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Around the wrist, a message of help

Richmond nonprofit group
FRIENDS aims to sell 1,000
 bracelets to support programs

BY ROBIN FARMER
 TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

A Richmond organization that helps families and children is raising money and awareness about its mission with a bracelet honoring a woman instrumental to its history.

The FRIENDS Association for Children plans to sell at least 1,000 sterling-silver bracelets inscribed with "Isn't it amazing what one woman and her friends can do?"

THE LUCY BRACELET can be purchased for \$35 at 1004 St. John St. or by calling (804) 644-2357.

That woman is Lucy Goode Brooks, a former slave born in Richmond in 1818. With members of her sewing circle, Brooks helped to open the Friends Asylum for Colored Children in 1871 at the corner of Charity and St. Paul streets.

"No longer deemed useful, because they could not be used free, [children] roamed the streets of Richmond," a book about the Brooks family written by relatives says.

The orphanage evolved into FRIENDS, a nonprofit child and family agency. It has three centers and programs that include tutoring, child care, and leadership and career-advancement classes for adults. More than 4,000 Richmonders, most with an average household income of less than \$20,000, received assistance from the group in 2004-05.

"The Lucy bracelet is one component that has helped to get our name out," said Cherie Clarke, a family support services social worker.

Michelle Bair, whose daughter attends the agency's child-care center, isn't surprised that most people are unaware of FRIENDS. She didn't find out about its programs and services until two years ago.

"When I was looking for child care for my



FRIENDS ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN

MORE ONLINE

Read more about **Lucy Goode Brooks** from our Black History profiles. Go to **TimesDispatch.com** and search for "Black History."

daughter, I wasn't even considering somewhere within the city because I didn't think it would be good quality. But upon visiting the [Church Hill] location at the recommendation of a church member, I was astounded by what they had to offer," she said.

Steve Davis Jr., 8, is among more than 100 youngsters who attend an after-school tutoring program.

"They help you and they tell you what to do with your homework and stuff," he said.

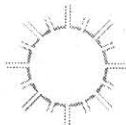
So far, FRIENDS has sold about 300 bracelets at \$35 apiece.

"Few Richmonders know about this oasis of an organization called FRIENDS, born in and serving the children of historic Jackson Ward long before there was such a community known as public housing," said Julie Sulik, the agency's communications coordinator.

Sulik conceived the idea to sell the handmade bracelets to raise the organization's profile and to raise money for the agency, whose administrative offices and Family Center are at 1004 St. John St., the same block where the orphanage once stood.

• Contact staff writer Robin Farmer at farmer@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6312.

SATURDAY



Windy and clear. High: 42.
 Low: 18. /B14

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Remembering Lucy

She lived in the 1800s, but her legacy of compassion continues. **B2**



