



**CORNERSTONE**  
Schools of Washington, D.C.

Hope and Academic Excellence  
in the Nation's Capital

# THE CORNERSTONE Connection

SEPTEMBER 2021 ISSUE

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## Note from the Executive Director

*Dear Cornerstone family and friends,*

We are excited to be off and running this year with 162 students at Cornerstone for in-person learning!

This September issue focuses on our commitment to developing servant leaders at Cornerstone. From our mission statement, "equipping them [students] with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become leaders who serve others in light of Christ and His Truth."

This year, we have increased investment in our seniors by providing opportunities for them to grow in their leadership skills and to put these principles into practice serving their fellow students. Jonathan Powell, Dean of Students and Athletic Director, has led the effort to kickoff a new House system, empowering our Seniors to take the initiative in building Christian community at Cornerstone and in the High School.

All of the seniors interviewed for a House leadership position and were selected as a House Head or Assistant. Following a planning retreat, the seniors planned a House launch event, recommended House names, and created gift bags for their housemates. On Wednesday, September 22, Houses Douglass, McLeod, Truth, and Wells were announced and the high school students enjoyed lunch and a fun kickball competition at Nats Academy. A great start!

We also hired Rachel Baber, our new Post-Graduate Planning And Alumni Director and a former Capital Fellow, to develop a weekly Life Plan class for all high school students as well as engage students and parents in a cohesive planning process for college and post-graduate opportunities. Additionally, she will expand our connection to Cornerstone alumni to support our K-Life initiative.

We are deeply grateful for our many community partners, including Anacostia River Church, who have been present to connect with Cornerstone families, greet our students on the first day of school, and to recruit Partners to serve our students through the Partner Program. We are one body in Christ serving Southeast DC!

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support!

**Blessings in Christ,**

Dean Luckenbaugh





## Welcome Back to School

**J**ust days before school started, we welcomed nearly 130 families to Cornerstone for a family orientation event as we prepared to begin a new school year. We had three separate sessions for elementary students, middle school students, and high school students and their families. Parents and caregivers heard from the leadership team about Cornerstone's vision for unity and partnership within our school community and what to expect for the year ahead. Students were able to meet their teachers and visit their classroom.

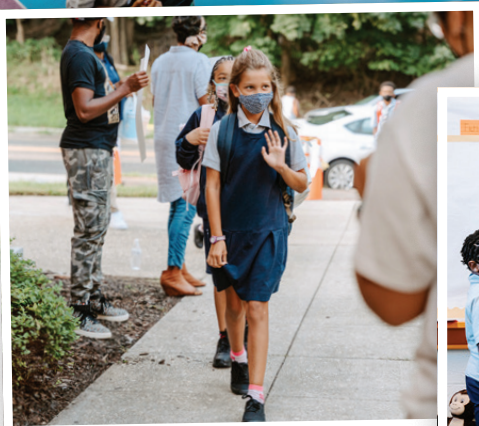


*Family Orientation*



Our doors opened for a new school year on **Monday, August 30** and the joy of returning to in-person learning was felt by all! After nearly a year of distance learning, we were thrilled to greet our families and students as they arrived on campus. Hours and hours of preparation by Cornerstone faculty and staff came to fruition as students entered their new classrooms. As a Cornerstone family, we are praying that each of our students would not only grow academically, but would also grow in their knowledge of who God is and who He has created them to be.

*First Day of School*





## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: JONATHAN POWELL

### **Dean of Students and Athletic Director**

*The Cornerstone community has been immensely blessed by the leadership of Jonathan Powell (JP) over the last 15 years. Here is what Mr. Powell had to say when asked about his experience at Cornerstone and the impact his various roles here have had on his life and his faith.*

#### **Q: What brought you to Cornerstone and what has made you stay?**

**A:** Fifteen years ago, I started teaching PE at Cornerstone as a favor for a friend who knew that I loved sports, fitness, and kids. Originally I was hired as a long-term sub. I never planned on staying for a full year. However, during those first few months I fell in love with our precious students and the Cornerstone community. During my tenure at Cornerstone I've witnessed God's miraculous and transformative power in countless students and my life as well. I like to say that I grew up at Cornerstone. My relationship with God has grown tremendously. I've been forced to grapple with my own pre-judgements of others and beliefs that were rooted in my upbringing instead of God's truth. Some of the precious gifts I've received are opportunities to walk with young people



through life's devastating disasters and beautiful triumphs. I've wept with students as they experienced the untimely death of a parent or close relative, and celebrated students' spiritual and intellectual awakening.

#### **Q: What is your favorite part of your role at Cornerstone?**

**A:** My favorite part of my job is discipling and engaging students. Over the years I've learned so much from my students and developed deep meaningful relationships with them. Our relationships have afforded me many opportunities to engage students outside of school and speak into their lives.

#### **Q: What are you most excited for this year as it pertains to Cornerstone's investment in developing servant leaders, particularly with our seniors?**

**A:** I would describe our seniors as a group of deeply thoughtful, compassionate, hilarious and intelligent young artists, entrepreneurs, athletes and friends. As Cornerstone has elevated our seniors, I've seen them embrace more of their God given abilities and let their unique personalities shine. We've communicated that we don't expect perfection, but with additional privileges comes greater responsibility. It's been beautiful watching them mature and rise to the occasion.





## Developing Leaders for Life

**D**eveloping servant leaders for life is an integral part of Cornerstone's mission and a marker by which we measure our success as an institution. This year, we are committed to growing our high schoolers in their **leadership skills** as well as **college and career readiness**.

Cornerstone now offers a Life Plan course led by Rachel Baber, our Director of Post-Graduate Planning and Alumni Relations, which is a class exclusively for high school students where they receive individualized resources and coaching to explore opportunities after high school. When asked what makes her most excited about Cornerstone's increased investment in student leadership and development, Ms. Baber said that she is "most excited for the ways that students will expand their view of what they are capable of and for the students to see themselves as leaders and believe in their unique abilities."

One area in which seniors will have the chance to exercise leadership is through the House system. The House system is designed to foster community within the high school and to provide opportunities for student leadership and mentoring across grade levels. One of our 12th Graders, Nasir Wright, said

*"A good culture is where everyone comes together"*

this about what makes a strong student leader and school culture:

*"A strong student leader wants what is best for you, even if you don't know it for yourself. A good culture is one where everyone comes together, shares wins and hardships together, and shares the fruits of our labor together."*

The senior students have taken on the challenge of serving as the inaugural leaders of the four Houses and named them after prominent Black leaders who shaped both our nation's history and the history of Washington, D.C.: Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Ida B. Wells. This

month, we launched the House system for our high schoolers with a full day of team-building activities and fun games. There will be various House events throughout the year **to promote servant leadership and build a more cohesive student culture at Cornerstone.**



After the House launch, our high schoolers enjoyed lunch and team-building games at Nats Academy.







## PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION



Cornerstone is blessed to have many amazing community partners who consistently show up, encourage, and pray for our students and families. One of those partners is Anacostia River Church (ARC). Members of ARC arrived at Cornerstone early in the morning for our first day of school with handmade signs to greet students and families. They cheered and warmly welcomed each student, and they paused to pray over this new school year after students were in their classrooms. ARC has also welcomed families at our orientation and have recruited many new student Partners. We are deeply grateful for ARC and all of our church partners who exemplify what it means to love and serve like Christ.



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## Development Update

As we settle into our school year, we are in the midst of promoting and recruiting for our **Partner Program**, which is our signature volunteer program here at Cornerstone. We are thrilled to be returning to in-person partnering this year! As a Cornerstone Partner, individuals have the opportunity to engage with our students in a unique way through being paired with a student and attending four Partner Events each year. Through this program, partners build meaningful relationships with the students and are able to encourage, pray for, and walk closely with them throughout the school year. **We still have a need for Partners for our 3rd-7th grade students this year and welcome you to sign up or recruit a friend!**



We also need Partners to provide financial support toward a student's tuition. We are specifically focusing on fully funding our students' tuition costs to ensure that a Cornerstone education is accessible to all families. We invite you to consider supporting a student scholarship at one of the following levels:

**Full student scholarship – \$7,200 (\$600/year)**  
**Half student scholarship – \$3,600 (\$300/year)**  
**Quarter student scholarship – \$1,800 (\$150/month)**

Thank you to all of our former and current Partners who have faithfully served our students over the years!

*To become a partner to a Cornerstone student,  
please visit [www.cornerstone-schools.org/partner](https://www.cornerstone-schools.org/partner)  
or contact Presley Montgomery at  
[pmontgomery@cornerstone-schools.org](mailto:pmontgomery@cornerstone-schools.org)*

If you would like to make a general donation to Cornerstone,  
you can do so at [www.cornerstone-schools.org/give-now](https://www.cornerstone-schools.org/give-now).