

# Turning Points



COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS of Georgia News

S U M M E R 2 0 1 2

## Boosting Confidence and Student Achievement

Each year Student Achievement Month (SAM) provides an opportunity to recognize students who need extra encouragement and support to succeed in the classroom and beyond. More than 150 students throughout the state compete at the local, regional and state levels in four categories: written expression, public speaking, creative expression and computer technology. State winners receive prizes valued up to \$1,000 and high school seniors can opt for a scholarship in lieu of prizes.

High school computer technology winner from Burke County High School, **Jamecia Dukes**, understands the importance of winning and the impact SAM can have on her continued education. "Winning has definitely boosted my confidence to continue to do better in school," Dukes said. "I know if I keep pressing in my school work, I will be able to accomplish more."

Other state winners include **Michael Martinez**, Ben Hill Primary School, Fitzgerald; **Shannon Byrd**, Sylvan Hills Middle School, Atlanta; **Amy Sanchez**, Marietta Performance Learning Center®, Marietta; **Antonio Williams**, SGA Elementary School, Waynesboro; **Cesar Sanchez**, Marietta Performance Learning Center®, Marietta; **Taylor Terrell**, Turner County Middle School, Ashburn; **Ashley Olivares**, Ben Hill Primary School,

Fitzgerald; **Diana Decade**, Burke County Middle School, Waynesboro; and **Lauren Robinson**, Cobb County Performance Learning Center®, Marietta. SAM winning entries can be viewed at [www.cisga.org](http://www.cisga.org) and on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/CISGeorgia](http://www.facebook.com/CISGeorgia)).

SAM state winners were honored at a luncheon and received encouraging remarks from Georgia's Labor Commissioner, Mark Butler.

This event relies on the generous support from sponsors. This year Newell Rubbermaid, Walmart, AGL Resources, Georgia Natural Gas and AlphaSkills were our champions. Anyone interested in supporting SAM or other opportunities at Communities In Schools, please contact the marketing department at 404-835-8907 or [dblair@cisgeorgia.org](mailto:dblair@cisgeorgia.org).



Back Row (L-R): Shannon, Amy, Cesar, Diana and Jamecia  
Front Row (L-R): Antonio, Ashley, Michael and Taylor



WSB reporter Mark Arum gives a quick lesson on Atlanta traffic during station tour.



Labor Commissioner Mark Butler

## Calendar of EVENTS

CIS of Georgia Network Summer Training **JUN** 6-8

AmeriCorps Training and Recognition Day **JUN** 7-8

College Success Corps Summer Program **JUN** 11-15

Dine Out For Kids® **AUG** 23

Procter & Gamble brandSaver campaign for CIS **AUG** 1-31

Cesar Sanchez enjoys a moment while delivering his winning speech.





## Encouraging Students to Explore Education Options

The Latin American Association, a recipient of a mini-grant awarded by CIS of Georgia, recently sponsored a College Access Conference at Kennesaw State University (KSU). The focus of the College Access Challenge Grant Program is to increase the number of low-income students entering college and ensure they have the necessary skills and support to succeed at the post-secondary level.

The conference was led by college students from 14 colleges and universities across the state. More than 400 people were in attendance, including students interested in college, parents, educators and administrators. College students from the represented universities served as mentors for the participating elementary, middle and high school students. Additionally, a number of Latino professors from KSU also served as volunteers to show their support of the organization and its efforts to bridge the gap between high school and post-secondary education, especially in the Latino community. Activities included a campus tour, college fair, transitioning from high school workshop, college application completion session, financial aid workshop and an on-campus dining experience.

Now that calculations for high school graduation rates are standardized across the country, we know Georgia's four-year graduation rate is 67.4%. This news represents a call to action for all of us to do more because the most important institution in America is the public schools.

Our actions should not just be aimed at our school teachers and administrators. We know great teachers and school principals are critically important, but not enough. Parents, faith-based organizations, businesses, service agencies, higher education, and government agencies – actually all of us must take up our responsibility to do everything that's possible to help our students succeed in school and in life. We – the public – must do more for our public schools.

Every Georgian has a big stake in improving our state's economy and preparing students for the global workforce. School dropouts cost our state billions of dollars yearly and all taxpayers are affected due to increased taxes to support unemployed and underemployed citizens, more expensive health and social services and increased costs for crime prevention and incarceration. To increase graduation rates, we cannot ignore these realities and must start focusing on the non-instructional factors that undermine learning at all school levels.

We must provide more assistance to the schools by increasing public and private sector partnerships to help meet students where they are in support of their education. Children need positive role models and tutors who can help them learn good study habits. There's no limit to what a child can do when a caring and responsible adult listens, engages, encourages, and helps to share burdens, big and small.

With 60% of future jobs requiring workers to earn technical certifications and many requiring additional college or degrees, we need to start now to prepare struggling students for these opportunities. We need all of our children to grow to be fulfilled and contributing citizens. It takes all of us giving our best. Schools cannot succeed apart from their communities.

Last year, I had the honor of attending the Student Achievement Month (SAM) luncheon where I met a bright and eager student, Micah Level, who was participating in the Communities In Schools (CIS) program. Micah was last year's public speaking winner for the statewide SAM contest. During his speech, he talked about how the CIS Youth Advocacy Leadership Program changed his life. Today, he and I keep in touch and I'd like to hold him up as one example of the ways that leadership and direct involvement with our youth is so important.

As your state agriculture commissioner, I am blessed with the opportunity to share the importance of agriculture with students throughout the year. Agriculture is our state's No. 1 industry, and a \$68.8 billion industry at that. It touches each of our lives every day. One of the greatest things I have seen is excitement about agriculture and a willingness to learn about where our food comes from and how we keep it safe.

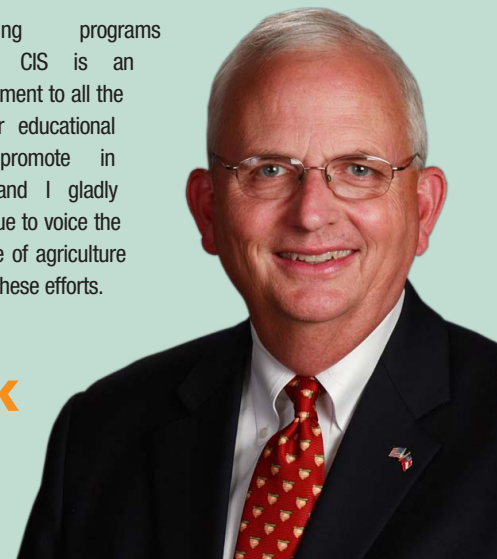
In the past year, the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) partnered with the Georgia Department of Education to foster a new "Feed My School" program. Through this initiative, more students are learning about Georgia commodities, meeting

with farmers and understanding what agriculture means to our state. The program also includes increasing the nutritional value and quality of food in Georgia schools and bridging the communication gaps from the farm to the cafeteria, resulting in healthier Georgia children. It is my hope this program will continue to grow, and agriculture in the classroom only gets bigger and more exciting!

I have been serving at the GDA since 2011, when we renamed our conference room the "Horizons Room." That name change was important to me; it showcases the role youth play in the future of agriculture. Images of Georgia's 4-H and FFA student members line the walls and remind all visitors that agriculture starts with our young Georgians.

Commending programs such as CIS is an understatement to all the efforts our educational leaders promote in Georgia, and I gladly will continue to voice the importance of agriculture as part of these efforts.

Guest Columnist  
**Commissioner Gary Black**  
Georgia Department of Agriculture



## Did You Know?

- CIS released the results of a comprehensive economic study conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists Inc., one of the nation's leading economic modeling firms. The independent study reviewed 113 CIS affiliates that serve high schools (25 were in Georgia). The study suggests that a rigorous approach to dropout prevention can be a cost-effective economic development strategy and concluded that every dollar invested in CIS creates \$11.60 of economic benefit.
- CIS of Henry County is participating in a Parent Expo on July 21 at the Atlanta Motor Speedway from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. The event is free and 4,000 backpacks with starter supplies and meals will be distributed to needy families. For more information, call 770-288-6230 or visit [www.cis-henry.org](http://www.cis-henry.org).
- CIS of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County held its 10th annual Celebrity Dinner. The dinner raised more than \$20,000 to support CIS programs and activities. Waiters, dressed in a variety of costumes with themes for each table, collected over \$5,600 in tips.
- Gateway Bank and Trust recently presented proceeds from the 13th annual GraduRUN. The run raised \$14,000 for Communities In Schools of Catoosa County.



Antonio Williams is ready to place his order at The Varsity.



Amy Sanchez with her winning entry for high school written expression.



SAM winner Diana Decade and SAM state judge Keisha Lancelin of The CW Atlanta.



SAM sponsor Sarah Hawthorne of AlphaSkills and her husband Fleming enjoy a moment with Ashley Olivares.



CIS Board Member Karen Brewer-Edwards of Walmart talks with Taylor Terrell during the luncheon.

# Student Achievement Activities



Senator Jack Hill and SAM state judge and CBS Atlanta reporter Jocelyn Connell.



Senator Bill Heath

**I**nvesting in education is an important factor that is necessary to increase Georgia's economic competitiveness. Preparing students for the challenges of working in the new global economy will ensure that we are on the right path. Walmart plays a vital role in this preparation by providing scholarships and supporting students through its sponsorship of CIS Performance Learning Centers® (PLCs). PLCs are small high schools designed to provide an alternative path to graduation for youth who are not as successful in the traditional school setting. Through CIS National, the Walmart Network Investment Grants support the development and implementation of job shadowing and internship programs for PLC students.

In addition to the programmatic support received from Walmart, its distribution center representatives in LaGrange helped CIS disseminate thousands of donated Procter & Gamble (P&G) items to needy families throughout Georgia. During the Student Achievement Month Luncheon, Walmart received the CIS Education Leadership Award in recognition of their efforts to enhance educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth. Kevin Barfield, Systems Operations Manager at the Walmart Troup County Distribution Center, took the lead on the P&G project and accepted the award on behalf of Walmart. Kevin went beyond

the call of duty to ensure the items delivered by P&G were manually counted and then distributed to stores in communities served by CIS local affiliates.

CIS looks forward to working with Walmart on this year's P&G campaign to best serve our students and their families.



# Successful Partnership

## Communities In Schools of Georgia Key Program Areas:

- Mentoring
- Parent Engagement
- Performance Learning Centers®
- Literacy
- Youth Leadership Development

## Georgia CIS Local Programs

Albany/Dougherty	Dodge	Jefferson
Athens/Clarke	Douglas	Jenkins
Augusta/Richmond	Effingham	Laurens
Baldwin	Elbert	Marietta/Cobb
Barrow	Fitzgerald/Ben Hill	McDuffie
Berrien	Fulton/DeKalb	Middle Georgia
Bulloch	Glascok	Rome/Floyd
Burke	Glynn	Savannah/Chatham
Candler	Hancock	Screven
Catoosa	Harris	Stephens
Cochran/Bleckley	Hart	Sumter
Decatur	Henry	Troup

CIS of Georgia provides training, technical assistance, and funding to locally managed programs to help young people succeed.

## Communities In Schools of Georgia

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

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**Communities In Schools** surrounds students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

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