



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



Nov 20-Dec 14
CIS Holiday Cards

Dec 1
Giving Tuesday

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Newsletter for Friends of CIS | Fall 2020

MEETING THE CHALLENGE: Navigating COVID-19 and Remote Learning



We are all experiencing a “back to school” year like no other - students, parents, teachers, and our CIS team members. “Uncertainty” and “pivot” are two of the most common words in our vernacular today. But when it comes to our staff and how they are responding to these challenging times, a few other words come to mind as well: *Committed. Creative. Encouraging. Caring.*

Beginning in March immediately after schools closed and through the rest of the school year, contacting every CIS family was our top priority. By mid-June, our staff had completed a total of 6,117 Emergency Needs Assessments and provided 55,080 services, as documented by our 75 direct service team members at 55 CMS schools. By category, these services included:

- 29,368 Critical Needs
- 8,047 Motivation & Behavior Interventions
- 7,896 Family Support & Engagement
- 4,998 Academic Assistance
- 4,770 College Awareness & Career Exploration
- 77 Other (diapers, wipes, child enrichment kits)

Yet these services do not measure the value of the human connection and socio-emotional support that our Site Coordinators provided their students and families, especially during those early days of the pandemic when fear and anxiety in both children and adults were prevalent.

For the past several months, our team has been busy updating Emergency Needs Assessments with each family; creating a Student Support Plan for each child on our caseload; and a School Support Plan for each school. They have set up virtual offices and are holding virtual office hours. They are making home visits and going above and beyond to ensure that students are engaging in their classes, while continuing to provide connection to basic needs, technology assistance, learning opportunities, creative and emotional outlets, and most importantly, to hope.

MEN TCHAAS ARI: New CIS President and CEO



Men Tchaas Ari, President and CEO

CIS-Charlotte is excited to welcome **Men Tchaas Ari** as our new President and CEO! October 20 was Men Tchaas' "official" first day. Many of our staff and Board members have already experienced his calm and steady leadership for the past three years, as he served on the CIS Board of Directors (since 2017) and chaired the agency's Human Resources committee.

Prior to joining CIS, Men Tchaas was the Director of Adult and Economic Services with Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, where he led a team of 700 and oversaw an \$80 million budget. Prior to DSS, he was the Chief Program Officer at Crisis Assistance Ministry. He is fluent in Spanish, and began his professional career with Mecklenburg County DSS as a Bilingual Food Stamp Case Manager. He has more than 23 years of experience in human services.

"Our search committee conducted a robust national search that drew a number of highly qualified candidates," said Natalie Alston, Chair of CIS-Charlotte's Board of Directors.

"The competition was steep and Men Tchaas proved to be the best fit for our organization," said Alston. "He garnered unanimous support from a demographically and professionally diverse search committee."

"Having known and worked with Men Tchaas for several years on the CIS-Charlotte board, we were already familiar with his experience and passion for our mission and serving young people," Alston added. "But the search committee saw an even more profound scope of Men Tchaas' expertise and passion for this work during the interview process. We were thoroughly impressed every step of the way, and believe he will be a powerful and vocal advocate for our students and families, our staff, and our mission."

"Working for Mecklenburg County has shown me the importance of investing in education," said Men Tchaas. "I'm convinced that education and social-emotional supports are key to ensuring all children reach their greatest potential. Communities In Schools is an outstanding non-profit organization dedicated to removing the barriers to success our students face. I am excited and honored to be able to join them in this essential work."

Men Tchaas is a graduate of Morehouse College, where he received his undergraduate degree in Spanish. He will receive his Executive Master's

FUN FACT about MTA!

"Men Tchaas" is pronounced **men-CHI-us**

"Ari" is pronounced **AIR-ee**

Men Tchaas recently shared that his name originates from the ancient Egyptian language. "Men Tchaas" means "one who submits to wisdom." Men Tchaas says he personally interprets this to mean someone who "learns lessons from those who have come before me."

degree in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Government at Syracuse University in December 2020. In 2018, he received a certificate in Municipal and County Government Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill. He is a member of the 2013 Class of Leadership Charlotte, for which he currently serves as board chair.

In addition to serving on CIS-Charlotte's Board of Directors, Men Tchaas has served on the board of the Assistance League and WFAC's Advisory Board. He is a charter member of the New Generation of African American Philanthropists (NGAAP). Men Tchaas has also served on various health and human services panels and has delivered talks throughout the community on food security. He recently served as a guest lecturer for a public policy class at Duke University.

On a personal note, Men Tchaas is a self-proclaimed "health enthusiast." He also enjoys reading, travel and all things "aviation." One of his future goals is to obtain his private pilot's license. A native of Bloomfield, Connecticut, Ari has lived in Charlotte for 23 years.

Please extend a warm welcome to Men Tchaas!



Men Tchaas on his first day in the office, October 20, 2020.

NATALIE ALSTON Named Chair of CIS Board



CIS is pleased to announce **Natalie Alston** as the incoming Chair of the CIS-Charlotte Board of Directors. She will serve in this role from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

Natalie joined the Board in 2015 and has served on the Program Evaluation and Governance Committees. Natalie's family moved to Charlotte when she was in elementary school. She attended CMS schools and is a proud graduate of Independence High School; then attended N.C. State University and Harvard Law School. A former practicing attorney, Natalie now owns an interior design business and is a busy mom to Naomi and Willie (above with Natalie's husband, Will).

Natalie is passionate about Communities In Schools and the organization's unique ability to improve economic and social mobility for kids. "CIS has known for years that the key to socio-economic mobility for our kids is access to opportunity and to a caring adult who can help them navigate through the complications that often accompany them to school," said Alston.

"Now we've all been thrust into this COVID-19 environment where students are isolated at home and access to resources and support is even more challenging for them," added Alston. "But because CIS has always placed a focus on building trusting relationships with students and families, and by encouraging our staff to leverage their own specific talents to meet the needs of their students, our staff are well positioned to connect with their students in this pandemic environment and keep them engaged at a time when they may need it most."

WELCOME TO THESE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are also pleased to welcome the following new CIS Board members, who began their three-year terms in August:

Titi Cole

CitiBank

Jordan Collier

Bristol Myers Squibb

Andy Kalbaugh

LPL Financial

Shivani Mehta

Atrium Health

Eric Norris

Albemarle Corporation

Laura Vinroot Poole

Capitol - Poole Shop - Tabor

Nate Salley

Audible Coaching and Consulting

Diamond Staton-Williams

Atrium Health and City Council of Harrisburg, NC

Daniel Valdez

The Hispanic Federation

A complete list of Board members can be found on the back page of this newsletter. CIS is grateful to all of our Board members for their time, expertise and commitment.

AWESOME DONATIONS! Supplies and PPE

CIS extends a huge shout-out to the following organizations who have donated critical supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure our staff's safety during the pandemic and as schools begin to re-open:

CIS of Rocky Mount Region / United Way of Tar River Region

10,000 Face Masks

RestoreGlobal.org

1,500 Face Masks

R.A.I.N. (Regional AIDS Interfaith Network)

10 1-gallon bottles of Hand Sanitizer

Urban League

121 Face Shields

United Way of Central Carolinas and Atrium Health

3,000 Face Masks

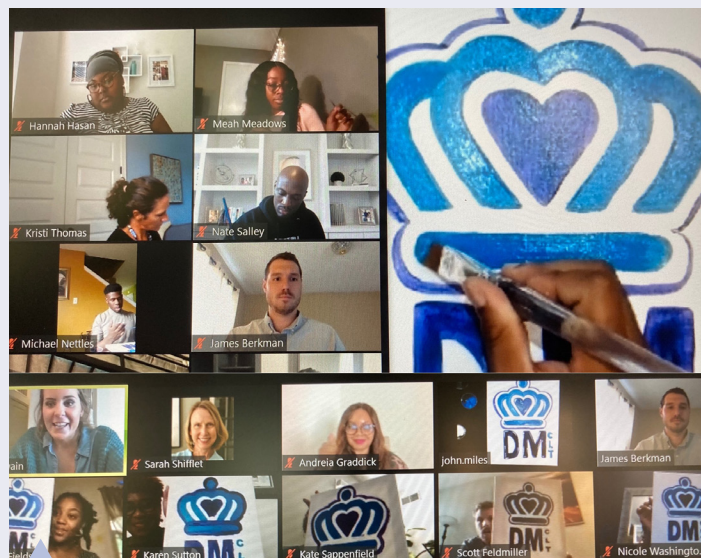


The Urban League donated 121 face shields to CIS.

DIFFERENCEMAKERS CLT 2020-21 KICK-OFF

September 19 was an amazing day for our group of “Difference Makers!” This was the kick-off event for our “DifferenceMakers CLT” program, a partnership between CIS-Charlotte and The Gambrell Foundation. This intergenerational leadership experience is designed to establish and promote youth leadership, advocacy, and mobilization by equipping a diverse cohort of rising and current community leaders with the opportunity to expand their public awareness, understanding, and knowledge of the Charlotte community. Through monthly leadership development programming, the 20 high school students and 20 community leaders will utilize their social capital to build bridges across differences to increase economic mobility for residents across Charlotte. Ultimately, they will learn about creating “movements” and how to be “difference makers” in our local community and the world.

The event, held virtually, was focused on learning about the past - our local and national history and how it inspired certain individuals in the Charlotte community to step up, speak out, and be leaders in the fight for change and social justice. Our student leaders came more than prepared, ready to engage and enthusiastically participate. They were not afraid to step in and interact with the impressive guests, including local heroes Harvey Gantt and Dorothy Counts Scoggins, education reformers James Ford and Pamela Grundy, diversity and inclusion expert Dr. Joseph Allen, CMS graduate and student activist Kayden Hunt, and Dr. Marian Yates, longtime CMS teacher and principal and currently VP of School Relations and Risk Management with CIS.



For “mental breaks,” several fun activities were built into the all-day event, such as this creative arts painting exercise, led by local artist Trey Miles.

Next up for the group, they are excited to begin work on a social justice project this winter... more coming soon on this!

CIS would especially like to thank The Gambrell Foundation for their generous support of this program and turning our DifferenceMakers vision into a reality!

Please Meet Our 2020-21 DifferenceMakers!

Community Members

Paul Burley	Bank of America
Niles Brown	Grant Thornton
Erika Duncan	Bank of America
Scott Feldmiller	Vanguard
Shannon Grant	Wells Fargo
Tara Hammons	America's Voices Against Apartheid
Hannah Hassan	Artist/Activist/Storyteller
Brittney Johnson	WSOC-TV
Angelica Johnson	CIS Site Coordinator - Vance HS
Renee' Leak	CIS Director of Program Operations
Wesley McLeod	CMS Teacher - Ridge Road Middle
Michelle Posos	I-77 Mobility Partners
Ed Roper	NGR Construction
Nate Salley	Audible Coaching and Consulting
Lorie Spratley	JP Morgan and Chase
Kristi Thomas	Wells Fargo
Nicole Washington-Dean	Xavier Austin Group
Stacey Weinstein	CIS Site Coordinator - Myers Park HS
Dustin Williams	Carolina CAT
Jared Young	Alston & Bird

Student Participants

Emmanuella Assem	Phillip O. Berry
Hana Bedada	Independence
Franklin Chacon	Harding
D'Andra Chisholm	Myers Park
Myah Conner	Independence
Luis Cruz	Garinger
Anisha Diyali	East Mecklenburg
Demija Dubose	West Charlotte
Demariyon Dubose	West Charlotte
Joy Fields	West Mecklenburg
Gustavo Flores-Yanez	South Mecklenburg
Kaytlyn Goldson	East Mecklenburg
Atqiya Nafisa	Vance
Meah Meadows	West Mecklenburg
Michael Nettles	West Mecklenburg
Kate Sappenfield	South Mecklenburg
Jayla Soares	West Charlotte
Safiya Spivey	Myers Park
Toni Teah	Phillip O. Berry
N'Dia Williams	East Mecklenburg

SENIOR SNAPSHOTS Class of 2020

Here's to the Class of 2020! We are so very proud of the 604 CMS-CIS graduates who crossed the finish line in June, despite the unexpected challenges and unusual end to their senior year, due to the pandemic. They all rose to the occasion and remained focused on graduation and their next steps, even amidst much uncertainty. Below we highlight two of our outstanding CIS seniors, with a brief update on their current situation; you can find their full stories on our website at www.cischarlotte.org/our-impact/success-stories. CONGRATS to all of our graduates!

Jaime Halton

Jaime is a gifted student and athlete. He graduated summa cum laude in the top 1% of his class from Vance High School, and has played football, basketball, baseball and track.



Jaime plans to major in Exercise/Sports Science and minor in Neuroscience. His ultimate goal is to attend medical school and become a sports medicine physician. He received a Covenant Scholarship to UNC-Chapel Hill and credits CIS for introducing him to Carolina.

"Before November 2019, I was sure I was going to Howard University," said Jaime. "My decision to switch my sights to Carolina was 100% based on the trip to the UNC campus with the CIS crew. If not for that trip, I highly doubt I would have completed my Carolina application."

In June, Jaime was so excited to become a UNC Tar Heel! Fortunately, his dream is coming true, even with the pandemic. He was able to remain on campus and is making tons of friends. "The pandemic has made those of us here tight from the jump," said Jaime, "We do family things like cooking all day, taking hikes in the woods, and planning trips that otherwise might never happen."

Jaime says he's taking advantage of every "silver lining" opportunity this unique situation has afforded him, exploring "all things Carolina," and he's loving it!

Paola Martinez Velasco

A Myers Park High School graduate, Paola graduated with a 4.3 GPA. She was also dual-enrolled at Central Piedmont Community College and has already earned 50 college credits! She received a scholarship to N.C. State University and plans to study Psychology and Genetics.



Paola has another outstanding accomplishment: she is the first in her family to graduate from high school. Her parents are extremely proud, but certainly not surprised. They knew better than anyone how bright, dedicated and determined she is. It was a little sad that Paola's graduation could not be celebrated with the traditional commencement ceremony because of the pandemic, but her family is nonetheless very proud and excited for Paola and her future.

True to her positive nature, Paola says she has learned some important lessons during this challenging time. "It is important to not let things slip by you," said Paola. "One day, it may not be granted to you. I have also learned that there is nothing more important or more valuable than family and friends."

Due to the pandemic, Paola is currently taking online classes in Charlotte but hopes to live on the N.C. State campus for the spring semester. The Wolfpack is lucky to have you, Paola!

SPECIAL SURPRISE for Shamrock Students

This past summer, Tripp Rives saw a story on the national news about someone who made hand-painted desks for children who needed a desk at home for remote learning. Inspiration struck! Tripp (far right in photo), who enjoys woodworking as a hobby, knew this was something he could do and thought it would be a great way to support kids and learning during this challenging time for families.

Tripp lives in Plaza Midwood and called Shamrock Gardens Elementary, asking if the school knew of any kids who could use a desk at home. The school referred him to Lisa Carter, CIS Site Coordinator at Shamrock. She jumped on the offer and soon connected Tripp to four lucky students. He delivered each desk personally.

The desks are beautiful, made with solid birch wood, some sanded and stained, others painted. Tripp plans to make another 4-5 desks, and hopes others will follow his lead. "The kids were so sweet," said Tripp, "and really excited to have their very own desk."



STUDENT VOICES: Protests Inspire Students to Speak Out, Take Action

This past spring when the racial justice protests erupted in Charlotte and across the nation, it was a traumatic and painful experience for nearly everyone, but especially so for the Black community. And as a community and a country, we have much work and healing still to do.

The majority of students enrolled in CIS are children of color, with 62% identifying as Black and 27% identifying as Latinx. As an organization, we believe it is imperative that we advocate for racial justice and equity. Many of our staff, board members, and students participated in the Charlotte protests, and in fact, some of our students led the way to organize rallies and events. We proudly highlight a few of these inspirational student voices below.



Site Coordinators Brooke Frazier (left) and Stacey Weinstein (right) with Myers Park student Ashanti Douglas, who helped organize a march in Grier Heights.

Tyzel Hayden

The racial justice protests inspired Tyzel Hayden, a junior in CIS at Myers Park High School, to write an open letter to his fellow classmates and the community at large. Below is an excerpt from his letter:

"In the future, we must keep fighting, and I hope that we come together. I want our country, America, to be a nation where everything is determined by hard work and perseverance. I want my baby sisters to know that they will be heard, by not allowing anyone to silence their efforts, to improve our society. I want my brothers and sisters to take it upon themselves and become WOKE through education - understanding the school system cannot teach you everything you need to know. As an American in the pattern of my ancestors who fought for civil rights, I will strive for equality and equity with a focus on Justice for ALL, as stated in our daily pledge of allegiance. The goal is to build a future for all Americans where yes - Black Lives Matter, but ultimately all lives are valued equally."



Ashanti Douglas

Ashanti helped organize a march in her Grier Heights neighborhood. That night, she couldn't sleep and was inspired to pen this poem. She texted it to her CIS Site Coordinator at 2:00 am.



*We've been told that roses are red and violets are blue
The world can be cruel, but I ask, how about you?*

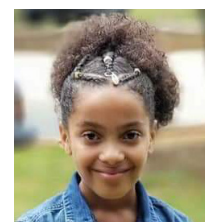
*Will you sit down as violence of the world silences you?
Or will you stand up and react through compassion or rage,
Look beyond what you've been told, but hold true
Will you see sunshine rays through your cage?*

*Though love may seem miles and miles away
And your cries echo off the immense mountain
Will you still find the courage to be okay, stand strong
Or will your tears overflow from your eternal fountain?*

*Your tears that can cover an ocean
The place where you can drown in your sorrows
Or swim, acknowledge and fight the current
Until there's a beautiful tomorrow.*

Brooklynn Jones

This CIS sixth grader is quite the enterprising young lady! Brooklynn, a student in CIS at Governor's Village STEM Academy, has been holding "Peace Parties" for several years now, to help promote good relations between community members and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. With support from CMPD, the Mayor, and other community leaders, the "parties" have been successful and drawn hundreds of supporters.



In June, Brooklynn organized her fourth similar event, but instead of a "party" with food, music and dancing, the event was revised a bit to reflect the current times, including the pandemic and the community's anger, sadness and frustration in reaction to the death of George Floyd. So this event was dubbed a "Peace Walk for Our Future," without the food, music and dancing, but with the opportunity to safely hold a justice march and interact with participating police officers. The Peace Walk was held Saturday, June 6 and was a great success!

Better keep an eye on this one — we hear she is full of great ideas and enthusiasm! Way to go, Brooklynn!

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

St. John's Episcopal Women's Group

"Merry Oaks is so fortunate to have a partnership with the wonderful ladies in the St. John's Episcopal Church Women's Group," says Carol Chadwick-Nixon, the CIS Site Coordinator at the school. "Not only are they providing many of the essentials that our students and teachers need, but also the little 'extras' that make you feel special and cared for."

Merry Oaks International Academy, serving grades PK-5, is a small (~500 students) CMS Title 1 school located in the Merry Oaks neighborhood off Central Avenue in east Charlotte. There is a lot of diversity, with families from 28 countries and 35+ languages spoken!

"It's really a wonderful school with a warm, family-like culture," said Chadwick-Nixon. "but there are also a lot of needs. I've been working with the Women's Group from St. John's Episcopal for three years now, and one thing I've learned – whenever there is a need at Merry Oaks, we can count on them to fill it."

Chadwick-Nixon described how St. John's brought loads of winter coats when they learned so many students were coming to school without a coat. When some of the 5th graders didn't have special clothes to wear for their "moving up" graduation ceremony, St. John's bought shirts, pants, and dresses so the children could feel extra special on their special day.

The Women's Group at St. John's has also provided school supplies, holiday gifts and a party for all of the CIS students at the school, Valentine's Day treats for every child at Merry Oaks, Starbucks gift cards during Teacher Appreciation week, and delicious breakfasts for the school staff every quarter. Now, as students are struggling with remote learning, St. John's is raising money to donate WiFi hot spots to the CMS Foundation.

"CIS and Merry Oaks are blessed to have such a strong community partner in the Women's Group at St. John's Episcopal," Chadwick-Nixon added. "We are so grateful for all they are doing to make our school even better for our families and staff."

Interested in partnering with CIS to support a school? Contact our Volunteer & Community Engagement Associate at volunteer@cischarlotte.org.



L-R: Melissa Conway with St. John's (SJEC), CIS Site Coordinator Carol Chadwick-Nixon, Margaret Errington with SJEC, and Mark Landon with CMS.

FALL FUNDRAISERS by Community Partners

CIS was thrilled to have two community partners reach out to us this fall with plans to hold fundraising events on our behalf. The PTA at **Selwyn Elementary School** sold Halloween "Boo!" yard signs to friends and family and donated the proceeds to CIS. We've seen lots



The Selwyn Elementary PTA sold "Boo" yard signs to benefit CIS.

of these cute signs in many a front yard during October! And on October 9, **Ascension Lutheran Church** organized a jazz-trio concert, "The Hymnal Meets Jazz," with ticket sales benefiting CIS. Many thanks to both of these new CIS partners!



Ascension Lutheran Church hosted a jazz trio concert on behalf of CIS.

Board of Directors

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Civic Leader

David "Dae-Lee" Arrington

Hue House

Kathryn Black

Bank of America

Lee Brashear

GCM Grosvenor

Niles Brown

Grant Thornton

Veronica Calderon

Aldersgate CCRC

Titi Cole

CitiBank

Jordan Collier

Bristol Myers Squibb

Jon Davis

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Vida Harvey

Novant Health

Greg Hobby

Civic Leader

Dwight Jacobs

Duke Energy

George Jurch

Continental Tire the Americas LLC

Andy Kalbaugh

LPL Financial

Shivani Mehta

Atrium Health

Karen Morgan

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Suzanne Morrison

Wells Fargo

Eric Norris

Albemarle Corporation

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Nate Salley

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Diamond Staton-Williams

Atrium Health

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US Bank

John Tate III

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Daniel Valdez

Hispanic Federation

Rad von Werssowetz

Berkeley Capital Advisors

Earnest Winston

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



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CIS-Charlotte is a Charlotte Observer TOP WORKPLACE!

We are honored to be a Charlotte Observer Top Workplace Award Winner for 2020! Our team is the best, and a HUGE reason CIS is a fantastic place to work!



CIS SCHOOL SITES, 2020-21

Elementary Schools

Albemarle Road
Allenbrook
Briarwood
Bruns
Cotswold
Hidden Valley
Highland Renaissance
Merry Oaks
Newell
Rama Road
Reid Park
Shamrock Gardens
Statesville Road
Sterling
Tuckaseegee
Westerly Hills
Winterfield

PK - 8 Schools

Ashley Park
Berryhill
Druid Hills
Governor's Village
Marie G. Davis
Thomasboro
Walter G. Byers

Middle Schools

Albemarle Road
Cochrane / iMeck (6-12)
Coulwood
Eastway
James Martin
Martin Luther King, Jr.
McClintock
Quail Hollow
Ranson
Sedgefield
Whitewater
Wilson

High Schools

Butler
East Mecklenburg
Garinger
Harding
Independence
Mallard Creek
Myers Park
North Mecklenburg
Olympic
Performance Learning Center®
Phillip O. Berry
Rocky River
South Mecklenburg
Vance
West Charlotte
West Mecklenburg
Detention Center North/Central



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