



**Fluvanna Faces**

### **Where do you live?**

Lake Monticello

### **How long have you lived in Fluvanna? What brought you here?**

I was born and raised in Charlottesville and moved to Fluvanna in 2001. I always liked the area and I wanted to live in a more rural environment.

### **Tell us about your work.**

I have worked at the University of Virginia for 19 years. For the last nine years I have been the Administrative Manager in the U.Va. Department of Radiation Oncology, School of Medicine. I oversee the day-to-day operations of the department and ensure everything runs smoothly. It's a busy and sometimes demanding job, but I am fortunate to work with wonderful staff who make my job rewarding. I am very honored to just have received the 2013 Leonard Sandridge Outstanding Contribution Award at U.Va.

### **Tell us about your family.**

My husband, John, is the building and grounds maintenance man at Effort Baptist Church and works harder than any person I have ever known – and he is very handsome! My 16-year-old daughter, Rachel, just finished her sophomore year at Fluvanna County High School (FCHS) where she is a good student and a year-round athlete (cross country and track). All three of us have the same goofy sense of humor. John and Rachel are very supportive of my busy job and whatever volunteer projects I'm involved in (and they usually get recruited into helping).

### **Tell us about a hobby you have.**

I spend most of my free time volunteering through my church, Fluvanna schools, and other non-profit organizations. I coordinate or assist with many walk/run fundraisers, including Legs for Liberia, Fluvanna Pump and Run, and the annual Fluvanna Meals on Wheels 5K run. I have coordinated dinners, t-shirt sales, concerts, symposiums, and served on many committees for non-profits. Though it's a lot of work I truly enjoy it.

I recently submitted two grant applications on behalf of FCHS. The first one was awarded for just under \$5,000 from the "Lowe's Toolbox for Education" grant to re-seed FCHS athletic fields, making them safer for our student athletes. The second one was submitted for chemistry lab equipment and we won't hear the result until the end of June.

### **Describe one of the highlights of your life.**

One of the biggest was the medical missions trip I took to Liberia, Africa through Effort Baptist Church in 2009. I trained with a local optometrist and the Lions Club generously donated

glasses so that we could hold vision screening clinics in Liberia. I was not prepared for the tears of joy, the hugs, and exclamations of "I can see! I can see!" To witness the many people that our medical team was able to treat and the lives that were saved was amazing. The trip was possible mainly due to the generosity of Fluvanna residents who supported fundraisers for medicine and medical supplies. It was also neat to meet the young girl who my family had been sponsoring to send to school in Liberia.

**Describe one of the biggest surprises of your life.**

Receiving a letter of commendation from former President Bill Clinton for the work I did while employed at FBI Headquarters in Washington, D.C. I framed and hung it in my office at work. It's not every day you receive a letter from the president!

**Describe one of the tragedies/struggles of your life.**

The death of my beautiful niece, Jennifer, from meningitis was definitely the biggest tragedy my family and I have ever experienced. She was a 4th year U.Va. student who was healthy and happy when we all celebrated her 21st birthday together. One week later she died suddenly from the deadly B-strain bacterial meningitis. She was my sister's only child and it was, and still is, just devastating. Though it's been almost eight years, it is still very painful and hard to accept.

My family and I knew nothing about meningitis and in order to make some sense of what had happened we did a lot of research. Although Jennifer had received the meningitis vaccination, we learned that there are several types of bacteria that can cause meningitis and the current meningitis vaccination available in the U.S. covers them all except for the B-strain, which killed Jennifer. We knew we had to do something. I networked with my scientist and physician colleagues at U.Va. and they helped me find the Moe Lab at CHORI in Oakland, California. My family and I flew there to meet Dr. Greg Moe and his team of researchers whose primary focus is the B-strain meningitis bacteria and developing a vaccination that will cover it.

We started an annual event called the Jennifer Leigh Wells Moonlight Walk/Run for Meningitis Research as well as other events to increase awareness about the disease and to raise money for meningitis research. We created the Jennifer Leigh Wells Fellowship at the Moe Lab, and the community has rallied around us each year to help us raise over \$80,000 thus far. In view of this horrific loss, I am proud of my family for coming together to try to bring something positive out of it and to try to prevent this from happening to anyone else.

([www.moonlight4meningitis.com](http://www.moonlight4meningitis.com))

**Describe a dream you have for your future.**

My hope is that I can continue on my planned track to retire within 10 years and then devote my time to volunteer work. I want to stay active and make a difference.

**Describe a fear you have for your future.**

I try really hard not to live in fear and to trust God, but I do always worry about my family's health and safety. I also worry that one day my eyesight will become so poor I will not be able to read books, which would be extremely painful for me.

Here's your chance to sound off.

**If you could give one public service announcement/word of advice to the public at large, what would it be?**

Folks, get up and get involved! You can make a difference! Volunteerism and commitment is decreasing rapidly. Don't just think "somebody else will do it" – you are that somebody else! See a need, start thinking about how you can fix it, and involve others. You don't have to spend a lot of time or effort to make a significant impact. Pledge to give just one hour per month

## **Jamie Dowell DeVore**

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volunteering in whatever you feel passionate about. Get your entire family involved as well. If everyone did that, just think how much better our world would be.