



# The *Wright* Information

*“Self Reliance and Self Discipline”*

February, 2007  
Volume I, Issue 1

*John J. Wright Alumni Association Newsletter*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK...

*“We love thee so, our dear old school ...”* so begins our Alma Mater. These words evoke special memories for those who attended Snell Training School, John J. Wright School or John J. Wright Consolidated School.

The John J. Wright Alumni Association had its beginning in the mid 1950’s under the leadership of Mrs. Thelma Pryor as president. Among the purposes of the organization was to retain a connection among John J. Wright Alumni and the school community. The organization’s activities included annual days held in April. Classes at ten year anniversaries were recognized through their involvement in the program of the day.

Over the years, for various reasons, the organization became dormant. In 1993, the John J. Wright Alumni Association was reorganized and chartered as the John J Wright Alumni Association, Incorporated. Its purposes: to preserve and disseminate the history of African Americans in Spotsylvania County, Virginia; to promote, enhance and foster education and community welfare in the county in a charitable manner; and to promote fellowship among the alumni of Spotsylvania (Snell) Training School, John J.

Wright School and John J. Wright Consolidated School.

The Alumni Association of 2007 is committed to these principles, we are charged to preserve and share the legacy that is our heritage. We honor and thank those upon whose shoulders we stand.

We encourage our young people (our legacies) by supporting their effort to continue their post high school education through our scholarships and stipends. As participating and contributing citizens, they represent our bright hope for the future.

We are calling on all alumni and friends to maintain a current membership. Plan now to join classmates and schoolmates at our annual October banquet to renew acquaintances, share ideas for strengthening our association and support fundraisers so that we can reach even more students.

Our Alma Mater ends with these words *“... may your cause never wane.”*

Let us build on the past and expand our reach in our community. As we celebrate successes, we do so in the knowledge that, unless we continue striving forward, we will fall back. Growth cannot be accomplished without the help of involved and committed alumni. With your support the possibilities are endless.

**Constance E. Braxton, ‘58**  
President

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**Remember Your Pledges!!**



## THE MAN BEHIND THE NAME

By Octavia Hall

*Who is John J. Wright?* I wondered as I entered the halls of John J. Wright Intermediate School as a 10 year old sixth grader. I recall visiting the school library where there was an area dedicated to educating all who entered about his life and accomplishments. It would be fifteen or so years before I would truly know and understand the contribution of this man's life and legacy.

John J. Wright was born in 1863 on Blanton's Farm in Massaponax. At the time of his birth, it was unlawful for blacks to read or have any resemblance of an education. However, Mr. Wright persevered and obtained a formal education and eventually graduated from the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute which is now known as Virginia State University.

After obtaining his college degree in 1894, Mr. Wright returned to Spotsylvania County where he began his career as an educator, empowering many, encouraging self-discipline and instilling the value of self-reliance. He also assumed the role as one of the most prominent African-American businessmen in the area owning over 200 acres in Spotsylvania and 130 acres in Caroline county.

Mr. Wright's perseverance, dedication and most importantly his love of community made education possible for many African-Americans. His contributions to this community were endless and established a foundation by which many African-Americans in Spotsylvania County, even until today, are still benefiting.

Sources: "A Different Story" by Ruth Coder Fitzgerald; Central Rappahannock Regional Library and Fredericksburg.com.

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## CALLING ALL MEMBERS

We are looking for members and would love to have your support. Any person who attended, graduated from or was employed by John J. Wright High School, John J. Wright Consolidated School or Snell Training School and pays the annual dues of \$10.00 may become a member. **Please join us on May 5, 2007 at Bethlehem Baptist Church at 1:00pm to become a part of this wonderful organization.**

### MEMBERSHIP

We have three (3) membership categories.

- A. **Regular Member**-any person who attended, graduated from or worked at Snell Training School, John J. Wright High School or John J. Wright Consolidated School and pays annual dues.
- B. **Associate Member**-any person who shall ascribe to the purpose of the corporation and pay annual dues.
- C. **Honorary Member**-any person so designated by the Board of Directors.

**All current members should plan to attend the May 5th meeting to address general organization business which includes discussion of an increase in dues in 2008.**

Once becoming a member, we have many committees within the organization to which you may contribute your talents. For more

information, please contact the committee chairpersons listed at the close of the newsletter.

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## INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

This past year the John J. Wright Alumni Association continued it's commitment to our community by awarding scholarships to Cortez Cook; Hampton University, Brittany Taylor; University of Virginia, and Damon Pendleton; North Carolina Central University School of Law. In addition, two (2) stipends were awarded to Stephanie Kinard; Virginia Commonwealth University and Mark McGlone; Howard University. The scholarship and stipend awards totaled thirty-two hundred dollars (\$3,200.00). Many thanks for your continued support of our scholarship fund through your direct donations and participation in our banquets, dances, and other fundraising activities.

The 2007 Scholarship applications will be available after March 1, 2007. The deadline for submitting the application is April 15, 2007. You may contact Milton Hilliard (540) 891-5502, Jean Williams (540) 898-1068 and William Taylor (540) 582-5016 or write: "Scholarship Committee" JJWAA, P.O. Box 1061 Spotsylvania, VA 22553.

Scholarship applicants must be active members or the offspring of active members of JJWAA for at least two (2) consecutive calendar years.

Community Use: A needs-based dental clinic, meeting space, museum, and programs offered during afternoons, evenings and weekends.



**Note: Scholarships and the amounts to be awarded are determined by the number of applicants and their eligibility.**



## THE WRIGHT PLACE AT THE WRIGHT TIME

The Spotsylvania Sunday School Union will host its annual Black History Month Program on February 17, 2007 at Beulah Baptist Church at 2:00pm. Dinner will be served after the program.

The Spotsylvania County Tourism and Planning Commission will sponsor the Spotsylvania County Black History Month Program on February 18, 2007 at the Marshall Center at 3:00pm. This year's theme: *Remembering Our Past: Our Men Leading the Way*

**Come Sail with Us-** The JJW class of 1958, as a part of their 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion Celebration, will be cruising to Bermuda in May of 2008. The ship will be departing from Norfolk, Virginia and all are invited to join in the festivities. For additional information, please contact Milton Hilliard, 540-891-5502.

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## OUR NEW HOME

The Spotsylvania School Board decided in 2003 to construct a replacement building for John J. Wright Middle School because of the cost of necessary improvements to the 60 year-old school and the inability to purchase additional land for

expansion. The John J. Wright Middle School Utilization Committee formed in 2004 to study options for utilizing the facility when it became available following the opening of Post Oak Middle School in 2006.

Chaired by Courtland High School Assistant Principal Mary Speight, a former John J. Wright teacher and long-time Spotsylvania resident, the committee included instructional staff, the Director of Maintenance, and county representatives.

The School Board, as recommended by the Utilization Committee, approved the relocation of seven programs to a central facility, which will save the county approximately \$7 million in classroom space. This action will allow for future program expansion as well as serving the needs of the community.

The School Board contracted with an architectural firm, BCWH of Richmond, for assistance in designing the renovation to accommodate the proposed uses.

Programs to be offered:

- Alternative Middle School
- Alternative High School Graduation Alternatives and Non-Traditional Education in Spotsylvania County (GATES)
- General Education Development (GED)
- Preschool
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Professional Development

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