



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

February 9, 2006

Media Contact:

May Johnston
704-335-0601, ext 1047
mjohnston@cischarlotte.org
www.cischarlotte.org

Communities In Schools celebrates 20 years of helping kids stay in school and prepare for life

Charlotte, NC – Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc. (CIS) is marking its 20-year anniversary with a celebration and fundraising event, “Take Stock In Our Students,” on Thursday, February 16 from 6:00-8:00 pm at One Wachovia Center. The event has a Wall Street theme, where invited guests can purchase CIS “stock shares” on the “CIS Trading Floor.”

Communities In Schools is the nation’s largest public/private partnership for dropout prevention, helping young people stay in school, successfully learn, and prepare for life by connecting community resources with schools. Since its inception locally in 1985, CIS of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc. has mobilized community resources and coordinated partnerships with health and human service agencies to help thousands of at-risk students overcome academic, social, and economic barriers.

Cynthia Marshall, CIS Executive Director, has led the organization since its inception in 1985. “At this point in our 20-year history, we are thrilled to see that a number of our high school graduates are now graduating from college and returning to the community as valued employees and volunteers,” said Marshall. “It is exciting to witness the process coming full-circle and see our former students succeed.”

Since 1985, CIS has expanded from serving 80 students at a single school, to providing services today to more than 2,000 students annually in 23 Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. Last year, 99% of CIS students stayed in school, and in June 2005, 171 CIS students graduated from high school. Currently, there are 225 CIS graduates enrolled in 43 colleges and universities who have received more than \$500,000 in scholarships with the assistance of their CIS advisors. The majority of these students are the first in their families to attend college.

“I have great respect for Communities In Schools,” said Dr. Frances Haithcock, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Interim Superintendent. “The organization has an excellent track record and has been instrumental in helping thousands of CMS students succeed in school and achieve their dreams for the future. We are fortunate to have CIS as a partner in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.”

- more -

CIS takes a holistic approach to dropout prevention by addressing the physical, emotional, and academic needs of students. Connecting students to a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult - whether through a CIS staff member or a volunteer tutor/mentor - is key program component. Additional services include vision and dental screenings/treatment, academic and emotional/behavioral counseling, cultural and volunteer service activities, and parent involvement workshops. The scope of current CIS programming also includes career exploration, pre-employment skills/workforce development, and college access through its ThinkCOLLEGE® program. Additionally, in a partnership with the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County and area universities, CIS operates the ThinkCOLLEGE® & Career Center, housed in the Main Branch of the Public Library and open to all Mecklenburg County residents.

Communities In Schools was founded nationally in the 1960's by Bill Milliken, who brought the organization's innovative concept to Charlotte in a speech to the Junior League of Charlotte. Fifteen area corporations helped launch the local CIS program under the leadership and support of Dr. Jay Robinson, then Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools superintendent; Jim Babb, co-chair of the Ad-Hoc Task Force on School Dropouts; Ed Crutchfield, then Chairman & CEO of First Union National Bank; and Jack Tate, a retired First Union executive.

CIS is funded in part by Mecklenburg County, the United Way of Central Carolinas, corporate and individual support, and a generous grant from the Charlotte Merchants Foundation.

###