



Contributing to EDUCATION

BETSY DE VEGA'S PASSION IS TO OFFER PARENTS THE TOOLS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

BY MARQUITA GRIFFIN

Immediately following her graduation from high school, Betsy de Vega immersed herself into the educational realm. It was a field she knew she needed to be connected to and for the past 30 years, this Greatwood wife and mother has devoted her efforts to supporting to local education.

With a degree in Psychology from the University of Houston in her pocket, de Vega has worked in education, in various capacities, from a bilingual case manager/ teacher for MHMRA of Harris County to an administrator for the Southampton Montessori School.

She was the first person to bring a cognitive skills-based enrichment program, Learning Rx, to the Houston area, and she is also a certified Irlen Screener and is Virtus trained.

de Vega also carves out time to volunteer for organizations like Night of Superstars, Hope for Three and Child Advocates of Fort Bend and is a member of Learning Disabilities Association and International Dyslexia Association.

Today, however, she is known for her work as the founder and executive director of the KnILE Center, an educational resource center in Richmond that she founded in 2008. Referred to as the little red school house for the 21st century, the KnILE Center offers parents the option of focused and specialized educational instruction for their child.

“My passion has always been working with children and I have always had a soft spot for working with kiddos that learned differently,” de Vega said. “I, too, struggled in school and wanted to find a way to help other students so they didn’t have to work as hard as I did, or at least have other options so they could succeed in school and life.”

RECOGNIZING AND FILLING IN THE CRACKS

When she founded the KnILE Center, de Vega’s intent was to catch

the children who fell through the cracks. Recalling her own childhood as an “average student [who] always had to work hard to get to the end result,” de Vega said she understands the struggles some children face.

“School wasn’t easy and reading and literature weren’t either. Looking back, I think I may have been diagnosed with Dyslexia if given the opportunity in school.”

It would be naïve to think there are no figurative cracks in the school systems, but their presence does not anger, nor deter, de Vega, in fact they inspire her. Where some people would see an unavoidable deficit, de Vega sees an opportunity to fill in those cracks with something unrivaled.

“Everyone is unique and learns differently. Traditional schools are a great option for most students, but cannot accommodate everyone or every learning style,” de Vega said. “I wanted to offer an alternative learning environment to kiddos who tend to fall through the cracks in traditional school either because they have a learning concern or they are exceptional and feel stuck or get bored waiting for others to catch up.”

To parents who want to take control of and support their child’s education, de Vega said they absolutely can. Parents don’t have to feel at a loss, not when the right resources are around.

The Knile Center has a private school called KnILE Prep Academy, which is a self-paced, content mastery “boutique style” private school that works with students on both sides of the bell curve.

The academy works with students with anxiety as well as learning concerns like ADHD, ADD, Dyslexia and Dysgraphia, plus exceptional students, competitive athletes, actors, entertainers and those involved in other extracurricular activities who need a more flexible schooling environment and schedule also benefit from the services of KnILE Center.

“Schools like mine exist to meet the needs of students that flourish in a different setting for whatever reason,” de Vega said. “In our school, we follow the child and his or her needs, not the other way around.”

FOCUSING ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Being in the position to work with students, to meet them at their level and helping them achieve impressive accomplishments brings a sweet satisfaction to de Vega, who said recent events have taught her to slow down and appreciate life — to “focus on to what is truly important.”

A year and a half ago de Vega, who has lived in Greatwood for 15 years, was diagnosed with young-onset Parkinson's.

“Although Parkinson's affects those 55 years old and older more frequently, there are many of us under the age of 50 diagnosed with it as well,” de Vega said. “One thing Parkinson's isn't, is prejudice. It doesn't matter your origin, age, race or gender. In addition, Parkinson's is an individualized disease, meaning symptoms may vary from person to person so finding the best treatment can be tricky at times.”

de Vega said she decided to publicly open up about her condition to primarily let everyone suffering from an illness know that she supports them.

“I know so many amazing people suffering from different illnesses, both physically and mentally and I want them to know they are not alone,” she said.

She also said she wants to bring awareness to the disease and organizations, like the Michael J. Fox Foundation, that are dedicated to research and development to help stop the progression or find a cure.

“As far as my story goes, I am doing great. I exercise regularly, take vitamins and work on continuing to improve myself. Don't get me wrong, I have good days and bad days, but doesn't everyone?” de Vega said. “The biggest challenge I face right now is my struggle to slow down and focus on me. If you know me, you know that's a difficult one for me, but I really think God gave me this cross to bear so I would be forced to slow down, not overflow my plate and focus on to what is truly important in my life.”

Like her husband, Charles de Vega, and their children Alex, 18 and Gigi, 16.

Like the joy of dancing — “It must be my Cuban heritage. I can be the first one on the dance floor and the last one to leave,” she said with a laugh.

Like trying new cuisines and traveling with family and friends.

Like being the head of an educational center that improves the lives of so many students.

“I feel so extremely blessed to be surrounded by so many incredible people, from my amazing family and friends to my staff and families at KnILE, to the incredible community I get to live in,” de Vega said. “I count my blessings daily. I have the best family ever and wake up every day doing what I love — making a difference in a child's life.”



The de Vegas: From left, Charles, Gigi, Alex and Betsy



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