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Total Sunshine Holds Balloon Release for Johnson MS Scholar

WI STAFF

THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2011

James Perkins, 14, was accidentally killed when an automobile jumped the curb and struck him in June, 2009. He was on his way to Thurgood Marshall Public Charter School in Southeast to take his placement exam for the upcoming fall season. His mother was also injured, though not seriously.



Marilyn C. Holmes, center, founder of Total Sunshine, Inc. with students who received new backpacks for their academic achievement at Johnson Middle School in Southeast. / Courtesy photo Bernadette Dare

Perkins, who was admired by his family, teachers and friends, was an outstanding math student and the salutatorian of his class at Johnson Middle School. The tragic loss to the community is what brought them back together again to celebrate his life at a balloon launch on Fri., November 18.

"Blue was James' favorite color," said Marilyn C. Holmes, president of Total Sunshine, Inc., the non-profit organization that honored James. The program also served as an opportunity to "encourage students to strive for greatness," Holmes said.

Following remarks by school board members Dorothy Douglas (Ward 7) and Trayon White (Ward 8), along with United Black Fund President Barry Lenoir, a group of nearly 100 students, community leaders, family and friends of Perkins went outside of Johnson Middle School to release blue balloons into the crisp evening sky.

The date marked what would have been James' 17th birthday. His family released 17 blue balloons to acknowledge the date. Others, including students and their parents released yellow and blue balloons.

"Each balloon released by the students represents an academic promise for excellence," Holmes said. And, in exchange for the promise, Total Sunshine, Inc. provides school supplies, laptops and other rewards for the students who do well in school. "The white balloons released by the parents represent a commitment to check homework every day," she said.

Holmes has spent the past 15 years as a D.C. EMS-paramedic. She said she sees how violence cuts down the lives of so many young people in the District.

"When I pick up these young people in my ambulance and they turn to me and say, 'Please lady, don't let me die,' I tell the kids I work with that this is what can happen when young people make the wrong choices," Holmes said.

Moved to make a difference in the young people's lives, Holmes established Total Sunshine to do just what the name implies...to bring happiness into "a too unhappy global community."

Holmes launched Total Sunshine, the television show on DCTV in 2001, purely to entertain her viewers. But, overtime she determined that it was more rewarding to use the program to motivate her viewers by sharing stories of goodwill and tolerance, charity and academic excellence.

It was James' untimely death that inspired her to establish the James Perkins Memorial Fund, a Total Sunshine project supported by the United Black Fund. For the past two years, with limited resources, the

Weekly Poll

Should the D.C. Taxi Cab Commission forge ahead with a vote to increase rates (specifically from \$1.50 per mile to \$2.75 per mile, and wait time fee from \$15 per hour to \$25 per hour)?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

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Balloons were released in honor of James Perkins, a math scholar and salutatorian, at Johnson Middle School in Southeast./Courtesy photo Bernadette Dare

fund has recognized students across the city for the academic excellence and handed out hundreds of school supplies to worthy students.

"We have not been able to raise a lot of money yet," Holmes said, "But we are proud that the program we had that honored James accomplished our mission of promoting smiles."

T

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Comments

1 2

#8 Andy Mabbett 2011-11-23 13:09 -5
 Balloon releases are harmful to the environment, to wildlife and to domestic animals, as I outline in an article, "A salutary lesson in the perils of inflation" which you can find by Googling for "birdguides balloon release".

Perhaps the organisers were told that the balloons are biodegradable - but, as my article shows, even biodegradable balloons can last - and do harm - for a year or more.

Quote

#7 Tiyanna 2011-11-23 12:07 +3
 - thank YOU to every one who came out to my cousin Balloon Release ! Total Sunshine has really helped our family out ' letting us know that we have somebody here with us that really care ! On Friday we had a really good timee letting my cousin knoe that he is really being missed & loved ! me love you lilJames & happy 17th Birthday :)

Quote

#6 Patricia Perkins 2011-11-23 11:44 +2
 I would like to thank everyone for their love, support and prayers; the balloon release event was fantastic. And I would like to thank our sponsors: Project Reboot, The United Black Fund and Safeway. And a special thanks to Ms.Merilyn C. Holmes you are very special to our family Thank You and God Bless.

Quote

#5 James Jackson 2011-11-23 08:26 +2
 I want to thank everyone who was there in person and in spirit for the Balloon Release at Johnson MS; in our celebration of our son, James Perkins' 17th Birthday. I can't begin to tell you all how thankful I am for Total Sunshine and all of their supporters for helping us, turn our tragedy into a blessing for others. I know Lil James felt the love, because Patricia and I did. I would also like to thank all those who said a prayer, light candles and release balloons in memory of James birthday, so many in other around the country who could only be there in spirit. Your love and support warmed our hearts, thank you more than words can say. Total Sunshine needs your support, tell your friend, tweet about it

Quote

#4 Antoinette 2011-11-23 07:10 +3
 Supporting Youth City Wide!

Quote

#3 Crystal 2011-11-23 07:05 +3
 Wow! Now this is great. Total Sunshine, Inc. Supporting DC's Youth. Thank You!

Quote

#2 Merilyn Holmes 2011-11-23 04:05 +3
 Thanks W! We hope readers will support our efforts to bring students to positive outcomes. Our School Grade Incentive Program has CONSISTENTLY received positive feedback from students, teachers, & school administrators. In 2012, our aim is to provide NEW laptops DC's top graduates for college, to provide many seminars in schools, & to promote many smiles. Fingers crossed!

Quote

#1 Merilyn Holmes 2011-11-23 03:55 +3
 I am elated! DC students were provided tools for success in the classroom and powerful messages of encouragement for the future. Our hope for the future is to further support the TSI School Grade

Incentive Program (supported by the James Maurice Perkins Memorial Fund) which gives laptop computers to DC Valedictorians & Salutatorians citywide for use in college; also facilitates behavior changing seminars in schools. I know I am making a difference where it counts-in the minds of youth. This "Medic to Society" is on duty (smile)!
Quote

1 2

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Merilyn Holmes Name (required)

info@totalsunshine.org E-mail (required, but will not display)

www.totalsunshine.org Website

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