



4115 Baltimore Av., Philadelphia PA 19104



The Lantern

a newsletter

for the City Center Academy

+

Spruce Hill Christian School community

Building A Culture Of Grace



classroom everyday. And what rules their hearts will exercise inescapable influence over their desires, thoughts, decisions, words, and actions. So, in the classroom we can never simply focus on educating minds, we also have to commit ourselves to changing hearts as well. Everything our students say and do is rooted in the thoughts and desires of the heart. It is only when the heart changes that the behavior of the child will change for the long run. So, it is never enough for us to set up systems that restrict and control behavior.

This is precisely where City Center Academy and Spruce Hill Christian School have a huge advantage. Because we take Scripture seriously, we recognize the centrality of the heart to a person's behavior and we also recognize how sin influences the thoughts and motives of the heart. We have hope and we persevere because we know that in Jesus Christ we find the promise of and power *(cont. on next page)*

By Paul David Tripp

Why isn't every child motivated by a desire to learn? Why doesn't every child do exactly as the teacher says? Why does a teacher's lesson plan never work exactly as planned? Why do students struggle so to get along with one another? Why do teachers have to spend time in the classroom doing things other than teaching?

You cannot examine the classroom in even the best of Christian schools without realizing that a teacher is never able to just disseminate academic information. No, everyday he or she is dealing with anger, fear, resistance, lack of motivation, interpersonal conflicts, authority issues, sadness, envy, hopelessness and a host of other heart issues that children bring into the classroom everyday. It is not hard to see how each of these things interrupts

and complicates the educational process in its own way.

Perhaps John lives for the recognition of his peers. So, to him, the classroom is not so much a place of learning but a forum for acceptance. Maybe Mary is simply not able to leave the hurt and chaos of her struggling family at the door of the school. Perhaps that hurt turns her attention away and makes it hard for her to be motivated to learn. Maybe Isaiah hates authority, so he resists directions and takes advice as a personal attack. Sarah lives for material things and education is simply outside of the system of what gives her value.

We could multiply example after example, but here is the point: students never leave their hearts at the door of the school. They bring their hearts into the

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SPRING 2008

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Photography by Meghan Hayes, Susan McDowell & Joe Sinagra

(cont. from page 1) for real and lasting heart change. We take seriously his call to be his instruments of heart change where he has placed us.

What does this mean? It means that we want our school to be a place of learning within a culture of grace. Rules and regulations are necessary because they work to reveal and restrain sin, but they cannot rescue us from it. It is only God's grace that has the power to change a person's heart. We make sure that in the classrooms and hallways of our school we are not asking the law to do what only grace can accomplish.

What does this practically look like? In our daily classroom interactions we respond to God-given opportunities to address heart issues with our students. How do we do this? First, we try to do everything we can to build relationships of love with our students. We want them to know we genuinely care for them and that our relationship with them is a safe place to begin to deal with their heart struggles. Next, we work to really get to know our students; seeking to understand, at the level of the heart, why they do the things they do. Next,



we look for opportunities to speak to our students, helping them acknowledge and understand what is going on in their hearts in ways that they would not be able to do without us. Here we help our students to look at themselves in the mirror of God's Word, so they can see themselves as they actually are. Finally, we help our students understand what to do with the new personal insights that God has given them. How should these insights result in new choices, words, and actions both inside and outside the classroom? In all of this we are daily pointing them to the help that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

In our commitment to love, to know, to speak and to do, we are working to make this school a place where academic excellence is possible because children are thriving in a culture of grace. We know that it is only when the obstructing issues of the heart are being dealt with that real learning will take place. And we are thankful for the insights that the Bible gives us on why each of us struggles and for the help for those struggles, in us and in our students, that is only found in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. ■



Paul Tripp is a gifted author, counselor, teacher and pastor. He is currently president of Paul Tripp Ministries and is on the pastoral staff of Tenth Presbyterian Church. His books include "Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens" (P&R 97) and "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands" (P&R 02). He is partnering with the school to bring insight to the issues of building a positive school culture.

Owen Davis is CCA's Assistant Principal for Student Life and Director of Admissions. He came to CCA to teach history after earning degrees at Princeton University and Westminster Theological Seminary.

Mentoring at CCA

At CCA I have often heard teachers express the desire for more time to just talk to our students about life issues and the struggles teens face. Teachers were often torn between making progress on academic material and taking time to talk about other matters weighing on students' minds. This year a new mentoring program began at CCA which gives teachers more time to meet with students, build closer relationships, and talk and pray through important life issues. Mentors also serve as advisors, checking in on students' academic progress throughout the year.

One period each week is set aside for students to meet with their mentors in small groups. Students can bring up issues and concerns, ask for advice and support from their mentors and peers, and to seek wisdom from the Bible on topics that the mentor prepares for the group. During the first semester, mentor groups have focused on the topic of conflict resolution and how to be peacemakers in a world full of conflict. Students have examined what it means to follow the Bible's command for us in Romans 12:18 where Paul writes, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Mentor groups have also provided an opportunity for student and teachers to bond outside of the classroom. Groups are free to enjoy their time together while sitting in the park or in a café or ice cream shop.

Mentor groups have already proven to be a positive addition to community life at CCA. Students have sought help from their mentors for resolving conflicts, voicing concerns or asking questions about school life. The teenage years are difficult to navigate. CCA's mentoring program provides caring, Christian adults to help guide them along their journey.

-Owen Davis



Finding a Safe Haven



By Emily Dao, CCA Class of 2009

It has been nearly six months since I first googled "Philadelphia Christian Private School" and came across City Center Academy. When people hear that is how I came to be at CCA, they're a bit astonished. City Center Academy was the first link that showed up.

It was mid-August and I was in a panic, trying to find a suitable school to enroll in. Just two months prior, my family and I had packed up our home in Raleigh, North Carolina to move a couple states north to a more bustling Philadelphia. My father is a pastor and the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA), his company, had relocated our family to a new church. At the time, I didn't really understand in my heart why God wanted this for us. I resented him deeply for it.

All the way up to the day the moving truck came, I was never willing to face the reality of our departure. Knowing a year in advance, I did everything I could to stay. I just wasn't prepared to leave the comfort of all the familiar places and faces that I had grown to love so much.

That last year in North Carolina was a rocky year for me. I jeopardized a lot in my life. Instead of focusing on school, I would cut class to hang out with my friends. I'd stay out late without permission and when I wasn't allowed out, I would sneak out anyway. I was out of control, completely impulsive, making rash decisions, and worst of all I was insensitive towards my parents. Having fun was my number one priority and I developed bad habits. I convinced myself that this was the only time that I could really just live my life. I looked at Philadelphia as a dead end and whenever I thought about it, I was just aggravated even further.

Growing up in a Christian family can make it very difficult for a person to their come to their own understanding about God. Because I'm a pastor's daughter it was even more difficult. I grew up with a lot of expectations. Unfortunately, I'm not the type of person who likes to be boxed up and be told that I'm supposed to be a certain way.

Moving day came and Philadelphia was just as I had assumed--meager and dreary. Months passed and I just felt home-sick and empty inside. I applied to CCA only because junior year was such a crucial year and I had to repair the damage I had done sophomore year. I was never stupid. I just didn't care to try in school and got by absentmindedly with average grades.

In September, I was able to start at CCA with a clearer mind. Everything in my past was fading behind me and in my heart I really just wanted to change. At CCA, the environment is so encouraging and it has allowed me to persevere greatly. I love every single one of my classes for various reasons. Most of all, I love my Hermeneutics/Bible class.

A lot of the growth that I have experienced at City Center Academy hasn't been academic. It has been spiritual growth. I look forward to Bible class everyday. Something inside me has changed from the person I had been last year. All the good old scriptures that I grew up reading suddenly seem new to me. It's as if I am really hearing God speak to me for the first time. I hold inside me now a fiery passion to understand God more and more—a feeling I never knew I'd experience. I finally grasp the meaning of leaning not on my own understanding but depending on God and His will alone.

In North Carolina, I made the choices that I did because I thought they would make me happy. Looking back, in all reality, I made those choices because I was unhappy. I have now found in God a new hope, a continual enjoyment in Him that leaves me hungrier for His glory everyday. In CCA, I have found a safe haven. ■



Student government is a group of students, elected by our peers, who work together as a united body for the sake of our school. I've come to understand how important it is for students to know they have an opportunity to share their ideas. Many students have opinions and concerns about the the different issues we face and express them through student government. We also provide leadership for raising funds for student events. Our goal this year is to raise enough to be able to sponsor a variety of activities, including a year-end trip which would give everyone a chance to come together for a good time. Most importantly, we are here to support the student body, provide a positive example and help make CCA a better place.

-Arianna Norman,
CCA Class of 2009

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity."

-Psalm 133:1

07 Spruce Hill Christian School and City Center Academy

08 Annual Fund

Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

—2 Corinthians 8:10b-12

“FINISH THE WORK.” Students at City Center Academy & Spruce Hill Christian School often hear this from their teachers and at home from their parents. Our academic program is both excellent and rigorous, so to finish the work, especially with “eager willingness,” a healthy dose of encouragement is often needed. Excellent teaching, homework assistance, “you can do it” pep talks and prayer all inspire our students to finish, and for many, to excel.

Likewise, our **ANNUAL FUND GOAL OF RAISING \$700,000 BY JUNE 30TH** is more ambitious than in any previous year. We are halfway through the school year and halfway towards reaching our goal. Now is the time to match your eager willingness with the “completion of it, according to your means.” Your gift is valuable, regardless of the amount. “For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.” Tuition alone does not cover the costs of operating the school for a good reason: approximately half of our students receive financial aid. Your “acceptable gift” helps make up the difference.

THIS YEAR’S ANNUAL CCA/SHCS BANQUET—scheduled for Friday, April 11th beginning at 6:30 pm at the Union League in Philadelphia—will be a celebration of giving. Rev. Herb Lusk, a Philadelphia pastor known locally and internationally for his powerful preaching and practical ministries, will inspire us in our giving so we can “finish the work.”

We hope you will want to attend the banquet, but do not feel that you have to wait until then to give to the Annual Fund. A gift envelope is enclosed for your convenience. ■

City Center Academy & Spruce Hill Christian School

Benefit Dinner

Friday, April 11th at 6:30 pm • The Union League of Philadelphia

For more information call the Development Office at 215-382-7839 or e-mail dwesley@sprucehill.org



In Memory of Hannah Shasia Cohen

“His banner over me is love.” –Song of Songs 2:4

On Sunday, February 10, 2008, Hannah Cohen, the beloved daughter of our Headmaster, went to be with the Lord. She had been struggling with a fatal lung disease for years, not that you would have been able to tell from meeting her. She was always upbeat and possessed an infectious happiness even in the worst of times. She attended Spruce Hill regularly through sixth grade and graduated with her class in 2006. She grew academically, socially and became a gifted musician, but valued most her strong relationship with Jesus, which she shared with everyone.

Though her life was cut short, it was filled with much happiness. The Cohen family made the best of the time that God gave

them together. Under the banner of God’s love—this is how Hannah lived and died and how she encouraged us to continue.

Hannah has gone home but she touched all that knew her and she will be remembered. Her parents, Seth and Anne Cohen, have chosen to honor their daughter’s memory by establishing the Hannah Shasia Cohen Memorial Scholarship Fund that will allow more children to benefit, as Hannah did, from an education at Spruce Hill.

If you would like to contribute to this fund, write “Hannah Cohen Fund” on the memo line of your check and send it to: Spruce Hill Christian School, 4115 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104 ■

—Moriah Taylor,
SHCS Class of '06 and friend of Hannah's



Middle School Soccer Team Wins League Championship



The Spruce Hill Soccer Team powered through the season to win the PASAC League Championship in Mount Airy in December. After practicing on the playground basketball court where they used garbage cans for goal posts, the team consistently won at their home court at Kingsessing Recreation Center and on the road at gyms all over Philadelphia.

The team was lead by tenacious 8th Graders Sierra Hendricks, Blaise Laramée, Alicia James, Karl Morris, Jared Butler and Dominique Roper. 7th Graders Elijah Brown, Austin Stephens, and Kenya Major made strong contributions to both offense and defense, especially in the dramatic 1-0 Championship victory. 6th Graders Sarah Wagenveld and Aaron Henry brought energy and toughness to the court every game, while 5th Graders Cole Ruley, Asa James, Sydnie Davis, and Marcus Williams all figure to be strong leaders for Coach Scott Peters in the years to come. ■



Our 4th and 5th grade classes have been introduced to a new skill—ballroom dancing! Lessons taught by instructors from the community dance studio, “Take The Lead”, have also encouraged our young dancers in new ways to express courtesy and respect for one another.