



J-Rock Summer Camp

June 21-August 13, 2010

As the end of the school year approached in June, many students looked forward to sleeping late and lounging around the house cheering "no more school!", but for the 100 or so J-Rock campers, a new experience awaited them on the campus of Cornerstone Christian Academy. Eight weeks of summer fun which included music, art, dance, drama, computers, sports, and language arts for the entire day, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Some even had an extended day until 6 p.m. Their days were sprinkled with trips to the pool, to the Mann Music Center, and Dorney Park. The camp drew many volunteers during the summer from M-Fuge, the Philadelphia Public Library, and the Legacy Foundation.



The summer culminated with a version of Alice in Wonderland entitled "Ally in the Hood", which the campers presented on August 13, 2010 to an excited audience of about 200 parents and friends. The presentation incorporated the talents of the campers. They helped to create scenery and costumes, wrote original poetry, danced, and did vocal and instrumental performances. Parents and campers are looking forward to J-Rock 2011!



P.O. Box 5520
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Academic excellence and
spiritual maturity since 1988

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Cornerstone Christian Academy is an independent, private Christian school serving 217 children, Kindergarten through 8th grade, in southwest Philadelphia. CCA's mission is to educate children in an environment that provides the highest standards for academic achievement and spiritual development. By providing a safe, disciplined, and spiritual educational environment, CCA inspires inner-city children to rise above their surroundings and achieve their highest potential. Nearly 100% of CCA's students graduate from high school on time, with most them pursuing a college degree. Contributions from individuals and churches, along with grants from companies and foundations, provide the necessary scholarship support for children to attend CCA.

Cornerstone is a member of:



Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is an accreditation agency dedicated to helping Christian ministries earn the public's trust through adherence to seven standards of responsible stewardship.



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The Cornerstone Times



Fall 2010

Dear Friends,

Some things in life are priceless. Take hope, for example. How can you estimate the cost of a human heart filled with hope? You can't! Like faith and love, hope is a gift of inestimable worth.

We work hard at Cornerstone Christian Academy to keep hope alive in the hearts and minds of our students. It's not easy. The community of southwest Philadelphia where our kids are growing up is full of negative influences and dangers. Just a few weeks ago a former Cornerstone graduate was shot and killed as he was walking with friends, and in the same week the mother of one of our elementary students was brutally murdered by her boyfriend in front of their home. Sadly, death is a reality that is far too familiar for many of our students. It's not surprising at all that a sense of hopelessness gets set early in the hearts and minds of children in this community.

To combat the darkness and fears that haunt our students, we strive to maintain a school environment at Cornerstone that is safe, secure, academically stimulating and spiritually uplifting. Here every student is viewed as a unique and precious child of God. Here students learn in a positive climate of respect, safety, discipline and trust. Here children are expected to excel academically and behaviorally. Here students worship God and sing praise to the Lord Jesus. Here we pray daily for the Spirit of God to keep faith, hope and love alive in the hearts and minds of people in this community and everywhere.

As I said, you really cannot put a price tag on what it costs to keep hope alive. But, we have determined that the yearly cost for a child to attend Cornerstone, *where we fill kids with hope*, is approximately \$7,200. Toward this amount, the average tuition that our families contribute is \$2,200. The additional \$5,000 per student is provided by the contributions we receive for our annual scholarship fund. **With near capacity enrollment of 222 students for the 2010-11 academic year, we need to receive over \$1 million in scholarship contributions.**

We never know at the start of each new school year whether or not we will be able to fulfill the scholarship promises we have made to our families. It's a venture and *adventure* in faith. We do not have a trust fund from which we can draw, other than the trust we have in God and the trust we have in our many friends, like you, who have generously supported our ministry in past years. For that support we thank God and we thank you. Now we ask that you please continue to pray earnestly for our students and staff this school year. And, please contribute to our scholarship fund as generously as you are able in order to help us keep hope alive in the hearts and minds of our students.

Gratefully,

Dick Ollinger
President/CEO





IN FOCUS: The Cornerstone story is diverse and unfolding before our eyes: students, parents, staff and friends making a difference together.



Friends from The Legacy Group (Plymouth Meeting, PA) volunteered at J-Rock Summer Camp. They helped campers practice their lines for the play, painted scenery, and assisted with the music classes. The Legacy Foundation provided Cornerstone with a generous grant to support J-Rock Summer Camp. We thank them for their support!



Cornerstone graduates Chantel Reavis, Kyree Adams, and Jaleel Adams share ideas with middle school teacher Natasha Grant about forming an alumni association. The group that gathered in August, comprised of graduates from 2004 and 2006, will plan service projects and social events as a way to bring more Cornerstone alumni together.



Teachers Cristina Griffin (4th grade), Mary Ellen Lavender (3rd grade), and Narda Cooper (2nd grade) smile during teacher orientation, which took place the week before school started. Teachers went through trainings, workshops, and also prepared their classrooms for their new students.



The 6th grade boys are ready for middle school! Pictured with their math teacher, Mrs. Rimmer, these students are working hard in their new classes. As middle school students, they are learning new study skills and time management.



**You are invited to become a
Cornerstone Partner**



Cornerstone Partners team up with students in achieving their educational goals. Individual partners make a financial commitment to their student partners for one or more academic years. Students commit to their best academic work and provide updates throughout the year to their partners. Cornerstone Partners provide essential support to students who are among the next generation of leaders in southwest Philadelphia. In becoming a partner, you are part of the transformation taking place at Cornerstone.

Cornerstone Individual Partners

- Pledge one or more years of financial support of \$2,500 for one half-scholarship for one student, or \$5,000 for one full student scholarship (pledges can be fulfilled with a one-time contribution, quarterly, or monthly contributions).
- Commit to visit their partner student at one of the two Partner Days during the academic year.
- Pray regularly for their student's academic success and personal growth.

Cornerstone Student Partners

- Dedicate themselves to achieving the academic and character goals set for them in their classroom.
- Provide updates during the year to their Individual Partner.
- Pray regularly for their partner and their family.

For more information on becoming a Cornerstone Partner, contact Erica Cheslock in the Development Office at (215)724-6858 ext. 233; or, send in your contribution with the enclosed envelope indicating that you would like to become a partner.

Supporting Cornerstone

Checks are accepted by enclosing your gift in the envelope provided.
Online gifts by credit card are accepted, on our Web site: www.cornerstonephiladelphia.com
Stock transfers can be made in 48 hours or less to our *Charles Schwab* account.
Corporate Match ask your employer about a dollar-for-dollar match of your gift.
Educational Improvement Tax Credit corporate donors may qualify for 90% in tax credits from the *State of Pennsylvania*.
United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania Cornerstone can be written in during your employer's campaign- indicate agency #026566.

To know more, contact Chris Petersen: (215)724-6858 or chrispetersen66@yahoo.com



Making Strides: Cornerstone Alumni

Tracey Lawrence, class of 2006

Tracey Lawrence is a member of the Cornerstone Christian Academy Class of 2006. She began at George Washington Carver High School for Engineering and Science in Philadelphia in the fall of 2006, and graduated in June 2010. Tracey was a student at Cornerstone from her 1st to 8th grade years.

Tracey says "My Cornerstone education prepared me well for high school. I learned things in 8th grade that were covered in 9th grade, and my Cornerstone teachers taught me disciplined study habits that helped me in high school." For instance, Tracey had to take Algebra in 9th grade, which she had taken at Cornerstone (with Mrs. Rimmer), so she was a tutor for her peers in high school Algebra. Also, her Cornerstone Reading teacher Mr. Cammisa assigned reading each night for homework, so in high school she had this habit which was necessary to complete her work.



The character development Tracey received at Cornerstone helped her make the transition to high school, where her freshman class was larger and more diverse. "There were students from throughout the city who had different faith traditions, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds. It was a shock at first, and eventually I made many new friends", says Tracey. Learning about the faith of her new classmates was an everyday experience as they debated different ideas and beliefs. Tracey also relied on the independence that was instilled in her by her parents and Cornerstone teachers in high school. She quickly learned in 9th grade that she would have to take initiative to be academically successful and get involved in school activities. She also learned that many of her classmates were driven towards top academic honors, and they considered her and other classmates as their competition. Eventually, Tracey became friends with these students, while giving them strong competition, and helping students who struggled by being a peer tutor through 11th grade. Tracey played varsity softball and volleyball in high school. In her Senior year she took Advanced Placement English and Calculus. She was also the editor of the yearbook, Vice President of the Student Government, and involved in the National Beta Club, an academic association that stresses community service. She graduated in June with an overall GPA of 3.89.

This fall Tracey will be a first-year student at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. She will be entering as a double-major in Psychology and Science. Tracey had a difficult decision to make earlier this year as she was accepted to the University of Michigan and the University of Texas at Austin in addition to Carnegie Mellon, which she chose because of the academic program and the financial package they offered: 92% of her total costs will be covered for each year of her bachelor's program. Tracey is excited for the school year to begin and plans on attending medical school after college.

In an effort to stay closely connected with our 8th grade graduates, an alumni gathering was held on August 17. During this time, students from various graduation years re-connected, shared memories, provided information about how their high school (and for some, college) experiences have been, and brain-stormed about forming an alumni association. The hope is to begin an alumni-led association that will provide social, educational, and professional opportunities for these students. As our graduates go on to high school, college, and their careers, we look forward to learning of their successes and how Cornerstone played a critical role in their lives.



First Day of School

September 7, 2010

At left, 7th grade students are already hard at work in the computer lab, practicing their typing skills. They will put them to use this year as they write research papers and learn Microsoft Office.



Above, 2nd graders sit quietly for their teacher Ms. Evans. Ms. Evans and Mrs. Cooper are the 2nd grade teachers this year. They have been working together to create fun lessons for their students.

At the right, Mrs. Rimmer poses with the girls from the 6th grade class. The 6th graders are adjusting to moving around to different classes and staying on top of their more rigorous middle school coursework.



Above, Mrs. Griffin teaches a Math lesson to her 4th grade class.

At right, 8th grader Shanda smiles for the camera. Shanda has attended Cornerstone since she was in Kindergarten and is excited for her final year. Shanda is in the Voices in Praise Choir and enjoys the opportunity to travel on choir trips.



At the left, Mrs. Cooper and her new 2nd grade class sit together in the reading corner.





From the Principal's Desk

Mrs. Deborah Lee

It is hard to believe but it's that time again- the beginning of a new school year. Here at Cornerstone we are beginning our 22nd year of educating and ministering to students. We are thankful that our children have returned safe and sound after enjoying a wonderful summer of camp, vacations and just hanging out.

In a fluctuating economy where Christian schools are closing down all around us, we are blessed that Cornerstone's doors are still open to our 222 students. Along with many returning students, we have many new faces, including a kindergarten class eager to learn

new things. 100% of our classroom teachers have returned from last year, which provides consistency for our students. A portion of James 5:16 says, "...the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much". I believe that our blessings are from the prayers of our donors, friends and school staff.

We were recently blessed to have a group of our alumni return for an evening of fellowship and reflection. Many of the students are presently in college and some are going in as freshman this semester. We were very happy to hear that we were integral to their academic success. The Cornerstone staff recognizes that we have been given the task to educate and love each child that comes into our school. The bar has been raised and we are committed to reach the high goals that have been set for us as educators. One way that you can be actively involved in helping our students achieve academic success is by becoming a Reading Mentor. Some students in grades 1-5 have been identified as needing extra reading support outside of the classroom. We provide you with training and curriculum to work individually with these struggling students. This is an opportunity that allows you to tutor a child, as well as develop a mentoring relationship with them.

I pray that you will keep Cornerstone in your prayers as we move into this school year. The students are already working hard in their new classes. The Cornerstone faculty and staff thank you for your supporting us in our efforts to teach, train, and mentor this new group of students.



Meet the Teachers

Get to know those who serve our students



Denver Taylor

This is Mr. Taylor's second year at Cornerstone as the 4th grade teacher. He has a bachelor's degree in musical theater and is a candidate for a masters of science in Christian Counseling at Philadelphia Biblical University. "The opportunity to work at Cornerstone is an amazing privilege. The choice was clearly orchestrated by God's hand since I first volunteered here, and I'm ecstatic to follow His lead", Mr. Taylor says. "My job is to pour into their lives and to challenge their minds. I hope that students would come into their own individual identities, while developing strong moral character and clear biblical world views."



Seth Caldwell

Mr. Caldwell has served at Cornerstone for 3 years. His first year was as a Mission Year volunteer, working with the after-school program. He is in his second year as the computer instructor. Mr. Caldwell holds a bachelor's degree from Huntington University in communication studies and a masters degree in urban development from Eastern University. Seth believes it is important to teach students how to use the computer responsibly in light of a biblical world view. "When I finished my Masters degree, I returned to CCA to find a job because I believed in their mission, and I wanted to work in the neighborhood I both love and live in, to further God's Kingdom here and now."

Fall 2010 Calendar

Sept 8 First Day of School for students

Sept 14 Volunteer Open House, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sept 15 Opening chapel, 1:15 pm

Sept 16 Back to School Night

Sept 27 Student Government elections

Oct 3 Voices in Praise Choir at Christ Presbyterian Church, Gibbstown, NJ 9:30 a.m.

Oct 8-11 School closed for teacher in-service and Columbus Day

Nov 1 Thanksgiving Food Drive

Nov 12 End of first quarter

Nov 22-23 Report Card Conferences

Nov 24-26 Thanksgiving Holiday break

Hand in Hand: Church Partnership

Christ Presbyterian Church, Gibbstown, NJ



Christ Presbyterian Church has been a friend of Cornerstone since 2005. Reverend Lori Bass-Riley (Pastor) and her husband Reverend Bryan Bass-Riley (Parrish associate) provide leadership to the church. The Voices in Praise Choir has visited Christ Presbyterian Church every World Communion Sunday (first Sunday in October) for the past 4 years. We have enjoyed various activities together such as a family bowling night, field trips with church members, and volunteering opportunities. Last year, the Cornerstone choir and children of Christ Presbyterian Church decorated pumpkins together after the church service (pictured at left). We invite you to join us on Sunday, October 3 at 9:30 a.m. at 400 Swedesboro Road, Gibbstown, NJ for our annual visit to Christ Presbyterian Church.