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What's Briefly Happening

Mom's House mom named woman of Toledo 2006

Tearfully, Alandra Scott exclaimed: "Finally, all this hard work is paying off!" She had just been selected as one of the 2006 Women of Toledo.

This honor is awarded by the St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center Auxiliary and acknowledges remarkable women in the Toledo community.

"Alandra represents the spirit and determination that should be acknowledged but often goes unrecognized," said Stephanie Koehler, executive director of Mom's House, an organization created to support education and child-care for the single parent.

Alandra Scott was born the youngest of 14 children. Education was not a big priority for the Scott family. Alandra did not finish high school with her class. Instead, she gave birth to her daughter Amber and began the life of a single mother.

She would give birth to two more daughters before she reached 22. With little formal education, Alandra could not obtain a job that could provide a comfortable lifestyle for her family. Money was always tight. She and her daughters lived in a small apartment in a run-down neighborhood. She depended a great deal on her family to help her with transportation and other support, but they were not always in a position to help. Day-to-day living was — and still can be — a struggle.

Shortly after turning 30, Alandra gave birth to a fourth daughter. Her eldest was starting high school, and Alandra began to recognize that if she wanted to set a positive example for her children, it would be critical that she finish high school. She enrolled in a GED class and found much needed child-care support at Mom's House of Toledo.

At that time, finishing high school before Amber was Alandra's only goal. Within six months of her enrollment, she had completed all the requirements and passed her GED test. With a little dose of success and newly discovered self-esteem, her aspirations grew. Alandra immediately decided to enroll at Davis College and continued in the Mom's House program. Alandra is scheduled to graduate from Davis College in December 2006 with an associate degree as a medical assistant. She plans to continue her education in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

Her determination and drive have set an example for her three daughters. Her eldest, Amber, graduated from Scott High School in June and is attending Owens Community College this fall. Her other girls, Brittoni and Camille, maintain academic honors while participating in band and orchestra. Denae is flourishing and is excited about the prospect of starting kindergarten.

"Alandra is a role model for the other clients at Mom's House and is an inspiration to all who know her. She has proven that with a lot of dedication, hard work, and belief in yourself, it is possible to overcome any obstacle," Koehler said. "The difference that Alandra has made in her life has had a profound effect — not only on her, but also on generations to come."

For information about Mom's House may be found by calling, Stephanie Koehler at 419-241-5554 or visiting www.momshouse.org.

A fabulous fall festival - 10 fun activities for the whole family

It's hard to say goodbye to summer. But, never fear, there's lots of fun to be had as fall gets into gear. Check out our list of great things to do with the whole family.

1. Go apple picking. Check out the phone book as apple orchards abound in northwest Ohio. Wherever you go, make sure to call ahead as some require reservations. Most orchards' seasons begin in August and run through October or November.
2. Make your final camping trip. Enjoy the great outdoors after the crowds have dispersed. Camping, the weekend after Labor Day, allows you to avoid crowds but still enjoy all the conditions of summer. Check out your favorite campsite now that the season is slowing down.
3. Bake an apple pie together. Create wonderful memories making apple pies with your family. Kids can help mix the crust, pat it in the pan, mix the filling as well as work the topping together. Make several at once, bake one, and freeze the rest. Simply wrap securely in aluminum foil and place in a Ziploc bag.
4. Create a list of movies to watch together. As the days shorten and the time between dinner and bedtime lengthens, keep a movie list handy as a quick reference. Revisit Disney classics such as Old Yeller, Rascal, and Kidnapped. You will be amazed that old movies still have their appeal generations later. Your library is a great place to get these movies - usually for free! Using a library system's online service, www.toledolibrary.org for example, you can even request a specific movie to be sent to your local branch for pickup. For more ideas, consider checking out family-friendly movie Web sites, such as www.dove.org or www.familystyle.com.
5. Collect colorful leaves. Spend time on a nature walk, collecting leaves. Once home, position leaves decoratively on a piece of colored construction paper. Carefully cover with a sheet of clear contact paper; then, trim the edges. Enjoy using these as placemats throughout the fall or hang on the wall as art.zels
6. Thank your neighbors. Create gift packages for the neighbors. Include those you haven't met before; what a great way to demonstrate friendship.

Jessica Fisher is a freelance writer making her home near Kansas City.

Check with your buddy - How about a little chess game?

They shake hands, sit up straight and speak quietly. Win or lose, they congratulate one another. Considering that they range in age from 7 to 11, this alone is quite an accomplishment. But that's how you play chess.

"It's a game of the mind, not the mouth," explains Bill Brewer, one of the founding members of the Coffee House Chess League (CHCL).

The CHCL hosted its 5th Invitational of Champions at Southwyck Mall in June with six area CHCL affiliated elementary schools from Maumee and Perrysburg competing including: Fairfield, Frank, Ft. Meigs, Toth, Union and Woodland. Every school held an elimination tournament in the spring. Winners were invited to the Invitation of Champions. This year, the school that had the best winning record at the tournament was Ft. Meigs.

The CHCL, founded in 1994 with five members, now includes more than 1,500 chess enthusiasts. Members meet monthly at area coffee houses, bookstores and malls to engage in friendly games.

"We invite any interested school to become an affiliate," said Brewer. "There is no cost except

Kids!

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the purchase of chess playing equipment. Our members serve as coaches and try to attend all of the club meetings.”

In addition to the joy of the game, studies indicate chess helps children learn a variety of skills. The CHCL is investigating possible state legislation that would require chess to be taught in Ohio schools. Other states have or are considering such legislation.

“When kids play chess, they’re learning decision making, critical thinking, reasoning, judgment, concentration, and observation, and many other lifelong skills,” said Brewer.