



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

Hope and Academic Excellence  
in the Nation's Capital

# THE CORNERSTONE Connection

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*Merry  
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**CORNERSTONE  
LIONS**

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## Note from the Executive Director

*Dear friends of Cornerstone,*

**O**ppportunity is one of our foundational LIONS values at Cornerstone. Christmas is the ultimate historic and annual moment of Opportunity which gives us true Hope.

This is the Divine Opportunity: to join God's family through faith in His only Son who came to identify with us and provide a path to a new life and Opportunities. And to take full advantage of this Opportunity, we need brothers and sisters around us who encourage and challenge us, and through imitating Jesus, never leave us or forsake us.

This *Cornerstone Connection* issue provides glimpses of Opportunity in action at Cornerstone.

You will meet three seniors who are Cornerstone "lifers". Each of these students has seized the Opportunity at Cornerstone to grow in maturity, friendship, entrepreneurship, and leadership, readying to pursue their next life step, all while surrounded by staff who have poured into their lives.

With these seniors leading three of four new Houses, you will see our first-

year House system taking steps to build community outside their grades. Some Freshman students took the initiative to propose and creatively plan a first in-school Homecoming during Spirit Week.

You will meet a Senior from another local school whose love for Cornerstone led to her entire school welcoming students and supporting and promoting Cornerstone at their annual chili cookoff.

You will witness our 58 Partners who took a second opportunity to invest focused time in our students, jointly making Christmas crafts and building friendship.

You will learn about the 114 donors that have already given close to \$900,000 to support Cornerstone's mission through our **2021-2022 Next Level Campaign**.

As we celebrate Christ's coming to us, we give thanks for the Opportunity to build Christian community in southeast DC, learning and growing together in love and hope.

Merry Christmas!  
Dean Luckenbaugh



## Cornerstone Lifers

**A** third of the class of 2022 has spent all of their school years at Cornerstone (all but one of their classmates has been together since 7th grade!). Makayla McDonald and Heaven Baskin started together in Kindergarten and Nasir Wright joined them in 1st grade. **These three Cornerstone “lifers” have risen to lead Cornerstone through their academic example, servant leadership, and becoming three of the four House leaders in our newly formed high school House system.**

All three attribute their developed confidence and maturity to the close-knit family atmosphere, the one-on-one connection with teachers, and the Humanities classes, started by Ms. Sallie and Mr. Salazar in middle school and running through high school. The engaging, discussion-based classes pushed these students out of their comfort zone and brought out their best by motivating them to initiate and elaborate.

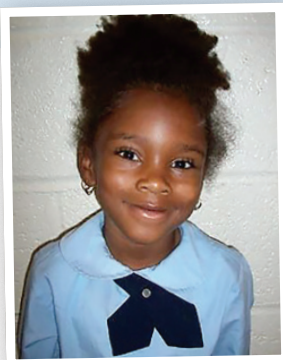


Mrs. McCray with Nasir (far left) and Makayla (right of Mrs. McCray) with two friends

As they reflected on their Cornerstone experience, Mrs. Wright's 2nd grade class (“the bug lady”), Mrs. McCray's 5th grade class, Mrs. Nelson's Art classes, and Mr. Turchin's History classes all came to their attention because those teachers were especially creative, fun, and most significantly, personally cared for them.

### MAKAYLA McDONALD

**MAKAYLA** recalls the impact of Mr. Newsome with whom she had a love/hate relationship in 5th and 6th grade. He would have the whole class copy passages in Ephesians 4 for disrespectful language like saying “shut up.” At the time, she hated him for that exercise and ignored the words. After some time though, she began to ask, “Why does he expect so much from me?” and she slowly began to pay attention to the words from Ephesians. “It really taught me something valuable,” she says.



Mr. Newsome later embedded in her that high school counts and will determine your future. This year, she captained the volleyball team and is the leader of House Truth.

Makayla emphasizes the personal care of teachers that stands out at Cornerstone: **“Ms. Sallie recognizes when I am**

*(Continued)*



“From the classroom to the volleyball court, Makayla has been the definition of a consistent student who has led by example every year at Cornerstone.”  
— Luke Salazar, Humanities Teacher



“Makayla has been a leader since the day I met her. Since 7th grade, I’ve seen her grow in patience, determination, and kindness. Since 9th grade, she has shown me almost every piece of writing she’s done, asked for edits, and made those before turning the assignment in. This attention to detail and dedication to excellence are just part of who Makayla is every day!”

— Elizabeth Sallie, Academic Dean



## Cornerstone Lifers *(Continued from page 2)*

**having a rough day, and takes me outside of class, and encourages and challenges me like a big sister."**

Makayla has a very athletic family which has also brought lots of injuries. She always seemed to be the one to be caring for the hurting family member whether wrapping

bandages or managing medications. This led to her interest in studying Kinesiology with the goal of being a sports trainer or doctor. Her dream school is Clemson, but she has applied to many colleges and has already been accepted at three schools including Penn State!

### HEAVEN BASKIN

**HEAVEN** emphasizes Cornerstone's influence in bringing her out of her shell and overcoming her shyness and social awkwardness. Mr. Salazar's Humanities classes have pushed her to improve her vocabulary and speak with clarity. Mr. Salazar provided "word puzzles and many creative



which brings out her artistic and expanding social skills. Her clients are with her for 1-2 hours and she has to engage them in conversation, something she could not have

imagined even a few years ago. She averages 12 clients per week during the school year and many more in the summer. Her confidence led her to run for House leadership and is now leading House Douglass!

She now wants to study business at a college in the Maryland area while also going to cosmetology school to expand her business and entrepreneurial skills.

*(Continued)*

**"Not only does Heaven excel in leading her class to academic success, but she displays exceptional care for the overlooked and outsiders."**

**— Luke Salazar, Humanities Teacher**

ways in the classroom to challenge and stretch me to be a good communicator and be more sociable," Heaven recalls.

**The culture at Cornerstone has also cultivated her creativity, encouraging her to try new and different things then she would typically choose to engage in.**

In 2020, these skills motivated her to start her own business, Lash Addiction,



**"Heaven has transformed during her time at Cornerstone. If I could have any student be my teacher, it would be Heaven. She is well spoken, creative, and incredibly dedicated to her education. She leads with a quiet strength that impacts her entire class and students younger than her. I can't wait to see how she continues to grow in her gifts!" — Elizabeth Sallie, Academic Dean**

## Cornerstone Lifers *(Continued from page 3)*

### NASIR WRIGHT

**NASIR** spoke of his transformation from “an annoying and average student to a positive leader who helps others while also being on honor roll.” He recalled a critical moment in 9th grade in a conversation with his Dad. He was feeling some pressure from his family to be successful at school, and his Dad encouraged him to “stick to his strengths.” He identified that he had the capability to retain information, multitask, and be able to see issues from different angles along with his funny, charismatic personality.

*“Through his artistic creativity, Nasir has regularly brought new life to books I have read many times and challenged his classmates and teachers to think more critically.” – Luke Salazar, Humanities Teacher*

**He began to leverage his skills to help others and live into his potential.** He remembered teachers who cared and were attentive to his individual needs. He believes that Cornerstone’s approach



*“Nasir is one of the funniest people I know. In addition to that, he’s an amazing big brother and asks incredible questions. His curiosity and insight are so unique and make his class better. During distance learning, he got so excited about *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, that he followed up with me after our Zoom class to keep discussing Janie’s motivations. Being his teacher has made me think more deeply and be more curious.”*  
– Elizabeth Sallie, Academic Dean

increases opportunities for students to engage and lead, and has fully prepared him for employment interviews. He now serves as the leader in House Wells.

With his father’s background in construction and being able to fix anything, Nasir is looking to pursue a degree in architecture. He has been accepted at Morgan State, which has the top HBCU architecture program in the country.

*The Cornerstone family is richly blessed by these students who have been through many ups and downs, yet now so beautifully represent our LIONS values of **Love, Integrity, Opportunity, Nobility, and Strength**. They embody a vision of hope for any struggling younger student of reaching their fullest God-given potential.*

### DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



It has been an exciting few weeks since kicking off our **Next Level Campaign** for the 2021-2022 school year. We are humbled and overjoyed to share that 114 donors have contributed \$890,655, which is 71% of our goal! With about \$350,000 left to go, would you consider giving to help us meet our goal by **December 31**? You can visit our website at: [cornerstone-schools.org/nextlevel](https://cornerstone-schools.org/nextlevel) to learn more and donate online.

*Thank you for considering Cornerstone in your Christmas giving!*





## SPIRIT WEEK

Leading up to Thanksgiving, our students and staff participated in a school-wide Spirit Week. **Spirit Week is a fun way to encourage school spirit, a positive culture, and unity among the entire student body.** The week included themed dress up days, the high school House Games, a catered Five Guys lunch, cross grade-level reading buddies, and culminated in a homecoming dance. Cultivating a strong school culture at Cornerstone is something we strive to do in every aspect of our program, and it was such an encouragement seeing our high schoolers take the charge to plan these events for this year's Spirit Week!

## The House Games

Competition was intense during our first-ever high school **House Games**! Each house (Douglass, McLeod, Truth, and Wells) competed in a series of athletic events including basketball, kajabi can jam, volleyball, and tug-of-war. Students made posters and cheered on their teammates, and each event was neck and neck! In the end, the **Truth** house came away with the victory. We are looking forward to the next House Games in the spring, which will be an arts festival.



**DOUGLASS • McLEOD • TRUTH • WELLS**



## PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

### Trinity School at Meadow View

Cornerstone was honored to be a part of **Trinity School at Meadow View's** (TMV) annual chili cook-off this year! Each year, students at TMV choose a local organization as the beneficiary of the event's proceeds. Cornerstone staff and students were able to



attend the event and enjoy great food and

fun with the TMV community. One of those students, Lucy Lee Treene, advocated for Cornerstone to be the recipient of this year's event and personally delivered the gift of over \$8,000 to Cornerstone! After visiting with students and delivering the gift, Lucy Lee shared, **"I would be a teacher at Cornerstone right now if I could!"** We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the students at TMV through this gift!



## Christmas Partner Event

We were overjoyed to welcome Partners back to Cornerstone on December 3rd for our second **Partner Event** of the year! The 3rd-7th grade classrooms were set up with stations for students and their Partners to decorate Christmas ornaments and enjoy Christmas cookies.



It was beautiful to witness Partners and students laughing, talking, and praying together and was such an encouragement to see these relationships begin to grow. **We are grateful for each of our wonderful Partners and the ways they are showing the love of Christ to Cornerstone students!**



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