A Message From the President

Dear Friends,

We are heartbroken that we cannot hold Kates Day again this year due to the pandemic. We laud the strength and resiliency demonstrated by the staff of the Virginia Correctional Center for Women as they have dealt with many adversities these past months. As Covid-19 vaccinations are being offered to the staff and inmates at VCCW, we have every hope that we shall be able to resume our annual Kates Day in May of 2022. The inmates will be eager to present their wonderful plants, delicious baked goods and lovely handmade crafts. We look forward to having you join us for our annual meeting and dinner next year.

Through remote teaching and extension courses, we have been able to continue to provide the inmates with college level classes despite the pandemic. Since Kates Readers can no longer meet, the inmates are more appreciative than ever of the reading material we continue to donate to support literacy.

The Kates Foundation has been the recipient of some remarkable and unexpected gifts this year. We are most grateful to have received a very generous bequest from the estate of Nancy Booker, a longtime friend, dedicated Board member and committed supporter of Kates and literacy. Our Development Committee continues to work on worthy memorial tributes to her legacy and generosity. Another late Board member, CeCe Bullard, posthumously contributed to Kates the royalties from her book, *Millie Pierce*. Her publisher has donated copies of her book to be featured in the VCCW library. St. Michael's Catholic Church continues to generously support the inmates with cartons of stationery, assorted calendars, activity books and greeting cards.

During the pandemic, the Kates Foundation has continued to provide wardrobe assistance to women being released from VCCW by transporting suitcases of clothing from a local non-profit in Chesterfield to VCCW.

Although we will not be able to share Kates Day with you in May, please remember that you can designate Kates as the recipient of your Amazon Smile Prime contribution and your Kroger Community Awards Program. Both of these can be registered through our newly updated website at theelizabethkatesfoundation.org.

On behalf of the inmates at VCCW we extend thanks for your support of The Elizabeth Kates Foundation, and our efforts to provide educational and vocational programs. Your kind donations enhance the lives of the incarcerated and play a key factor in helping to reduce recidivism. When you send us your annual dues please consider a tax-deductible contribution of what you might have spent at Kates Day. Your gift will allow us to continue our important work and further the goals and dreams of Miss Elizabeth Kates.

Our deepest gratitude for all of you for caring and sharing,
Kate Sarfaty

Meet the New Warden

Warden TyKeshae Fowlkes got an unexpected surprise for Christmas this year – the exciting news that she would be returning to Virginia Correctional Center for Women, VCCW, in Goochland. While she was there in 2015 as Assistant Warden, Fowlkes now returns as Warden of the facility. “I have always loved VCCW. It is such a beautiful place and I enjoy being able to walk the grounds throughout the day as part of my job,” she explained. She added that one area of focus will be providing inmates opportunities for growth and education to prepare them for release.

Warden Fowlkes began her career with the Department of Corrections in 1995, working as a part-time secretary while taking classes in computer information (cont.)
systems. “I came for a part-time job and found a very rewarding career,” said Fowlkes. A keen sense of curiosity has always made her want to learn more, so she learned everything she could, and worked hard, earning promotions along the way. She thrived on the variety that came with the job. No two days were ever the same, whether she was involved in administration, security or grievance management. Fowlkes has worked in men’s and women’s minimum and maximum security facilities throughout Virginia, including death row. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her new job in Goochland.

So, how does the Warden spend her time when she isn’t working? “My garden is my sanctuary. I work outside every day from early spring to late fall,” she added. She laughed when she explained that she often rescues plants from the sale bin and loves bringing them back to life.

Attention Members

If you are a member of The Elizabeth Kates Foundation, you will find a ballot form for voting on the new slate of officers and board members enclosed with your newsletter. Please complete and return the enclosed form promptly. You may also include your annual dues at the same time. Once voting is complete, you can find the list of new officers and board members on our website, theelizabethkatesfoundation.org, and in the Goochland Gazette. We appreciate your response and value your continued support. With the cancellation this year of Kates Day and the Annual Meeting, your vote by mail is very important. If you are not a Foundation Member, we invite you to join us. The cost is a $25 donation. You will find information on our website under “membership.”

Education Update

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Kates Foundation has worked hard so the students at VCCW are able to continue to take college courses. Last spring when instructors suddenly could no longer go to VCCW, the Kates Foundation found ways to continue most of the classes. While other educational and vocational classes have not been available because of Covid-19, the college classes have continued due to the efforts of the Foundation. Several courses were offered last fall, and currently, students are enrolled in Sociology, College Composition II and Developmental Math. The Foundation has worked with Southside Virginia Community College to increase funding opportunities from other sources so that more opportunities to take more classes are available.

Kates Readers

Kates Readers 1, a book club for women working on their GED at The Virginia Correctional Center for Women, has been meeting, with the exception of the past year, since 2007 to provide books and lively discussion for its members. This is a cooperative project of The Elizabeth Kates Foundation and the Richmond Alumnae Club of Pi Beta Phi. Kates Readers 2, meeting since 2018, is for women who have a high school diploma or GED.

Kates Readers 1 and 2 give our participants the opportunity to practice reading skills, develop and broaden vocabulary, become more confident in discussing books in a group setting, and become more knowledgeable in different genres of literature.

As always, our appreciation goes to the GED instructors who encourage their students to be part of Kate Readers 1, to Mr. Brian Galvin, Librarian, and to the administration of VCCW for its continuing enthusiasm for our program. We also thank the organizations and individuals who support The Elizabeth Kates Foundation with their generous donations that make both Kates Readers groups possible. For additional information about Kates Readers, please contact Joan Dalrymple, jrdcpd@gmail.com.

Inmates Support the Community & Salute Our Vets

Board member Peggy Spera volunteers at a non-profit thrift store, where she keeps a sharp lookout for unsold yarn. Her eagle eye paid off over the past few months, and recently we were able to deliver 15 huge shopping bags of yarn and supplies to VCCW. There, a group of incarcerated women are knitting and crocheting hats to donate to the women and men who have served in our country’s military. The hats will go to patients and other veterans at McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond. From donated yarn to donated hats, there is a thread of kindness that stretches across boundaries.

The mission of The Elizabeth Kates Foundation is to provide educational and vocational programs to reduce recidivism.