



CORNERSTONE
Schools of Washington D.C., Inc.

Hope and Academic Excellence
in the Nation's Capital

THE CORNERSTONE Connection

FALL 2020 ISSUE

After much consideration and based on feedback from our Cornerstone students and their families, we have made the decision to start our new school year virtually and continue distance learning through the first quarter of the school year. As we get closer to the end of the quarter on October 30th, we will reevaluate and make a decision about whether to extend distance learning for the rest of the semester.

As we begin this new school year at a distance, we are encouraged, thinking back to the many creative ways our teachers found to create community during the last few months of our previous school year. From themed Zoom calls ("wear a crazy hat day") to our drive-through farewell parade, our teachers were committed to finding ways to make sure their students felt loved and stayed engaged. We know that starting the year at a distance will be a challenge, but we also know that our teachers have the creativity and passion to cultivate effective learning communities, even from a distance.

Note from the Executive Director

I remember when I first saw the sign being carried by Jay Urich, South Carolina Gamecock's young quarterback, during a march for justice. "Matter is the Minimum," his sign said, followed by "Black lives are worthy, Black lives are beloved, Black lives are needed." Very few statements have rung so true in my time at Cornerstone.

We didn't open Cornerstone twenty-one years ago because we thought the children of Washington, DC simply "mattered." We opened Cornerstone because we believed the children of DC were worthy of our best, beloved by our staff and our God, and needed by our country and by our world! We passionately wanted to create a school that would prepare our students well for life here on earth, but, more importantly, give them an eternal perspective of God's will for their lives and for their eternities!

While the world is a different place today than it was when Cornerstone was founded, the mission of Cornerstone has never been more relevant or more needed. Only God's truth provides the pathway to righting racial injustices. Only God's love can heal centuries of hurt. Only God's strength can overcome the enemy who seeks to destroy and divide. This year, more than ever, I pray our students see Christ in us and see themselves as a central part of the Imago Dei.

We are so thankful that God gave us the vision for Cornerstone when he did and that He has provided for our every need to have us here "for such a time as this."

Sincerely, Derrick A. Max



Teachers gather for the end-of-year parade.
And at left, fifth graders enjoy funny hat day.

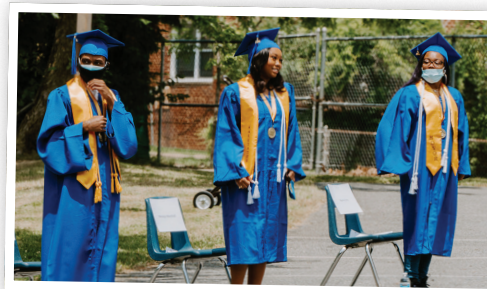


An Unusual Graduation

As our school year came to a close last June, one of our biggest concerns as a staff was how to celebrate our seniors. Graduating from High School is such a huge accomplishment and seeing our graduates receive their diplomas in our sanctuary to the cheers of their extended families is truly the highlight of every school year.

When it became clear that our traditional graduation ceremony was not going to be possible, our administration got together and planned a socially distant drive-in graduation. Our ten graduates and their families arrived in our upper parking lot the morning of June 2nd to a parking spot decorated with balloons and streamers and marked off just for them. While remarks from the valedictorians (there were two this year) and the class-elected speaker had to be pre-recorded, the graduates were still able to walk and receive their diplomas to the cheers of their classmates, teachers, and families.

We will miss this awesome class of graduates and we wish them all the best as they begin their college and vocational programs this fall!



FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS

There are only three grocery stores east of the Anacostia River and their produce departments are severely lacking. Add to this the shortages that were prevalent in every grocery store at the beginning of the pandemic and the ongoing unemployment, especially in the service sector, and you get a huge need for groceries among families in Southeast D.C.

We knew McLean Bible Church had a program for collecting and distributing grocery items to people in need, so we got in touch and offered our parking lot as a distribution site. Not only do they provide a big box of groceries for the hundreds of people who come through our parking lot every other Friday, but they also offer a prayer and a word of encouragement. As our site leader, Donovan Bates, said, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have delivered over 50,000 pounds of food in Southeast DC, shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with hundreds of families, and witnessed dozens of people accept Jesus Christ into their heart." MBC has also created a Facebook community for the people they meet where they can continue to hear about food distributions, hear gospel messages, and ultimately get connected to a church family.

It's been particularly wonderful to see how relationships have formed between volunteers and community members. Many of those who come to pick up food regularly ask for prayer from specific volunteers whom they have gotten to know. Some of our parents and staff have even gotten involved as volunteers. We are so grateful for this partnership with McLean Bible and the way they have served our community during this time of need.



GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT: BRIANNA AND KIYON

Miss Johnson, our former Office Manager, had the chance to check in with a few of our graduates from the class of 2017. **Brianna** is starting her senior year at Bowie State University where she is working toward a Bachelors of Social Work. She started out majoring in Psychology, only switching to Social Work after, "Psychology just wasn't clicking. I never saw myself doing social work until I got to college... I went to college because my family told me to, but it's worth it! You can find something you like." When talking about the impact college has had on her, Brianna shared how adjusting to a new place has led her to open up more to friends and family. "My roommate would take me to events like basketball games and it really got me out of my comfort zone," she told us. She looks forward to getting her Master of Social Work and using her degrees to serve underserved children and families.

Kiyon, our valedictorian of the class of 2017, attends Delaware State University where she is getting her degree in Computer Science. She always knew she was going to study Computer Science because it was a growing field. As she told us, "I actually like what I'm learning, so that was a plus. I want to give back to people who have done things for me time and time again. I want to be able to give back on a wider scale, even if it's just building a website for someone who needs one. It turns out this degree is something that God placed in my mind to do and now I see why He did." Kiyon talked about how the challenge of transitioning to college has made her more determined. She shared, "Being in a different situation helped me to grow a lot." Her relationship with God has even gotten stronger in college. "I've had more times when I've needed to rely on Him. I can depend on Him and, even something I don't want to tell anyone, I can bring it to Him."

We praise God for all he is doing in the lives of these awesome young women and we can't wait to see what they do next!



Farewell to Father Pawell

If you have ever visited Cornerstone, you may have had the pleasure of meeting Father Pawell, the pastor of the Catholic church from whom we rent our building. This summer, Father Pawell was called to pastor a church in a different part of the city, so we wanted to take a moment to honor him and his service in our community.

Father Pawell has always been a whole-hearted partner in our ministry to students. He would often open school-wide events in prayer, he has held Ash Wednesday services for our student body for the past few years, and it was not uncommon for him to walk through the school on any given day with a greeting of peace for anyone he met or for him to pop into Mr. Max's office to pray for him on hard days. His heart for the community was evident as he would go out and walk through the neighborhood, sharing the love of Christ with everyone he spoke to. **We cannot overstate the blessing that Father Pawell has been to our staff, students, and families. He will be missed.**





3742 ELY PLACE SE
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PLAYGROUND!

We are so excited to announce that our new playground is completed and ready for play, thanks to the generosity of everyone who gave towards our playground fund during #GivingTuesday last November and a few key donors who matched that giving! We were able to not only replace our old wooden playground with modern and up to code equipment, but also to repave our crumbling walkways and stairs and level the play area so that students can run around safely. Your generosity overflowed so much that we also installed four in-ground basketball hoops and striped the asphalt so that now we have a basketball court right in our backyard!

This new playground has been a long time coming. Play is so important for our students and it means so much that they have a beautiful new space dedicated just for them. Our students can't wait to start playing on it when we are able to come back together in person.



FUNDRAISING GOAL

Last month we sent out a letter sharing our financial need in the face of the ongoing pandemic. We set a bold goal to close our deficit by raising \$200,000 before the beginning of the new school year. We were blown away to receive almost \$250,000! **Thank you so much for your financial partnership as we work together to continue offering a rigorous and Christ-centered education to students in our nation's capital for years to come.**

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

To make a financial contribution, visit www.cornerstone-schools.org and click on "GIVE NOW" or mail a check to P.O. Box 76456, Washington, DC 20013

