiency,

get a job and learn other life skills.

The nonprofit organization can house up to 12 girls. Counselors and mentors emphasize education, faith, health and personal hygiene, nutrition, meal planning, cooking and living on a budget.

Dr. Elizabeth Sheehan Revell

Age: 61
Home: Hellam Township
Family: husband Alvin, son Makaya and eight grandchildren
Occupation: psychologist



Service: Pro bono psychotherapy with refugees through the Golden Vision Foundation; past board member, Animal Rights Network; former co-editor, Gestalt Review

Message to youth: Learn from what others are willing to teach you, but act from your own heart, for this is where your truth is and the place where God speaks to you.

Recognized for: homeschooling her son, Makaya.

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3C

Feast

Continued from 1C

play his djembe drum. They cheered from the sidelines at his many soccer games and drove him to karate classes.

A friend of the Revells, Lamar Gunter, wanted to help Makaya's teenaged brothers, who became homeless after their mother died.

Gunter located a school in the Congo that would care for and educate the three boys, now 14, 17 and 15. She's since moved to Australia but continues to support their schooling from afar, Elizabeth said.

With his adoption, Makaya inherited an extended family, including three other siblings, their eight children and a plethora of aunts and cousins. This was exciting, albeit a bit overwhelming, he said.

"All of them love me, and I love them, too," he said.

Makaya pushes his parents to be more active. They help him with homework. He does some chores and feeds the rescued sheep on the family farm.

They're all still testing new boundaries, getting used to the changes in their lives.

Alvin, who is recently retired, has three grown children from a prior marriage. He never expected to be a soccer dad at 75, stutling his 21-year-old son to classes at Harrisburg Area Community College in York.

Elizabeth has never been a mother before. She never expected the maternal emotions she's having — nor the spiritual growth.

"There's this sense of love, a sense of meaning and an appreciation for the resilience of people I didn't have before," she said.

Makaya "has so much joy. He's a walking lesson. I learn so much from him every day."

Makaya himself said his life has zigged and zagged in ways he never dreamed.

"My parents pass away, and now I have second parents," he said. "God has been helping me a lot. He's given me second parents to look after me and give me a second chance."

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MORE LOVE FEAST HONOREES AT A GLANCE

Dr. Jesse Rawls Jr.

Age: 34
Home: Harrisburg
Family: wife Erica and children Aris, Khai, Alyse and Jessica
Occupation: principal, William Penn Senior High School in York



Services: minister and youth leader, Shiloh Church of God in Christ in Harrisburg

Message to youth: Life is not about taking but rather about giving. Live to serve and serve to live. It is our responsibility to uplift ourselves so that we are better able to uplift others.

Organizations: William Penn Senior High School is a 1,600-student urban high school.

Suzanne Moyer

Age: 59
Home: York
Family: husband Joseph and children Chelsea and Whitney
Occupation: consultant, Resource Optimization Service Inc.; counselor, York City Scholars Program (part of York City Dollars for Scholars); organization development consultant



Services: past president, York Youth Symphony; board member, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; past member and officer, A.H.E.A.D., business consulting group; past board member, York City Communities That Care

Message to youth: Music is a universal language, but it is a great team sport. It's a team activity in that it requires everyone's full participation in reaching their own level of excellence to generate a great performance.

No one can play a symphonic piece on their own.

Students who are involved in the arts tend to devote their energies in that direction and end up being able to maintain a positive focus in ways that may be difficult under different situations. It's an activity of love and devotion and a positive one that really promotes communication.

Organization: Last year, the York Youth Symphony celebrated its 50th anniversary. Governed by a volunteer board, the symphony's 75 to 85 high-school-aged musicians come from about 30 school districts in York and Adams counties.

The symphony presents three concerts to the public annually and two educational concerts at elementary and middle schools. Auditions are held each September. In recent years, symphony advocates have sought to get more city youth involved and encouraged music teachers to work with students who sometimes can't afford private lessons.

Sharon M. Ritter

Home: York
Family: brothers Wilmon III, Martin and Warren Ritter
Occupation: director, 21st Century Youth Achievement After-School Program (York City School District)



Services: member, Bethlehem Baptist Church in York; member, Delta Sigma Theta sorority; member, National Black Women Coalition; member, Eastern Star

Organization: This York City School District program offers educational enrichment, homework help, recreation, social services and cultural programs to up to 600 students in grades third through eighth. The program also serves adults in the after-school and evening program by providing literacy, telecommunications and technology education and parenting skills classes.

Elder Donnel Singleton

Age: 43
Home: York
Occupation: former assistant radiology technician, Memorial Hospital; student, New Life Theological Seminary's master of arts program in Urban Christian Ministry



Services: youth pastor and assistant to the assistant pastor, Emmanuel Church of God in Christ; volunteer, vacation Bible school; member, Wise Chorus

Message to youth: Serve the lord while you're young. Organization: The youth ministry at Emmanuel COGIC involves the youth group, called Parity Class, a group of about 15 junior high and high school students who focus on Bible study and community service. Another project is Teens Crises and Community, an occasional educational series about the justice system and community advocacy.

Douglas Woodard

Age: 48
Home: York
Family: daughter Ebony Michelle, 22, and Douglas Jr., 20
Occupation: metallurgist, Columbia Gas Co.



Services: co-chairman, York City Youth League; member, Emmanuel Church of God in Christ

Message to youth: You need to give back to your commu-

nity every chance you get. Whether it's in a small or big capacity, help another young person come along.

Organization: York City Youth League was started in 1993 by five volunteers who organized York kids into recreational sports teams but kept involvement low cost and local. Organizers secure space at city schools and buildings and developed a program that became an opportunity for youth mentoring, as well as exercise and teamwork.

This season, the league includes 30 basketball teams comprised of 245 students, girls and boys, in kindergarten through 10th grade.

Michael T. Smith

Age: 39
Home: York
Family: wife Terisha; son Mykal, 13
Occupation: founder and director, Temple Guard of York and Lancaster



Services: board member, York Youth Movement; deacon, Temple of Grace Ministries in York

Message to youth: Mentor youth today for a better York tomorrow.

Organization: Temple Guard of York and Lancaster started eight years ago as a church ministry. The goal was not only to teach the drill but give youth an alternative to gang activity and violence and build relationships.

Today, the guard is a nonprofit group with about 400 youth members in York and Lancaster counties, ages 5 to 20 — boys and girls of all races and backgrounds. The team performs at everything from anti-bullying assemblies to parties, weddings and sweet 16 parties.

Mark A. Rhodes

Age: 43
Home: York
Family: wife Val and children Nichelle Banks, 27; Marikela, 27; Aaron, 23; Monique, 19; and Monica Rhodes, 18
Occupation: machine operator, Harley-Davidson; diversity and conflict resolution trainer and owner, Key Learning Consultants; small business consultant



Services: co-chairman, York City Youth League; merger, York City Little League; chairman, Minority Business Development Council; executive board member, Eastern York County Youth Sports; member, Fairview Full Gospel Missionary Baptist Church in York

Message to youth: Never let anyone tell you that you can't do something. No matter what it is, you can do something. If you really believe in your heart it can be done, it can.

Organization: York City

YOUTH HONOREES

The following young people will be among those representing the organizations being honored Sunday at the African-American Love Feast:

- Carl Barnes
- Melina Garcia
- Jazmin Gilbert
- Kyah Monique Graham
- Keyana Johnson
- Mandy Patricia Lake
- Shana A. Moore
- Isheia Peleson
- Jade Quattibaum
- Makaya Revell
- St. Clair Simmons III
- Tyrone Smith

Youth League was started in 1993 by five volunteers who organized York kids into recreational sports teams but kept involvement low cost and local. Organizers secure space at York schools and buildings and developed a program that became an opportunity for youth mentoring, as well as exercise and teamwork.

This season, the league includes 30 basketball teams comprised of 245 students, girls and boys, in kindergarten through 10th grade.

Dr. George W. Waldner

Age: 61
Home: York



Family: wife Judith T. Waldner and daughter Lizabeth Renard, 33

Occupation: president of York College

Services: president of the board of directors, Crispus Attucks; executive committee member, York County Economic Corp.'s board of directors; board member, YorkCounty

Message to youth: I encourage youth to spend a lot of time on their studies because it will richly reward them in the future, both in terms of their personal success and also in terms of the opportunities to be of service to others.

Organization: York College is a private school with about 4,600 full-time undergraduates located partly in York and partly in Spring Garden Township. The average class size is 21 students, and campus life includes 80 clubs and organizations.

Religion

Continued from 1C

MONDAY

Lent

First United Methodist Church, 200 Frederick St., Hanover, Bible study "Radical Renovation: Living the Cross-Shaped Life." To register or for details, contact Phyllis Plowman at 637-1574.

TUESDAY

Support group

Surviving Spouses Social for widowed men and women 7 p.m. at Faith United Church of Christ, 508 Pacific Ave., York, 843-8991 or 845-7725.

Christ American Baptist Church, 730 Mangos Mill Road, Heidelberg Township, Christ-centered adult recovery program 7 p.m., 225-1876.

Shrove Tuesday

St. John's Episcopal Church, 140 N. Beaver St., York, Mardi Gras-style celebration 6:30 p.m. with jazz band, raffle, jambalaya dinner silent auction. Cost \$10 adults, \$6 children, free ages 5 and younger. Tickets available at door.

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 201 S. Main St., Spring Grove, Fastnacht breakfast

Valleys, 7 p.m.
St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 201 S. Main St., Spring Grove, noon and 7 p.m.

Locust Grove United Church of Christ, 1035 Locust Grove Road, Windsor Township, 7 p.m.

Advent Lutheran Church, 1775 E. Market St., Springettsbury Township, 7 p.m.

Zion (Shaffer's) United Lutheran Church, 4535 Shaffer Road, Codorus Township, noon and 7 p.m.

Zion Lutheran Church, 2215 Beandyside Lane, York, meal 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; service 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., 767-4673.

Heidelberg United Church of Christ, 47 W. Philadelphia St., York, supper 6 p.m.; Praise Central service 8:30 p.m.

Red Lion Zion United Methodist Church, 1155 Felton Road, Red Lion, 7 p.m.

St. Paul Lutheran Church (Hemlock), 11894 Susquehanna Trail South, Shrewsbury Township, 7 p.m.

Mount Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2164 Mount Zion Road, Springettsbury Township, 7:30 p.m.

Disciples United Community Church, meeting at Friends Meeting House, 110 Tutane Terrace, Lancaster, Celtic service 7:30 p.m., 898-0613 or www.ducc.us.

Christ (Roth's) Lutheran Church, 580 Roth's Church Road, Spring Grove, 7 p.m.

UPCOMING

Sweet Heart