

## SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Literacy is a key initiative in most CIS programs. That's why book drives are important and help make CIS literacy programs successful. In Georgia, the AmeriCorps Reading Tutorial, Georgia Literacy Connection and Reading Is Fundamental programs are popular. The programs target low achieving elementary school students and help them improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition skills. In '03-'04, almost 95% of students served by the Georgia Literacy



(from left) Donna Lowry, WXIA-11 Alive Education Reporter, Patty Pflum, Atlanta CIS Executive Director, Helen Zappia, Organization of DeKalb Educators, Pat Pickard, DeKalb County School System, Ellen Peacock, Borders District Marketing Manager, Abidemi Marsh, Borders Corporate Sales Coordinator.

Connection improved their reading skills, and 93% served by AmeriCorps Reading Tutorial improved their skills.

For three consecutive years, CIS of Atlanta has been partnering with Borders bookstores when conducting back to school book drives. This year's efforts were expanded to include CIS of Marietta/Cobb, Douglas, Athens/Clarke and Augusta/Richmond counties. The 14 stores that participated in Georgia collected a total of 10,071 books. The books were distributed to CIS partner schools, and Borders donated a percentage of sales to the participating CIS programs.

# TURNING oints

News of Communities In Schools of Georgia

Winter 2006



## Georgia Gears Up For National Mentoring Month

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

National Mentoring Month  
.....January

Mentoring Workshop  
.....Jan. 23

Student Achievement Month State Judging  
..... Jan. 25 & 26

Performance Learning Center® Services Coordinator & Academic Coordinator Roundtables  
.....Jan. 26

Excellence in Leadership Certificate Program Training® (Series II)  
.....Feb. 21-24

Performance Learning Center® Academic Winter Conference  
..... Feb. 28-Mar. 1



Kaylan Watson, CIS of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County, works with fourth graders (front to back) Preston Hasty, Erik Murray, Dea Blackstock and Christian Muniz as they read.

National Mentoring Month, spearheaded by the Harvard Mentoring Project and MENTOR, occurs every January. According to statistics, there are millions of kids in this country who fall into the crisis category of being at risk and need mentoring. The month-long outreach campaign focuses on the need and provides an opportunity to work in partnership with others to increase the number of mentors for our aspiring young students. Generally when you talk to someone who is successful in life, they attribute their success to the help of a mentor or mentors.

Communities In Schools (CIS) has always had strong mentoring programs in Georgia and throughout the country. The Georgia Mentoring Partnership (GMP) develops and implements a statewide mentoring process that provides support and guidance to mentoring programs. The GMP worked successfully with the Governor's office to proclaim January 2006 as Mentoring Month in Georgia. Additionally the GMP, CIS, and Education GO Get It (GO) will conduct a training session for mentors, people seeking to become mentors, G-Force volunteers (GO's term for college student or community mentors), and youth serving programs at the Centreplex in Macon on January 23. For more information on the training session and how to become involved in mentoring in Georgia, visit [www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org), [www.georgiaGO.org](http://www.georgiaGO.org) or [www.georgiamentoring.org](http://www.georgiamentoring.org).

### Communities In Schools of Georgia Key Program Areas:

- **Mentoring**
- **Parent Education**
- **Innovative Teen Education**
- **Literacy**
- **Technology and Bridging the Digital Divide**
- **Youth Leadership Development**

### Georgia CIS Local Programs

Albany/Dougherty	Cook	Houston	Rome/Floyd
Appling	Coweta	Jefferson	Savannah/Chatham
Athens/Clarke	Crisp/Dooly	Jenkins	Screven
Augusta/Richmond	Decatur	Laurens	Stephens
Baldwin	Dodge	Macon/Bibb	Sumter
Barrow	Douglas	Marietta/Cobb	Tattnall
Berrien	Effingham	McDuffie	Troup
Bulloch	Elbert	Miller	Turner
Burke	Emanuel	Montgomery/	Twiggs
Candler	Fitzgerald/Ben Hill	Treutlen/Wheeler	Valdosta/Lowndes
Catoosa	Fulton/DeKalb	North Georgia	Walton
Cocharan/Bleckley	Glascok	(seven counties)	Warren
Colquitt	Hart	Putnam	Wilkes

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[www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org)

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**Communities In Schools is the nation's leading community-based organization helping kids succeed in school and prepare for life.**

visit our website at  
[www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org)

## Guest Columnist



Michael L. Thurmond  
Commissioner, GA Dept. of Labor

I have yet to see a student with a strong family background fail to achieve academic success. Research has shown that children learn from the time they are born, and those born into strong families tend to flourish, learn more, and achieve higher goals than those who don't have similar support. Children who are the product of strong families usually achieve academic success, which in turn leads to economic success.

In order to encourage strong families, we must develop what columnist David Brooks calls our "human capital." Brooks defines human capital as more than just skills and knowledge; it is also cultural capital—"all of the assumptions, emotional dispositions and linguistic capacities we unconsciously pick up from families, neighbors and ethnic groups, usually by age three." Therefore, in order to strengthen the individual, we must strengthen the family.

The Georgia Department of Labor's recent Workforce Conference emphasized the link between economic success and strong families. Georgia's working families are the basic building blocks of our state's economy, and strong healthy families contribute to the creation of a productive workforce. We often overlook the importance of strong healthy families, but they are critical to our state's economy. Strong families give their children what David Brooks calls "aspirational capital: the fire-in-the-belly-ambition to achieve," and achievement brings academic success which leads to economic success.

I applaud any effort that encourages children to stay in school, and Communities In Schools has a history of working to strengthen families. The stronger we can make our working families, the stronger our economy will be. After all, knowledge is power.

## DID YOU KNOW ? ? ? ?

- **Dr. Portia Holmes Shields**, CIS of Georgia board member, received the 2005 **Educational Leadership Award** from the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund during a dinner in New York.
- **CIS of Decatur County**, in partnership with **York and Associates Engineering Firm**, has made learning fractions and ratios fun through their Xtreme Math Team After School Program.
- **CIS of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County** raised over **\$19,000** with the support of sponsors and their waiters who not only served guests but entertained with skits and songs from movies.
- **CIS of Augusta** received a Compassion Capital Funding grant for **\$40,000** and an Abstinence Education grant for **\$405,000**. The compassion grant will allow for program expansion and organizational development.
- Many CIS affiliates and Performance Learning Centers® have helped Katrina and Rita evacuees. **Classic City PLC in Clarke County** raised \$400 and purchased and donated items they needed to get started in Athens. They plan to continue to help the family throughout the new year.

### Spellings Learns More About Georgia Schools

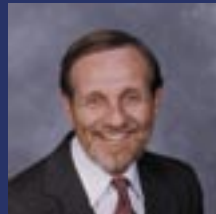


U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings listens to Neil Shorthouse explain a point to Senator Saxby Chambliss as Albert Coleman, Patty Pftum and Chambliss' wife Julianne look on.

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings made a visit to Capitol View Elementary School in Atlanta to discuss techniques faculty used to increase students' reading skills and overall academic achievement at their school. During her visit, Senator Saxby Chambliss arranged for CIS of Georgia to meet and discuss how CIS programs are helping students stay in school and improve academically. State School Superintendent Kathy Cox and Deputy State School Superintendent Stuart Bennett also participated in the discussions and talked about CIS' role in the Georgia Department of Education's school improvement plan. Spellings commented that Georgia is one of the forerunners with a "can do" attitude as it pertains to implementing the *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

Sen. Chambliss has a keen interest in education, and his wife is a retired teacher. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, he was recently successful in expanding the Reach Out and Read initiative to military bases by including it in the 2006 defense budget. The program encourages parents to read to their children.

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Neil Shorthouse

Exposing children to education early is the key to preventing learning difficulties in their later years. That's the word from a recent Georgia State University study of the state's universal pre-K program. The study found that while Georgia's preschool children begin school behind their peers nationally, they gain ground by the end of the first grade, to the point where they exceeded the national norms on their overall math skills and their ability to identify letters and words.

The study also revealed that about a third of the children whose mothers didn't complete high school repeated either kindergarten or first grade and scored far lower on standardized tests.

At the other end of the spectrum, many high school students who are seeking admission to a CIS Performance Learning Center® are not reading at the minimum sixth-grade level requirement.

How do we reverse these trends? Part of the solution lies in recruiting mentors. Mentors accomplish things for kids that even some paid professionals cannot achieve. One of the reasons they are successful centers on the power of a caring, one-on-one relationship that provides encouragement, guidance and support.

During National Mentoring Month, consider becoming a mentor of a school-age child. If you cannot do that, consider volunteering at a local school or helping a child increase their skills and enthusiasm for reading.



Bishop Hall Charter School PLC students took a three-day experiential learning trip to learn about marine biology and oceanography.



(From left) Marietta PLC Services Coordinator Jolene Virgo and students Juan Balcazar, Keia Reed and Robert Ector attend a Coca-Cola Student Leadership Conference at Georgia State University.



U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings observes a Capitol View Elementary School student doing classwork during her visit.

## NETWORK ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Visit [www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org) to find out about CIS programs in your community.