



# Communities In Schools

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

The mission of Communities In Schools is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

## Communities In Schools believes all students deserve five basic resources:

- A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult
- A safe place to learn and grow
- A healthy start and a healthy future
- A marketable skill to use upon graduation
- A chance to give back to peers and community

### SAVE THE DATES



**August 1-31**

School Tools Campaign

**August 27**

First Day of School

**September 22**

Lowcountry on the Green

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Newsletter for Friends of CIS | Summer 2012

# “Communities In Schools changed my life.” CIS Graduate Jamal Tate: Back on Track



With his natural charm and winning smile, one would never dream that Jamal Tate was sitting in jail just 18 months ago, contemplating a very different future from the one he is planning for himself now as a freshman at Central Piedmont Community College. Jamal will tell you that he would certainly not be enrolled at CPCC now, taking a full load of classes and holding a work-study job in the Global Learning department, if not for Communities In Schools, and in particular his two CIS counselors, Reggie Hester and Joe Rothenberg.

It was never a question of his potential. Jamal is smart – he held a 3.5 GPA and was state champion in track his 9th grade year at his former school in Las Vegas before moving to Charlotte with his mother when he was 15.

“In Charlotte I started hanging with the wrong crowd, started experimenting with drugs, then began skipping school,” said

Jamal. He was arrested for the first time in 2010 for a misdemeanor and spent one night in jail. His relationship with his mother worsened, they were fighting a lot, and Jamal continued to have run-ins with the law. However, at the end of the school year, he still managed to make excellent scores on his EOC (End of Course) tests – but he failed all of his classes anyway due to excessive absences.

When Jamal was arrested a second time, it was for a more serious offense and he had to spend two weeks at the Jail North facility for juveniles. That’s where he met Reggie Hester, the CIS Services Coordinator at Jail North. Jamal says he remembers well what Reggie said to him when he was released from Jail North this time: “I can see the greatness in you,” Hester said, “you just have to see it in yourself.”

“Mr. Hester was a very encouraging figure,” said Jamal. “He was the pushing factor that kept me wanting something better for myself.” Hester also made sure that Jamal connected with Joe Rothenberg, the CIS Site Coordinator at [the former] Waddell High School, where Jamal was a student at the time.

*(continued on page 2)*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

One of the best parts of my job is spending time in our schools. I especially love walking the halls with a CIS Site Coordinator – it's a bit like walking alongside a celebrity! There's a constant stream of high-five's, hugs, and shout-outs from students – each one thrilled to connect with his or her site coordinator. It happens at all school levels, from elementary, to middle, to high school. This is because it's the site coordinator's job to really get to know each student on his or her caseload. Site coordinators understand exactly what a student needs in order to be successful in school, and then work to address those needs. For one child it may mean providing a healthy snack when the child arrives at school because he has not eaten since lunch time in the cafeteria the day before. For another child, it may mean dental care for an abscessed tooth, and for another it may mean finding a math tutor or reading buddy.

Even more common, as our site coordinators can attest, is the need for students to simply have another caring adult in their life. In the most recent (2011) "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" of CMS students, nearly 25% of middle schoolers reported that they had seriously considered suicide, and 30% of high schoolers reported "long lasting

feelings of hopelessness and extreme sadness that affected normal routines." Depression and anxiety among pre-teens and teens is more common than most realize.

Taking the time to get to know students on a personal basis builds trust, and our site coordinators are often that trusted adult at school; they are the confidants of multiple students, and often times with parents as well. This trusting relationship between student and CIS Site Coordinator is a key part of what makes CIS unique – and effective.

When school resumes in the fall, I hope you'll visit a CIS school site with me and witness a site coordinator in action. It is the best way to see what our team does every day and how CIS delivers intentional support and encouragement to the thousands of students we serve. Besides, this could be your chance to feel like a rock star "groupie!"



**Molly Shaw, CIS Executive Director**

## CIS Graduate Jamal Tate: Back on Track *continued*

"Mr. Rothenberg stayed on me, made sure I was going to class and completing assignments, and helped me figure out what I needed to do in order to catch up and graduate on time," said Jamal. "But the best part about CIS, both the kids and Mr. Rothenberg, was how accepting they were of me. They didn't treat me like a criminal, and they didn't judge my past. With Mr. Rothenberg, it was always like, 'That's all in the past. What can we do now, going forward, to get you back on track?'"

It was Rothenberg who took Jamal to his first college fair and arranged for him to complete the paperwork needed for a Pell Grant and an application to attend Central Piedmont Community College. Jamal says he had forgotten about the paperwork, and as graduation approached, he wasn't sure of his immediate plans but was considering the military. Then Jamal attended an end of year lunch celebration for CIS students at Waddell, where Rothenberg announced each CIS senior by name and their choice of college or post-high school plans. "I was not expecting to hear my name at all," said Jamal, "and then Mr. Rothenberg called my name, followed by 'Central Piedmont Community College.' I was so surprised – that's how I learned I had been accepted to college!"

Jamal is now thriving at CPCC. In addition to his classes and work-study job, he's involved in numerous campus clubs and activities. Jamal – along with several other CPCC freshman who are also CIS-Charlotte graduates – have even formed a new club aimed at college freshman,

"Communities In Colleges," modeled after Communities In Schools' mission to help students stay in school (PK-12) and prepare for life after high school. According to Jamal, Communities In Colleges serves as a resource and support group for incoming freshmen at CPCC to help them have

a smoother transition from high school and be successful in college. It is now an officially sanctioned CPCC student organization, thanks to Jamal's idea and recruitment of other CIS alum to help.

"Communities In Schools changed my life," says Jamal. "I love going back and speaking to students in high school, because I know what this program did for me. I'm committed to my education now and I'm excited about my future, thanks to CIS."

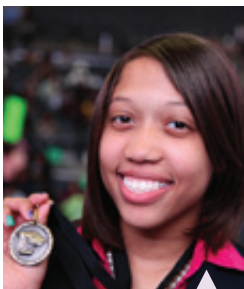
**"Communities In Schools changed my life. I'm committed to my education now and I'm excited about my future, thanks to CIS."**

# A TIME FOR CELEBRATION!

## CIS seniors and selected underclassmen honored at “Celebrating Our Graduates”

**T**ime to Celebrate! Communities In Schools honored 650 graduating CIS seniors in the Class of 2012 on Thursday, April 19 as part of “Celebrating Our Graduates.” This year the venue moved to Time Warner Cable Arena, in order to include selected underclassmen who had shown significant improvement in academics, leadership, and/or perfect attendance, and to create a different kind of experience for our students. It was a

high-energy event with the voice of the Charlotte Bobcats leading the way! Highlights included keynote speaker Joseph B. Washington of Atlanta; a surprise



*Asante Hazziez proudly displays her CIS graduation medal.*



*South Mecklenburg senior Morgan Pollard hugs her mother as she realizes that she is the 2012 CIS Leadership Award winner!*

appearance by Mayor Anthony Foxx; the 1st place winner of the annual CIS Speaking Contest, Asante Hazziez, who presented her winning speech; and the announcement of the 2012 CIS Leadership Award winner, Morgan Pollard of South Mecklenburg High School.

**MANY THANKS TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS** and all of our guests who attended in support of our 2012 graduates!

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# SAFE JOURNEY R.I.S.E. Leadership Award Winner

**R**asheka Darrisaw, a CIS senior at West Mecklenburg High School, is this year's winner of the Safe Journey “R.I.S.E. Leadership Award.” Safe Journey, a CIS teen mother parenting program, presented the surprise award at its annual R.I.S.E. (Reaching Individual Success through collective Efforts) Leadership Conference in May. Rasheka served on Safe Journey's leadership team, whose members are chosen based on their leadership ability, commitment to academic excellence, and consistent participation in Safe Journey/APP (Adolescent Parent Program). Rasheka says that college used to be just a “passing thought,” but with support from Safe Journey, she began to focus on the importance of education and excelling in school. This fall Rasheka will attend Johnson C. Smith University and hopes one day to become a lawyer.



*Rasheka Darrisaw (left) with Kim Jones, a CIS Site Coordinator who also served as Rasheka's mentor in the Safe Journey program*

# CIS GRAD GIVES BACK: LaShonda Perry donates \$1,000 to CIS through Allstate Grant

CIS graduate LaShonda Perry has fond memories of her days as a student enrolled in Communities In Schools at both Coulwood Middle School and West Charlotte High School. In fact, when her employer, Allstate Insurance Company, encouraged employees to get involved in their community and volunteer for a worthy charitable cause, LaShonda says she immediately thought of CIS.

LaShonda found the CIS website and sent an email inquiry to find out about volunteer needs. LaShonda was matched to a child at Walter G. Byers Elementary and has been her lunch buddy since last fall. She goes every Wednesday to have lunch and spend time with her

“buddy,” and has befriended lots of other girls in the class, too. “I love going each week and it makes me feel good to know I’m supporting kids in the CIS program that helped me,” LaShonda added.

Then LaShonda took it a step further: The Allstate Foundation is celebrating its 60th Anniversary this year and the company held an employee contest called “Give Outside the Box.” Employees could nominate a nonprofit to receive a \$1,000 grant and had to explain how the grant would help the community. LaShonda nominated Communities In Schools, and after employees voted at the local and then regional level, CIS was a winner in the southeast region!

“I’ve always wanted to give back to CIS because it really helped me a lot, especially in high school when I was hoping to attend college,” LaShonda said. “I’m the first in my family to go to college, and I’m a proud graduate of N.C. A&T University. Now I’m working for a great company that’s enabled me to give back in a bigger way than I ever imagined. It feels good.”



LaShonda with her lunch buddy at Walter G. Byers Elementary where she volunteers.



LaShonda Perry, center, won a \$1,000 grant for CIS through her employer, Allstate Insurance Company. With her are Lisa Thaxton (left), a Senior Communications Consultant with Allstate’s Charlotte office, and Molly Shaw, CIS Executive Director.

## CIS Middle School Student Wins FULL COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

Asparrow Hargro-Cole, a CIS 7th grader at Albemarle Road Middle School, recently learned that she is this year’s winner of the Friedland Foundation scholarship. The scholarship provides four years of tuition expenses to a state college or university of her choice, as well as a one-on-one mentor for the next five years.

In addition to being an active leader and participant in Communities In Schools, Asparrow is a member of the Honors Chorus at Albemarle Road, loves language arts and science, and has maintained an A/B average the entire school year. In her free time Asparrow enjoys hanging out with her friends and reading. Her role model is her grandmother who takes care of Asparrow and her siblings. She is inspired by her grandmother because she is taking classes to complete her education, illustrating to Asparrow the importance of education and that dreams don’t have an expiration date.

Asparrow will be a first-generation college student and is very excited about the opportunity to further her education. In the essay portion of the Friedland Scholarship application, Asparrow wrote the following:

“I developed into the person I am today because someone took a chance on me, noticed me, believed in me. I want to attend college so that I can carry the baton for my generation. That is what I am supposed to do. That is what I am eager to do. That is what I would be happy to do. I promise that taking a chance on me and making a deposit in my future will produce great rewards for not only myself but also the community. I dare you to believe in me.”



Asparrow (right) with KiYonna Brown, her CIS Site Coordinator at Albemarle Road Middle School.

# ART AS THERAPY: Bechtler Museum collaborates with CIS and Meck. County Sheriff's Office

**C**IS students in the Jail North Re-Entry program recently spent six days exploring and creating art in a collaborative project with CIS, Jail North, and The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. G.H. Boyd was

the Bechtler teaching artist who worked with the students.

The project was based on two artists, Paul Klee, whose work is represented in the Bechtler's permanent collection, and New York-based artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988). The project began by studying two

paintings by each artist. They discussed the biographies of each artist, and the similarities and differences. Both artists used symbols in their artwork that were personal and meaningful to them. Both artists were influenced by music; Klee was a musician and played the violin, Basquiat was influenced by 1970's and 80's punk rock. Both made choices with their artwork (as all artists do!); Basquiat started out as a graffiti artist in New York City, but passed away at the age of 28 from a drug overdose. This led to discussions about making decisions in life and in artwork.

Students were asked to create three symbols that were meaningful to them. Then, they had to figure out how to combine them. After several iterations, these symbols became an abstract image that was extremely meaningful to the students. Next, they used watercolors to sketch their image, and then created it again in acrylic paint on a large canvas. Students also explored the principals of art (composition, repetition, line, balance, etc.).

Keith Cradle, Adolescent Program Manager with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, said the program was well received by the eight young adults who participated and they learned a lot about art, creativity, and utilizing art as therapy. "Overall it influenced them in a positive way and we look forward to the Bechtler coming back to work with more of our teens."



# Two CIS Talent Search Students Named **GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLARS**

**D**estiny Planter and Raeven Henry are two extraordinary seniors graduating at the top of their class from West Charlotte High School in Charlotte, NC. Both are enrolled in Communities In Schools' Talent Search program and work with their Talent Search Counselor, Stephanie Cafaro. Destiny and Raeven recently learned that they are Gates Millennium Scholarship recipients. They will attend UNC-Chapel Hill in the fall. Raeven hopes to attend medical school and Destiny aspires to become a child psychologist.

On overcoming challenges and achieving success at West Charlotte, Destiny says "There were times I didn't have the resources that others are equipped with, but I learned to never use my environment as an excuse."

Raeven admits to feeling overwhelmed as she completed the Gates Scholarship application. Upon learning she won the award, she said, "I am grateful for the opportunity and I hope that my higher education will allow me to be competitive in a global community."

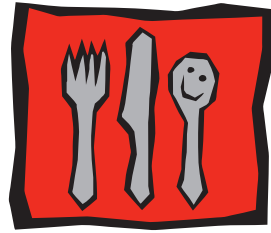
The Gates Millennium Scholars Program selects 1,000 talented students each year to receive a good-through-graduation scholarship to use at any college or university of their choice. The award also provides recipients with personal and professional development through their leadership program, along with academic support throughout their college career.



*Destiny Planter and Raeven Henry with Stephanie Cafaro (center), the CIS Talent Search Counselor at West Charlotte High School.*

# THANK YOU for making Every Bite Count!

**O**n June 19, individuals and groups all across the Charlotte region celebrated and ate extremely well during Communities In Schools' 13th annual **Dine Out For Kids**<sup>®</sup>. Restaurants, corporate sponsors, and **YOU**, our friends and supporters, made the event a **SUCCESS** – meaning, you helped increase resources that support our mission to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.



**Dine Out For Kids**<sup>®</sup>

*Who knew that helping others could taste so sweet??!*

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## MANY THANKS TO OUR PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS!

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| Brixx Wood Fired Pizza                               | Mimosa Grill             |
| Bytes Café   | Mortimer's Café and Pub  |
| Charlotte Knights Baseball -<br>June 19th Home Game  | Nothing but Noodles      |
| City Smoke   | Paco's Tacos & Tequila   |
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| Dressler's   | Showmars                 |
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| Eddie's Place  | Taste Café               |
| Harper's Restaurant                                  | Terrace Café             |
| HMSHost - Charlotte Douglas<br>International Airport | Upstream                 |
| Johnny Burrito                                       | Village Tavern           |
|  | Zink                     |



## SPEEDWAY CHILDREN'S CHARITIES gets Kids Revved Up!

Speedway Children's Charities (SCC) awarded CIS-Charlotte a \$10,000 grant this past year to support programming for CIS students. In addition to the grant, Communities In Schools students have been invited to participate in various educational activities coordinated by SCC, Charlotte Motor Speedway, and their corporate partners. The activities are designed to demonstrate the critical role that subjects such as science, technology, engineering and math play in NASCAR, while exposing them to the exciting careers they can pursue by concentrating on these important subjects.



*CIS students from Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School participate in a math competition as part of "Students at the Speedway," a program sponsored by Speedway Children's Charities and Bank of America last fall.*

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Tamika McPherson – Whitewater Middle School

**T**amika McPherson has been volunteering with Communities In Schools for over 10 years, since she was a college student at UNC-Charlotte. In college, she wanted to volunteer but not just on campus – she wanted to be “out in the community.” Tamika read about CIS and what the organization was trying to accomplish and decided this was where she wanted to give her time.

For the past two years, Tamika has been volunteering as a lunch buddy and mentor for a group of girls at Whitewater Middle School, but before that she volunteered with CIS at Allenbrook Elementary, Nathaniel Alexander Elementary, and the (former) Smith Middle School.

When she was volunteering at Allenbrook, she really connected with a group of 5th grade girls and decided to “move up” with them when they went to Whitewater Middle School. She has lunch and visits with the students weekly. “I ask them about their classes, their teachers, their grades, and what’s going on with them in general,” says Tamika. “I let them share whatever they like – I want them to be comfortable with opening up and expressing themselves to me.”

Her approach is working – two of the students she mentors mentioned how “Ms. McPherson is a person you can trust and tell your problems to.” Another student said she knows Ms. McPherson really cares because she spends extra time with them outside of school, doing “fun things like going bowling and having a girls sleep-over at a hotel.”

Tamika works at TIAA-CREF as a Business Management Analyst. She does not have any children of her own, but says she loves seeing how CIS really cares about their students’ success and the encouragement they give to ensure it. “I volunteer because it is how I was raised, to reach out and help when and where I can. But most of all, I enjoy it, and I’m honored to be a part of it.”



*CIS volunteer Tamika McPherson with two of the students she mentors at Whitewater Middle School.*



*CIS Volunteer Colin Pinkney with North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue*

## CONGRATS to CIS Volunteer Colin Pinkney!

Pinkney was recently named a N.C. Governor’s Award winner for Volunteer Service. On April 19, he attended a ceremony in Raleigh to accept the award from Governor Bev Perdue. Communities In Schools and United Way of the Central Carolinas nominated Pinkney for the award, based on his dedication and years of mentoring teens, and in particular for his innovative book club for young males that he leads at Olympic High School. Prior to Olympic, Pinkney volunteered through CIS for a number of years at West Charlotte High School. Pinkney is also the founder and executive director of the local nonprofit Urban Restoration, a collaboration of twelve ministries dedicated to serving those in Charlotte’s poorest communities.

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR! School Tools Campaign • August 1-31, 2012



Please help students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have a great start to the school year by donating school supplies to the annual School Tools Campaign in August – so easy to do, yet so very important! Thousands of students come to school every year without even the most basic set of supplies. Many teachers spend their own money to try and meet the need. **Please help** by donating supplies and/or organizing a collection among your friends, neighbors, or workplace to have a combined impact!

### Key Dates to keep in mind:

**Wednesday, August 8 – WSOC-TV  
Collection Day:** Drop supplies at WSOC-TV,  
1901 N. Tryon Street

**Saturday, August 18 – Postal Collection Day:**  
Leave supplies at your mail box and your letter  
carrier will pick them up!

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Lowcountry on the Green • September 22, 2012



New venue – same Lowcountry good time! Join us on the lawn of the Mint Museum on Randolph Road from 7-10 p.m. on Saturday, September 22 for the fourth annual Lowcountry on the Green! Enjoy scrumptious lowcountry fare of Shrimp & Grits, Crab Cakes, Lobster

Hushpuppies and more, plus live music and a silent auction – all for the future of our children and community. **More details and ticket information coming soon!**