THE FISHING SCHOOL

1240 Wylie Street, N.E. Washington, D. C. 20002 (202) 399-3618 Fax (202) 399-6723
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 60674 Washington, D. C. 20039

Tom Lewis
President/CEO
Founder

Board of Directors
John T. Butler
Chairperson

Robin Earnerst
Secretary/Public Relations

Jean M. Shaughnessy-Hodges
Treasurer

Evie Rooney
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Timothy P. Schwartz
Development

Jacqueline Bowens

Marie Darby

Reverend L. B. Jones

John F. Rankin

William J. Barrow. III

Millicent Gorham

Dandridge L. Ince

Stanley C. Peters

Richard F. Johns

Advisory
Joe Horning

Virginia Williams

Gil Brown, Ph. D.

Hon. J. C. Watts

Hon.James Talent

What is The Fishing School?

The Fishing School is a/an

- **AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM** that provides academic remediation;
- **SUPPORT SYSTEM** that seeks to address the holistic well being of youth and their families with a comprehensive approach;
- **SAFE HAVEN** for youth from street crime – a little "beacon of light" on Wylie Street;
- **HOME AWAY FROM HOME** that provides love, nurturing, and a nutritious, "home cooked" meal;
- **FAMILY** of students, staff, volunteers, and board members that provides support to one another;
- **CATALYST FOR CHANGING (CHANGE AGENT)** the negative life styles, attitudes and belief systems of neighborhood children and their families;
- **BROKER** of resources for children and families;
- **ADVOCATE** for students and parents in school settings; and an
- **"OASIS"** for spiritual development and a foundation for character development.

BZA
Case No. 16786
Exhibit No. 11

"If you give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will feed himself for a lifetime"

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16786
EXHIBIT NO.11

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STATEMENT OF PROJECT

The Fishing School, a non-profit organization, is established to provide a resource for educational and informational services to families and individuals in the District of Columbia.

The Fishing School is a community outreach program designed to enhance the quality of life for residents of the District of Columbia who suffer from the lack of education, unemployment or inadequate employment, mental or physical illness, depression, despondency, drug dependency, etc. The philosophy of the school is based in the age-old adage: "If you give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day, teach him how to fish, he'll feed himself for a lifetime." Education is the cornerstone of this program and the services are designed to enable self-sufficiency.

The Fishing School has various programs, which will be of significant benefit to the community at large. The primary objectives of the school are:

- To provide educational support for the community in the form of tutorial programs, literacy training, communication skills building and academic enrichment.
- To teach the community effective ways to secure and maintain employment.
- To instruct the community in the rich history of African American people.
- To provide, teach and enable the development of positive attitudes through spiritual beliefs.
- To promote responsible, healthy, and self-sufficient families and build strong family relationships.

Primary services will be offered at the school, although referrals will be provided on an individual basis as necessary. Services will be provided by a staff of volunteers and paid employees.

The Fishing School will adhere to all rules and regulations governing non-profit organizations in the District of Columbia.

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DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS OFFERED

Tutoring & Homework Assistance – Each day the children are offered assistance with their homework assignments.

Male Youth Enrichment Program – This program currently serves young men, ages 7 – 15. **The program:**

- **Monitors** academic achievement by working directly with teachers and principals.
- **Provides** structured activities for young men (including academic tutoring, field trips and sports). The program provides conflict resolution workshops through a partnership with Concerned Black Men.
- **Builds** character and enhances self-esteem.
- **Teach boys** about cultural diversity and history.
- **Improves** social and communication skills and provides an opportunity for self-expression.
- **Provides** positive male role models.
- **Facilities** trust.
- **Instills** positive moral values and social responsibility.

Scholarship Program – Each year, children are nominated to the "Free the Children Trust", a college scholarship program for inner city children.

Computer Program – This workshop is designed to teach youth how to use computers and educational software. Students also use computers for homework assignments. Classes are taught twice a week at our two locations.

Nutrition Program – A warm meal is served nightly. For many of the children, this is the only cooked meal of the day.

Inspirational Hour – Bible scriptures and discussions are an important aspect of the daily schedule. Issues are discussed, using Biblical principles.

Recreation Program – The youth are periodically taken on field trips that are both educational and recreational.

Sports Program – The school has a basketball, baseball and football team.

Dance Program – The Fishing School dance troupe has performed at several locations across the Metropolitan region. Dance instructions are given weekly in partnership with the Northeast Performing Arts.

Music Program – The Fishing School has a "testimonial choir", which is beginning to enjoy acclaim throughout the city with an increase in their performance schedule. Students, staff, parents, and volunteers write positive testimonies. Musicians put the testimonies to music from the Urban Family Development (Neighborhood Learning Center) and children from both centers make up the choir. Singing classes are conducted once a week.

Cultural Program – Representatives from embassies visit The Fishing School, and the youth have visited embassies. They are taken on many culturally enriching field trips.

Saturday Female Enrichment Program – This program:

- **Provides** structured activities for young ladies (including academic tutoring, and field trips).
- **Builds** character and enhances self-esteem.
- **Teach girls** about cultural diversity and history.
- **Improves** social and communication skills and provides an opportunity for self-expression.
- **Provides** positive female role models.
- **Facilitates** trust.
- **Instills** positive moral values and social responsibility.

Stanford 9 Preparation – Our educational consultant administers a math and reading tutorial program daily to enhance the homework process and the Stanford 9 preparation.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR
31 HOPKINS PLAZA
BALTIMORE, MD 21201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: MAR 28 1995

Employer Identification Number:
52-1736536
Case Number:
525075026
Contact Person:
M MCCARTHY
Contact Telephone Number:
(410) 962-7756
Our Letter Dated:
October 11, 1991
Addendum Applies:
Yes

THE FISHING SCHOOL INC
P O BOX 60674
WASHINGTON, DC 20039-0674

Dear Applicant:

This modifies our letter of the above date in which we stated that you would be treated as an organization that is not a private foundation until the expiration of your advance ruling period.

Your exempt status under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) is still in effect. Based on the information you submitted, we have determined that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are an organization of the type described in section 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Grantors and contributors may rely on this determination unless the Internal Revenue Service publishes notice to the contrary. However, if you lose your section 509(a)(1) status, a grantor or contributor may not rely on this determination if he or she was in part responsible for, or was aware of, the act or failure to act, or the substantial or material change on the part of the organization that resulted in your loss of such status, or if he or she acquired knowledge that the Internal Revenue Service had given notice that you would no longer be classified as a section 509(a)(1) organization.

If we have indicated in the heading of this letter that an addendum applies, the addendum enclosed is an integral part of this letter.

Because this letter could help resolve any questions about your private foundation status, please keep it in your permanent records.

If you have any questions, please contact the person whose name and telephone number are shown above.

Sincerely yours,

Paul B. Harrington
District Director

Enclosure:
Addendum

Guidelines under which private foundations may rely on this determination, for gifts, grants, and contributions made after March 13, 1989, were liberalized and published in Rev. Proc. 89-23, Cumulative Bulletin 1989-1, page 844.

You are required to make available for public inspection a copy of your exemption application, and supporting documents, and this exemption letter. If you are required to file an annual information return, you are also required to make a copy of the return available for public inspection for three years after the return is due. Failure to make these documents available for public inspection may subject you to a penalty of $10 per day for each day there is a failure to comply (up to a maximum of $5,000 in the case of an annual return). See Internal Revenue Service Notice 88-120, 1988-2 C.B. 454, for additional information.

Tom Lewis
Founder

The Fishing School was founded in 1990 by Tom Lewis, a retired D.C. Police Officer with over 20 years' experience in combating issues facing inner-city youth.

The Fishing School has received numerous awards and commendations including the Leadership Washington KPMG Community Partnership Award in 2000. The Fishing School's contributions to the children of its community have also been highlighted in area newspapers and local network news, including:

People Magazine, WRC TV 4,
The Washington Post, WUSA 9,
The Washingtonian and many others

For More Information Contact:
Tom Lewis, President & CEO
The Fishing School
Phone: (202) 399-3618
Fax: (202) 399-6723
Website: www.fishingschool.org
E-mail: fishingschool1@aol.com

Children's National Medical Center

These materials were made possible by a donation of CNMC

THE FISHING SCHOOL

1240 Wylie Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 399-3618

4737 Meade Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20019
(202) 396-2743



"If you give a man a fish, you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will feed himself for a lifetime."

United Way/United Black Fund Member Agency
D.C. One Fund
CFC # 8553

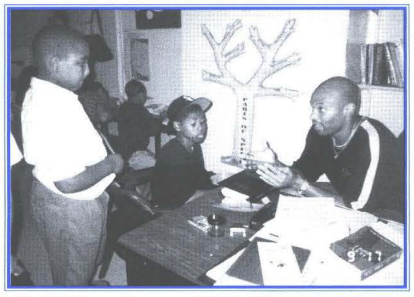
PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Goals:

To meet their responsibilities for promoting and protecting their children's health and well-being, parents need support from their communities.

The Fishing School's programs and services place particular importance on the needs of inner-city young people. The majority of programs are targeted toward children in grades 1-8.

Emphasis is placed upon the educational and motivational needs of children, recognizing that education can and will "unlock the door" to knowledge and opportunity as well as break the cycle of poverty and deprivation so prevalent in troubled communities. At The Fishing School, children are free to "dream dreams" and acquire the tools they need to make their dreams come true.



Programs Offered include:

- Spiritual Enrichment
- Homework/Tutoring Assistance
- Spanish Classes
- Computer Classes
- Cultural & Historical Awareness
- Environmental Classes
- Male/Female Enrichment Program
- Arts & Crafts
- Recreational Activities

Benefits:

- Improved Academic Performance
- Increased Self-Esteem
- Enhanced Cultural Awareness
- Enriched by Community Leaders as Mentors



PARENT/COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

Classes and Workshops are offered to parents to provide children and parents with the skills that help to establish a successful and healthy family environment.

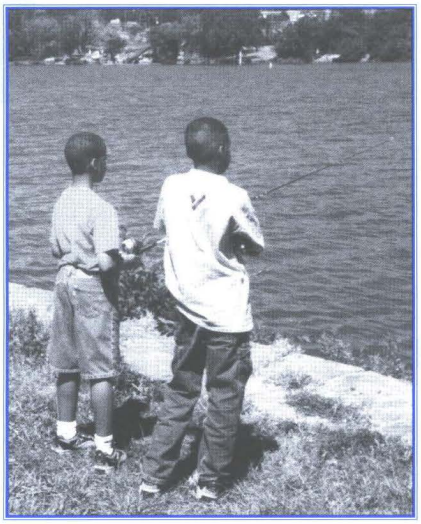
Our Parent/Comminity Resource Center allows participants to become enlightened, educated and empowered to take control of their lives — and develop their full potential.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Fishing School actively promotes community involvement in its program and services. By "casting our net" for volunteers and assistance within the community, we foster an increased



level of responsibility and accountability. The Fishing School offers community members an opportunity to reinvest in our most valuable resource, the lives of our children. We also provide a forum for discussion of problem solving of critical issues affecting the community.





HOW YOU CAN HELP. . .

The Fishing School is a 501(c)(3) organization and is primarily funded by voluntary contributions. All donations are tax deductible and directly enable inner-city children to have a "safe haven" in their neighborhood. Monetary donations allow for the purchase of instructional books, tapes, and other needed equipment and supplies that will help children succeed. Donations of these items are graciously accepted, as well and volunteers are greatly appreciated at The Fishing School.

An investment in our children today helps to assure hope and leadership for tomorrow.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The problems of our nation's capital are well-known — violent crime, alcohol and substance abuse, unemployment are destroying our city. These problems have a devastating impact, particularly upon our most vulnerable citizens — the children. The Fishing School believes that meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities in Washington, DC is not beyond our reach. The solutions to the problems that plague our children are those that can be addressed, in part, by community based organizations that offer substantive alternatives to inner-city children and young adults in whom the future of our communities reside.

The Fishing School endeavors to create and nurture the desire, will, and discipline required for inner-city children to develop into independent, productive members of our society.

OUR MISSION and CREED

The Fishing School is a faith based after- school family and child support center that provides a safe haven, intervention and education for vulnerable children and youth. The Fishing School accomplishes its mission through a comprehensive array of services which include tutoring, community resource referrals, spiritual enrichment and recreation.

Our philosophy and mission is based on both the scriptures (John 21), and the proverb that "if you give a man a fish, you will feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will feed himself for a lifetime."

CREED:

As a member of the Fishing School, I promise to honor God, honor my parents and guardians, wherever they are and whatever they do and respect myself and others wherever I go and in whatever I am doing.

I will work to reach the goal of the Fishing School, which is to teach me how to develop the skills and knowledge to make the right choices in life so that I will be a support for my family and myself. If you don't see me in the streets or hanging on the corners using foul language, it's because I've gone fishing at the Fishing School.

The Fishing School Presents...

THE FISHNET

If you give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day.
Teach him to fish, and he will feed himself for a lifetime.

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2001

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT...



Dear Friends,

As you can imagine, President Bush's visit to our Meade Street location on January 30th generated a lot of excitement for our children. As T.J. Blandford, Jr., one of our students' summed up, "It was a good experience. I introduced myself and shook his hand because he was kind enough to come to our program." For T.J., and many of our other students who were interviewed by television and newspaper reporters, "the most exciting part was seeing myself on the news later that day."

T.J., a tenth grade student at FLOC Learning Center, has been coming to our Wylie Street after school and summer enrichment programs for four years. He credits the Fishing School with keeping him out of trouble.

As we move toward the end of the school year and the beginning of our Summer Enrichment Program to begin on June 25th, I am reminded of the ancient prophet Zechariah's vision of a good society was one where "the children shall play at peace in the streets." I am grateful to the Kimsey Fund for giving our children tickets to attend several Wizards games and a hockey game as a reward for good performance in school.

On April 25th, our Wylie Street children gathered to serenade Henrietta Smith as their way of saying "a job well done." Ms. Smith has served as our Executive Director for the past year but now moves on to develop her human resources consulting business. Yet, we are fortunate to welcome Ms. Tonya Sellers as our new Administrative Assistant.

The other day as I was finishing up a telephone call in my office, I heard the voice of one of our youngest students asking each person she was encountering, "Can you please help me with my homework?" The response was the same, frustration at wanting to help but already swamped with another responsibility. Her childlike delight in learning was evident in her voice as she asked her question over and over. This desire is just too precious not to nurture.

We are fortunate to have some wonderful individuals and organizations that volunteer at our two centers on Wylie Street and Meade Street. Yet, as that little pleading voice indicates, we desperately need more volunteer tutors. As you read the feature on Lewis Anderson, our longest term volunteer, I hope that you will be inspired to share your talents with our children and come fishing with us.

With a grateful heart,
Tom Lewis
Founder and President

OUR MISSION...

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MEDIA WATCH



"Fishing School for the Mind: Faith-based programs for youths," The Washington *Times*, Tuesday, April 10, 2001, page C4. Visit www.washtimes.com to access this full-page feature.

"Ex-Cop Reels Kids In," *The CQ Researcher*, May 4, 2001, page 391.

President Bush's Remarks at The Fishing School
January 30, 2001

Thank you, Tom, very much for having us. And it's such an honor to have John Diulio on my staff. For those of you who don't know John, he's a pioneer in working with Republicans and Democrats and people who really care about political parties to revitalize neighborhoods and places where hope may have been lost, by rallying faith-based organizations. And so, John, I'm so honored that you've sacrificed for the country.

It's good to see Steve Goldsmith here, who is a partner as well.

A little over a week ago, a few mile from here, I was honored to be inaugurated your President. I'm here today to repeat the promise I made on the steps of the Capitol: I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. I'm going to need some help to do that. And so I'm so honored four Members of the United States Congress are here: Senator Joe Lieberman from the great State of Connecticut; Senator Rick Santorum from Pennsylvania; Congressman Mark Souder of Indiana; Congressman Tony Hall of Ohio.

I'm also pleased that two members of my Cabinet came: one, Mel Martinez, my Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; and finally, Rod Paige, a fellow Texan who is now the Secretary of Education.

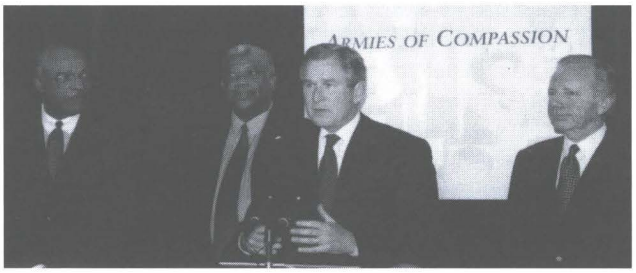
The Fishing School obviously attracts people who seek excellence, and all of us up here, regardless of political party, love to herald excellence. And we love to stand next to people who have got vision and good intentions and a good heart. And that's Tom Lewis.

This little haven is a refuge from violence and addiction and abuse. Children find learning and care, but most important, they find something that we can never pass legislation to achieve, and that's love. They find love. They find an adult saying: Somebody cares about you; somebody loves you; somebody wants to help you. Tom knows what we all know, that through loving children, you find deep fulfillment in your own heart. You can just see it on his face, and you can hear it in his voice.

As a candidate for President, I had the privilege of visiting a lot of churches and synagogues and charitable groups all across the country, groups that offer food and shelter, hope and dignity. I've seen how effective and committed these groups are at saving and changing lives. As President, I am resolved to put Government on your side, Tom, on the side of the committed and the caring and the compassionate.

There are many people in need. The good news about America is, there are so many willing to serve. It's the great strength of our Nation. There's no limit to the talent and energy and compassion of this great land. But sometimes the need is too great, and the resources are too limited, and all of us, as private citizens and public officials, should help where we can.

Today, I'm sending to Congress a set of ideas and proposals that mark a hopeful new direction for our Government. We will encourage community and faith-based programs without changing their mission. We will eliminate barriers to charitable works wherever they exist, and we will encourage charitable giving wherever we can.



I'm open to any good ideas that will come from the Congress. And I can assure you, these four good Members of Congress will have some good ideas. And they're probably not going to be afraid to tell me either. But here are some of my proposals.

I want to fully open up the Federal after school program, called 21st century learning centers, to all after-school programs, including faith-based groups. I propose to create a compassionate capital fund which will provide start-up funds for promising new programs serving people in need. We'll make sure that funding is available to faith-based programs on an equal basis, with nonreligious alternative.

Government, of course, cannot fund and will not fund religious activities, but when people of faith provide social services, we will not discriminate against them. I propose to encourage mentoring programs for children of prisoners, as well as programs that, when possible, help to mend broken families.

The change we seek won't come all at once by any act of Congress or any Executive order signed by the President. Real change happens street by street, heart by heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. It happens in places like this one, the Fishing School. Yet, I hope that good policies can expand and multiply these efforts, uplifting livings all across America.

"What can I do? How can I hear the universal fall to love a neighbor just like I'd like to be loved myself?" In this case, a person I call a social entrepreneur, and this is a country of social entrepreneurs.

And our job, regardless of our political party, is to recognize the strength of the country, to nourish it and feed it within the Constitution, within the bounds of the Constitution, and to herald success when we find it. And today all of us are honored to be here to herald success because we have found it right here.

God bless Tom. God bless your program.

MELODIES FROM HEAVEN



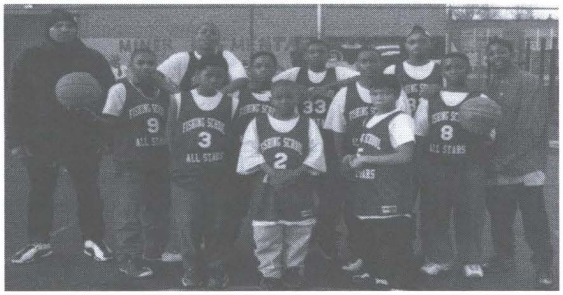
The Kids Testimonial Choir debuted on April 6th as part of an arts fest that featured drama, dance, poetry, and song. Singing popular selections like "Lord, I Lift Your Name On High" and "Worship Christ," eight youngsters from The Fishing School joined eight children from The Neighborhood Learning Center for their inaugural performance held at Washington Community Fellowship, 907 Maryland Avenue, NE.

The Choir was formed in January of this year and is a joint project with the Neighborhood Learning Center/Urban Family Development. The purpose of the choir is to give our children, their parents, and the community an opportunity to express their hopes, thoughts, and dreams in song, especially by singing their original compositions. India Brown, 11, likes best "that we get to make up our own moves and motions. We're very creative."

The Choir practices at Wylie Street each Thursday for an hour under the inspirational direction of Mr. Kertwin Daniels. According to Wanetta Johnson, 12, "We have a teacher who can sing also. Mr. Daniels cares about our work, he's just like a father. He's great."

The smiling faces of the choir members showed an obvious joy of performing. For Anastacia Johnson, 9, singing before an audience was a definite confidence boost. "When we got on the stage, everyone cheered for us." The Choir also performed on Saturday, May 19th, during the 7th Annual Block Party of the 400 block of 9th Street, NE.

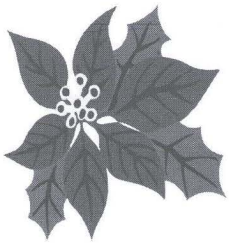
PLAY BALL!



The Male Youth Enrichment Program All-Stars basketball team finished their season with a 4-4 record in the D.C. Recreational League. These 15 players, ages 9-12, now turn their attention to baseball and take the field for the fifth year as the Yankees. Last year, the team won the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation's District Three Championship.

The Yankees lost their opening game against Taft, 11-1 on May 8th. However, Derrick McCrae, MYEP Coordinator and Coach, is optimistic about improvement as evidenced by the team's 16-4 victory over Harry Thomas Recreational Center in their second game. The Coach is confidant that his team can repeat as champs this season. Their 16 game schedule runs through June.

In order to be eligible for the team, Coach McCrae insists that players maintain their grades. He also speaks regularly with parents and teachers to ensure that his players also behave at home and school. The Coach is grateful for the help of Ms. Evans, Ms. James and Mrs. Ouedraogo, three mothers of team members, who assist with coaching and managing the team.



HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

On April 16th, The Council of Churches of Greater Washington, DC entertained 40 of our students at our Wylie Street location, including several from our Meade Street site. Representatives of area congregations encouraged our students to pursue their aspirations, led songs, played games with and gave presents to the students. All, especially the children who were to have attended the White House that day for the annual egg hunt that unfortunately was canceled due to rain, had a good time.

COMMUNITY FOCUS



On Saturday, March 31st, The Fishing School joined with the city to clean up Wylie Street. Twice in April, seven Fishing School students volunteered at Rock Creek Manor Nursing Home to assist senior citizens. *To suggest a community service project, please call Ms. Sellers at The Fishing School, (202) 399-3618.*

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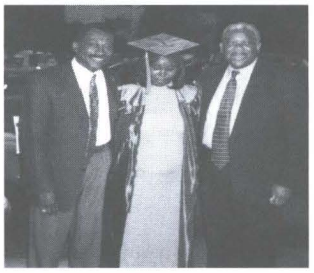
FishingSchool@aol.com

We're on the Web
www.fishingschool.org

The Fishing School

If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will feed himself for a lifetime.

Volunteer Spotlight: Lewis Anderson



Mr. Anderson & Mr. Lewis with Gloria at her graduation.

Each Tuesday faithfully for over seven years, Lewis Anderson has arrived on Wylie Street to tutor students in math. He first heard about The Fishing School when someone at his church, Washington Christian Center in Temple Hills (MD), mentioned the program. His first visit in October 1993 made him a believer in Tom Lewis' vision to make the lives of the kids better.

"Sometimes, I come in really tired, but after being with the kids, it energizes me," said Mr. Anderson who has a demanding job as the Chief of Classification and Compensation for the National Parks Service. Growing up, math was a challenge for him and sometimes he was required to repeat a class. Yet while a student at Howard University, his perseverance paid off and he began to do well. He delights in encouraging young children not to be frustrated or frightened by a subject that was once his weakness.

Notes on every tutoring session have been entered in the same spiral notebook he brought with him on his first visit. Because of his longevity of service, he has been able to see many graduate. He especially notes with satisfaction that young boys who stay in the program usually complete high school.

Mr. Anderson beams with pride when he mentions Gloria Wilson's success in overcoming many personal obstacles to graduate with good grades from high school last year. He first began helping her with pre-algebra in the 8th grade. Gloria plans to enter Montgomery College this summer. While in the 10th grade, she won a Free the Children Scholarship of $2000 each year for four years of college tuition. The year of her award, she had the highest academic average of all the applicants.

CONTRIBUTE TODAY

You make a big difference in the lives of our children when you give to The Fishing School. Financial contributions from friends, areas businesses, churches, and organizations are an important reason why we are able to provide a safe and nurturing environment. *Please mail your tax-deductible contribution to*

The Fishing School, P.O. Box 60674, Washington, DC 20039.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Fishing School needs **mentors** and **guest speakers** for our Male Youth Enrichment Program and Female Youth Enrichment Program. **Tutors** are needed each weekday for our Homework Assistance Program, Reading Tutorial Program, Spanish Program, and Computer Program. To get more information, contact Ms. Tejeda at The Fishing School, (202) 399-3618.

"You get more back than you give out. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping a child improve their mind. You do make an impact."
Lewis Anderson, 7 year volunteer

The Fishing School thanks all of our supporters, including Arcana Foundation, Association of Legal Administrators (Capital Chapter), Banyan Tree Foundation, Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Clark-Winchcole Foundation, The Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, William H. Donner Foundation, Max & Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Mark Watson Eager Foundation, Lois & Richard England Family Foundation, Fannie Mae Foundation, German Orphan Home Foundation, Heron Foundation, Kimsey Foundation, Junior League of Washington, Marpat Foundation, Gilbert & Jaylee Mead Foundation, Eugene & Agnes Meyer Foundation, Nation's Capital Progress Foundation, New York Avenue Foundation, Spring Creek Foundation, Hattie M. Strong Foundation, The Summit Fund, Philip L. Graham Fund, Freddie Mac Foundation, Gannett Foundation, International Monetary Fund, and Kaiser Permanente.



HOOKED ON HOPE

Tom Lewis's school fishes for souls not yet lost —kids growing up in a culture of despair



SHAUNTAY NEDD STUDIES A FIVE-inch worm squirming in a plastic carton and scrunches up her nose. "Yuck," says the 7-year-old, clutching her fishing pole, "I don't want to put the worm on." Tom Lewis, 57, nods in sympathy. "These are the biggest worms I've ever seen," says the retired Washington policeman, struggling to bait her hook. Then Shauntay casts the lure into the Potomac River. She never does catch a fish but, says Lewis, that isn't the reason he brings needy D.C.-area children—about 40 this time, aged 5 to 15—to the river. The lesson is about patience in life. As with fishing, he says, "it takes time and patience to wait for good things to happen."

In a neighborhood where broken homes, drug use and hopelessness are common, and patience is not, the ex-cop has fashioned an oasis—one that values family, knowledge, hope and self-esteem. Seven years ago, at his own expense, he refurbished a rowhouse to accommodate a nonprofit outreach program in which 25 to 65 children are tutored by volunteers in subjects ranging from ballet and poetry to computer skills. He named it the Fishing School after the old adage "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, he'll feed himself for a lifetime."

That philosophy defines Lewis, who overcame considerable hardship himself. Born in Chadbourn, N.C., he was the sixth of 15 children. His mother, Martha, picked cotton, and his father, Gaston, worked in a sawmill. "By the time most of us were teenagers, we'd all left home because times were hard

"We're trying to show children the possibilities the world holds," says Lewis (on his porch with wife Lucille and, below, fishing with student Thelonius Forbes, 9).



Photographs by Vickie Lewis



◄ Devotionals and song (led by assistant Madeline Neal, center) kick off each day.

➤ Lewis inspired Natalie Preston, 17, to finish high school. "I just changed," she says.

▼ Lewis tells kids that taking control of one's life isn't easy: "You've got to want to."





and there was no real support," says Lewis. But he never lost touch with his family, providing them with emotional and often financial help. Ed Lewis, 50, his younger brother—also a retired Washington policeman—recalls that Tom "was always, always the guy to make sure the family stood together."

Lewis dropped out of school after 10th grade, becoming a migrant farm laborer, then an Army grunt and a postal worker before he joined the D.C. police force in 1965. After walking a beat for three years, he transferred to community relations. Assigned to speak at schools, he was shaken by the poverty and desperation he saw. "I never saw so many filthy, dirty children coming to school in the morning," he says. "I stepped out of many classrooms with tears in my eyes."

Lewis swore then that he would retire after 20 years and live off his pension while helping those in need. On Valentine's Day 1986, he made good on that promise: "I retired on a Friday, and Monday I started working at the largest halfway house in D.C.," counseling newly released prisoners.

But for him that wasn't enough. While praying one Sunday in 1989, he was struck by an idea. He decided to convert a rental property he'd bought in Northeast D.C. into a family service center. " 'What do you expect to get out of this?' " Lewis says his doubting neighbors asked. "I'd say, 'I expect to see men take care of their children, women nurture their daughters. I expect to see children learn how to have more self-respect.' "

His wife, Lucille, 53, who owns a tailor shop, was also skeptical at first. With three children (Jason, now 28 and a barber, Patrick, 27, a mailman, and Tisha, 24, an ad saleswoman), she was concerned about family finances. "But then I realized that this was something he truly wanted to do, and I made peace with myself," she says. Still, she worries that her husband, who suffers from diabetes, works too hard.

Since its opening in 1990, the school has gradually added volunteers (it now has 20) and, with backing from the United Way and individual donations, has increased its annual budget to $71,000. In summer, daylong activities begin with group motivational sessions, followed by field trips, arts-and-crafts projects and gardening. During the school year, children arrive after school for Bible study, a hot meal and tutoring. Deborah Rankin, 42, a D.C. schoolteacher and volunteer says, "[He] gives kids a place to go where they'll really learn something, where they learn to care for each other."

Lewis's "graduates" echo that praise. Natalie Preston, 17, the first of his kids to finish high school, hopes to become the first in her family to graduate college. "I'm going to be a lawyer," she says. Cyrus Neal, 14, who was tutored in writing at the Fishing School and recently won an $8,000 college scholarship for his poetry, says, "I came to meet girls. After a while, I don't know what happened, I started to want to come." It wasn't just his instructor—or the girls—who won him over. It was Lewis. "I could see he really cared," says Cyrus. "He really loves us."

■ ROB HOWE

■ MARY ESSELMAN *and* ERICKA SOUTER *in Washington*



The Fishing School participants get a lesson on computer and life applications from program director Tom Lewis at the Washington, D.C.-based community outreach center.

The Fishing School

"If you give a man a fish you will feed him for a day; but if you teach a man to fish he will feed himself for a lifetime."

Beltway Agency Field Office staff and agents lend their support to a youth service center

Affixed to one of the nondescript row houses on a side street in the District is a sign that serves as a beacon to its youngest residents. The Fishing School's sign, which states its mission [see above], has proven to be an effective lure that secures its catch by delivering what is promised.

The brainchild of Tom Lewis, a retired D.C. police officer, the outreach center was established and initially funded by him in 1990 when he saw a need to provide a haven for learning and self-expression in the city's neglected Southeast area. "We want to motivate children as they continue to grow," says Tom.

Children from ages 5 through 15 now have a daily regimen of detouring to the center after school to take computer classes, go on field trips and receive tutoring in their subjects. Daily weekday Bible study classes and a hot meal nourish the spirit and the body. A corps of center volunteers routinely go to schools to advocate for the students and serve as football and baseball coaches for the center's leagues. One volunteer teaches the principles of aerodynamics by taking children to Goddard Space Center to launch rockets.

The payoff for the volunteers' selfless service is the chance to add to the list of success stories Tom readily shares with pride. "One young man's poetry was read at a public reading at Border's Book Store that was attended by poet laureate Maya Angelou. He's since won an $8,000 college scholarship," says Tom. "Another young man appeared in 'The Nutcracker' with Chelsea Clinton at the Warner Theatre and won a scholarship with the Dance Theatre of Harlem. A young lady is now bound for Hampton University."

Using every available space in the narrow two-story structure, Tom hopes to purchase the adjacent home to expand the center. Funding for the center is provided through the United Way and private donations.

Neighbor to Neighbor Support

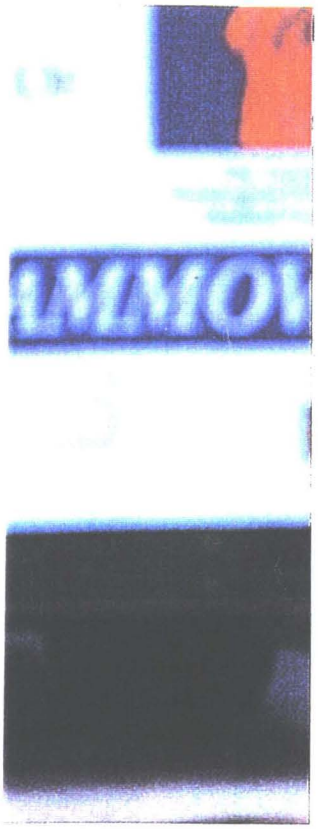
The school's efforts came to the attention of Beltway Agency Field Executive **Lil Holt** through articles in People and Parade magazines. "State Farm always talks about being involved in the community and this is an effort that has proof that it is making a tangible difference in the lives of children," says Lil. "If we are serious about our commitment — and I believe we are — I can't think of a better vehicle to support."



Beltway Agency Field Executive Lil Holt presents a $675 check donated by Beltway agents to Tom Lewis, director of The Fishing School.



TOM LEWIS



"You remember the O Street Market crew? They used to hang right outside this door, digging their knives in the mortar to hide drugs."

Tom Lewis is standing outside the Fishing School, the children's and family-services center he started on Wylie Street in Northeast DC. Once labeled the worst street in America, Wylie now has hope and promise—all because Lewis bought one rundown building as an investment.

Then, in 1989, the former DC police officer followed a vision that told him to turn the place into a community resource. Its name comes from the adage "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and he'll feed himself for a lifetime."

The teaching begins at 3:30 as Lewis and his small staff—one full-time assistant and five part-timers—begin helping children ages 5 to 15 with their homework. Up to 30 kids a day take part in Bible study, computer training, table games, gardening, sports, and crafts; one volunteer takes small groups to Goddard Space Flight Center to launch model rockets.

The narrow row house gets noisy, but it's a happy noise, filled with "Excuse me" and "Thank you, Miss Neal." Lewis won't stand for disrespect, and slogans like "You've got to want to" adorn the walls.

Lewis's own motivation saw him through three years of migrant farm labor, a high-school-equivalency degree earned while in the Army, a bachelor's degree from American University, and 20 years on the DC police force. Seeing the city's poverty firsthand pushed him into social work and then to the Fishing School, where he takes no salary.

"GOD HAS USED ME AS A WAY OF SHOWING THE PEOPLE IN THIS AREA HIS LOVE."

Wylie Street children have given poetry readings at Borders Books. One graduate is now at the Washington School of Ballet; another won an $8,000 creative-writing scholarship. Lewis is preparing to open a second location, over in Deanwood, to change more lives. "We believe you can make something out of nothing," he says. "This is what I need to be doing." □