

TURNING points

Communities In Schools of Georgia News

Spring 2010



CIS Students Excel in Statewide Competition

Over 300 students from 17 counties vied for scholarships and prizes valued up to \$1,000 in Communities In Schools' (CIS) annual statewide Student Achievement Month (SAM) contest. CIS staff and board members, along with parents, educators, elected officials and other guests celebrated successes and recognized student achievements at a luncheon in their honor. The public speaking winners gave their speeches.

SAM provides an opportunity for youth that CIS serves to excel through a contest that requires them to articulate how CIS has made a difference in their lives in one of four competitive categories (public speaking, written expression, computer technology, and creative expression). The contest helps students set and achieve new goals, gain confidence, and understand the importance of succeeding in school. SAM is a multi-level competition. Community leaders judge local entries. Georgia college representatives decide regional winners, and Atlanta business leaders and media choose state winners. Prizes for each of the state winners include a computer and printer, educational software applicable to their grade level and other prizes. High school seniors can opt for a \$1,000 scholarship in lieu of prizes.

Christina Olivares was the elementary SAM winner in the public speaking category. During Christina's speech, she exhibited such maturity for a student in the 2nd grade. She told the audience that the CIS Literacy Program improved her reading skills. Most of her family speaks Spanish, and she is now able to help her grandfather read English. Christina also tutors kindergarten students three days a week before school starts. Her principal said she's like a mini-teacher who is taking her job seriously. Christina has aspirations of becoming a doctor. Judging from what the audience heard about her accomplishments at such a young age, she is well on her way to becoming whatever she aspires to be in life.



Christina Olivares explains to the audience how she was struggling with her reading until she enrolled in the CIS Literacy Program.



Nikki Partridge evoked emotion as she explained how CIS and the Performance Learning Center helped her persevere through troubling times and achieve academically.

Nikki Partridge was the high school SAM winner in the public speaking category. Her social studies teacher and mentor (Carolyn Turner) says that she has come a long way. Nikki experienced many tragedies at a young age and it affected her academics and outlook on life. It wasn't until she enrolled in the Performance Learning Center® that she was able to get her life back on track and catch up on credits so that she can graduate on time. She now has aspirations to go to college and become a nurse.

All of the SAM state-winning entries can be viewed at www.cisga.org under the Get Involved tab (Special Events). Communi-

ties In Schools is thankful to all of our sponsors for helping defray the costs of the prizes and luncheon: **Walmart, AGL Resources, Georgia Natural Gas, and McGraw Hill-Glencoe.** We also had in-kind sponsors who helped make the event a success. Students had dinner at **California Pizza Kitchen** in Atlantic Station and had the VIP bowling lanes and lounge available at **Ten Pin Alley.** **THP Graphics Group** provided printing. If you would like to become a sponsor or help support the event in other ways, visit our website or call the Communications Department at 404-897-2955.



CIS SAM state winners
Front row (l-r): Zaiyah Durham and Christina Olivares. Back row (l-r): Kryssi Zelenski, Brienne Gordon, Kendria Lawton, Ewan Petersen, Nikki Partridge and Rubi Romero

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

National Volunteer Week
.....April 18-24

Teacher Appreciation Week
..... May 2-8

National Teacher Day
.....May 4

AmeriCorps Week
..... May 10-15

CIS/AmeriCorps Training and Recognition Day
.....May 15

CIS Network Training
..... June 21-24

Dine Out For Kids®
.....August 19

Visit our website at www.cisga.org



**Pat Falotico, IBM North America
VP, Coverage Integration**

My reasons for supporting education efforts in Georgia are directly tied to the roles I play in my family, company and our community. Many are aware that children are our future, and our success as a nation is in jeopardy as one million kids drop out of school each year. Most don't drop out because they are not smart. Rather, they are disengaged from the learning environment and in need of a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult. CIS focuses its attention on these types of students and develops programs to help them and school districts improve academic achievement.

As a mother, I know how important a supportive educational environment is to the success my children experience in school. I'm also aware that excellent teachers, dedicated administrators, caring parents and countless gifted volunteers are needed to ensure students are given the opportunities they need to learn and become productive citizens. Looking from the perspective of a teacher's wife, I know the toll the current economic situation is taking on the resources our schools have to deliver on their mission. As an IBM executive, I am dependent on our schools to produce the employees of tomorrow who are ready to compete in the global economy. And as I look at things as an active member of the community, I know that our economic growth as a region and long-term safety and security of our counties is directly related to the percentage of children who successfully complete their education and enter the workforce as productive members of society.

CIS is THE leader in our community that harnesses the resources to help kids succeed. That leadership was so apparent during the Student Achievement Month activities. As a member of the board of trustees and a judge of some of the fine written and technology entries, the statements students made about the impact that CIS has made in their lives touched me. The pride the winners and their parents wore on their faces during the awards luncheon made it clear to me that CIS is a difference maker in our state. I am so very proud to be associated with this great organization. You should consider getting involved in CIS or another nonprofit organization that has education as it's focus. Our future rests on it.

DID YOU KNOW ? ? ? ?

- The CIS of Georgia annual report can be viewed online at www.cisga.org and a copy can be mailed to you upon request.
- Don Remillard, Douglas County School Superintendent, received the CIS Education Leadership Award during the SAM luncheon. The award is given to individuals who have been instrumental in helping to move education initiatives forward in Georgia and are champions of CIS.
- Jackie Whitt (Cobb Performance Learning Center® principal) is the new Georgia Association of Alternative Education (GAAE) president for 2010. PLC students and teachers participated during GAAE's annual conference and provided best practice information and innovative ways to engage students.
- The Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center is partnering with the Georgia PTA to engage parents through the Urban Family Engagement Initiative. The Initiative is a ten city effort to engage hard-to-reach parents and caregivers in underserved and minority communities and provide them with more resources. Further information is available at www.georgiapirc.net.
- President Obama mentioned CIS in a speech as an example of a program that reduces dropout rates and provides kids who are at risk of dropping with one-on-one support.

FUNDRAISING STARS

Dynamic fundraisers are an important component of any nonprofit's strategy and success. The state office (CIS of Georgia) helps local affiliates build their fundraising capacity by providing training, technical assistance, program evaluation, grant opportunities and pass through funding. Grants from foundations and corporations help the state office provide these services.



Left to Right: Melissa Burgess, Jill Alexander and Gudrun Mills

CIS of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County has a very successful annual fundraiser. Their celebrity dining experience continues to thrive. Some of the attendees dress up like celebrities, provide entertainment and wait on guests during dinner. They had quite a turnout during this year's event and raised more than \$18,500. That's quite a feat for a small town. Jill Alexander portrayed Miss Piggy and collected \$960, the highest tips earned by any celebrity ever. To view all of the pictures from this year's event, visit CIS of Ben Hill County at www.cisbenhill.org.

Donations from individuals help local CIS affiliates provide more services to the students and families. The goal is to increase graduation rates, prepare kids for the global workforce and build better and safer communities. On average, \$270 will support one student for a year of CIS programs. Key initiatives that CIS affiliates provide include Performance Learning Centers, mentoring, literacy, youth leadership, parent engagement, tutoring, and after-school programs.



Neil Shorthouse

Thomas Linkona says, "A child is the only known substance from which a responsible adult can be made." Communities In Schools and many other important organizations take this statement to heart as we mobilize parents, relatives and other caring adults to help children become responsible adults and contributing citizens.

Communities In Schools – as the name suggests – places great people and resources into our schools. In Georgia, 42 local affiliates surround more than 170,000 students with a community of support and empower them to succeed in school and achieve in life. We need your help as we work on molding the child-substance in at-risk kids by crafting new and engaging ways to ensure they have marketable skills and are ready for the global workplace.

In this economic environment, our state government and school administrators grapple with creative ways to protect and improve our educational institutions with fewer dollars. We all should consider being more involved in helping students achieve their highest potential. Consider becoming a school volunteer or helping a CIS local affiliate. I know many reading this are already up to their necks doing great things for kids. But I'm sure there are some of us who can step it up further. Think about it ... with all of society "cutting back" what's going to happen to the *child-substance* if we don't do our part?

Business, government and civil rights leader Cliff Alexander explains the child-substance work this way: "There is only one way to end poverty, reduce crime, cure illness, ensure peace and create opportunity. That one single way is education."

Now is the time to help our educators and elected officials improve education and increase graduation rates. Are you doing your part?

Student Achievement Month Celebration Highlights



State Attorney General Thurbert Baker enjoys the program.



Douglas County School Superintendent Donald Remillard receives the CIS Education Leadership Award.



State Board of Education Chair Wanda Barrs (right) and fellow SBOE member Linda Zechmann listen to comments at their table from Bleckley County state winners.



Christina Olivares (CIS of Fitzgerald/Ben Hill County) meets Governor Sonny Perdue.



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Giving back to peers and community is one of CIS' Five Basics, and it is not uncommon for students who receive CIS services to provide a helping hand. High school seniors at the Catoosa County Performance Learning Center® (PLC) did just that, making a difference through international service learning projects in Nicaragua and Kenya.

Charlotte Leech and Kyle Bruce are two of the students who coordinated activities to complete service learning requirements for graduation. Charlotte gathered information on Kenya, while Kyle's focus was on Nicaragua. During their research, they learned that Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and Nicaraguan teachers earn less than \$1,000 a year. They also discovered that most students do not get more than a 6th grade education. With these facts in mind, they began to develop ways to help.

Social studies teacher Tom McMahan and Principal Dr. Lamar Brown helped the students develop plans and brought two guest speakers from western Kenya to the PLC. Bishop Zak Epusi from the diocese of Katakwa and Reverend Zach Drennen with the Elewana Institute answered questions and provided information about schools in Kenya. The PLC hopes to become a sister school to a high school in Kenya and obtain solar panels that will provide electricity for a computer lab in an area that has limited access to power. The goal is to continue developing projects that will make a difference in the lives of students in Kenya and teachers in Nicaragua. Questions concerning the efforts to help schools through the nonprofit Elewana Institute in Kenya can be directed to Tom McMahan at tmcman.cca@catoosa.k12.ga.us.

Students have used a variety of fundraisers that produced \$1,600. Some of the money was used to provide meals for the more than 400 teachers who attended a Nicaraguan teacher conference. In order to tie projects into their curriculum and further engage the students, during English classes they wrote about Kenya and Nicaragua. Students also discussed the ecological condition of the two countries in science classes.

The PLC administrators want to go a step further and provide math and literacy curricula, professional development assistance and best practice information to help at-risk and unmotivated students. Teachers who have an interest in helping teachers in Nicaragua can contact Dr. Brown at lbrown@catoosa.k12.ga.us.



Left to Right: Dr. Lamar Brown, Kyle Bruce, Charlotte Leech and Tom McMahan

Communities In Schools of Georgia Key Program Areas:

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

Georgia CIS Local Programs

Albany/Dougherty	Decatur	Jefferson	Troup
Athens/Clarke	Dodge	Jenkins	Turner
Augusta/Richmond	Douglas	Laurens	Walton
Baldwin	Effingham	Marietta/Cobb	Warren
Barrow	Elbert	McDuffie	Washington
Berrien	Fitzgerald/Ben Hill	Miller	Wilkes
Bulloch	Fulton/DeKalb	North Georgia (seven counties)	
Burke	Glascock	Rome/Floyd	
Candler	Glynn	Savannah/Chatham	
Catoosa	Hancock	Screven	
Cochran/Bleckley	Harris	Stephens	
Coweta	Hart	Sumter	

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

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