

**By Michelle Brooks**

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Pam Hart is backed up by her family in her decisions. They are Amanda, 13, right, Brittany, 11, left, Matthew, 7, and her husband, Todd Hart. The family is wearing T-shirts from schools she has helped to launch. (Julie Smith/News Tribune)

Pam Hart's civil engineering degree led her to the state highway department, which led her to a great mentor who taught her the significance of long-range planning.

Since her first daughter was born in 1993, Hart has been the one leading.

First is her family, where she has home-schooled her three children for four years. And her husband, Todd, shares the same passion for education that she does.

Then she found her gift of administration fit well helping perpetuate the parent-focused services at First Steps, an enrichment and preschool program at First Christian Church, where she still serves as director.

Hart continued to be a visionary in July 2001 when she followed what she felt God was leading to do, to develop a new Bible-based, parent-first elementary school - Concord Christian School, which will begin its second year with doubled enrollment this fall.

And now, since the fall of 2005, she has been at the helm of the latest alternative education move, bringing together professional teachers and home-school settings at the Lighthouse Preparatory Academy, where students sign up for one to seven courses taught three days each week at Columbia College.

Each of the community endeavors Hart has been involved with have the same goal, equipping kids to go out and impact the world for Christ.

But that goal is fostered through a Christian-based program that comes alongside parents, Hart said.

We don't ever want to usurp their role as the primary caregivers, Hart said.

Lighthouse's mission statement sums up Hart's drive: To strengthen families by partnering with parents to develop witnesses for Christ through academic excellence and character development.

But Hart doesn't advocate for one form of education. She likes the public schools, actively supports the new parochials and even teaches at the Jefferson City Home Educators cooperative program.

Every family has to do what's right for their family, Hart said.

As for the Harts, and a growing number of other families in Mid-Missouri, they want continuity between what is taught at home and church and what children receive at school.

It won't do much if we raise great, nice children who are not prepared to do God's work, Hart said.

Hart has been most encouraged by the variety of personalities and talents that she feels God has pulled together to create these new educational outlets, she said. And that is why she felt comfortable moving off the Concord Christian School board, because she knows so many people in leadership share the same vision, she said.

I enjoy the different ways God has gifted people and pulls things together, Hart said.

The first year is scary, she admitted about jumping in to a new school offering. But when you look at CCS now, you see God was faithful.

The need for the alternative education sources is apparent to Hart when she sees the level of parental involvement and enthusiasm through these various endeavors.

I see parents - and teachers - pouring themselves into these kids, Hart said. You see the kids come out changed.

She is the product of parents who taught her with God all things are possible. And now she continues that family tradition.

Hart chuckled at the misperception some may hold that home-schooled children are not socially adept.

Jefferson City has an awesome homeschool group with activities kids can be involved in, Hart said. You can actually spend too much time in the social, if you're not careful. ...

And I don't think you can ever shelter a child too much. There's enough world out there, they'll get exposed to it.