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## Art Dash!

On March 7, 2009, we hope you'll join us at Preservation Hall in Soulard for Art Dash, a fun event that sends every couple home with an original piece of art. If you are interested in tickets (or know an artist who might be willing to donate a piece of art), contact Nancy Ritzel:

nritzel@cityacademyschool.org  
or (314) 382-0085, ext. 104

## Community Partners Help Launch New Science Program

Erik Taylor's science classroom is abuzz with activity. On any given day, students might be conducting electricity through nail magnets, or testing the pitch of musical instruments they have constructed. They could be discussing how to approach a scientific challenge, like creating a water filtration system in a plastic bottle. Or perhaps students are dissecting earthworms.

No matter what they are studying, you'll notice that students are smiling. They are attentive. This is inquiry-based science instruction, which teaches key scientific concepts to children by asking them to apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios. Taylor, a former educator with the St. Louis Zoo, teaches science to students in grades one through six.

*"City Academy graduates could one day be excellent additions to St. Louis's talent pool of scientists and engineers."*

~Don Danforth III,  
President & Co-Founder  
City Academy

"Children are born explorers," Taylor said. "They want to discover the world around them and figure out how it works. This is the very essence of science. It is important to surround children with opportunities to make this exploration possible."



Zuri Thomas and Jerrica Flakes learn about the science lab's new equipment.

Partners in the improvement of our science program include the Monsanto Fund, A. P. Green Foundation, ExpressScripts Foundation, Pat and Nick Reding, and Gerry and Bob Virgil.

Along with hiring a science specialist, the school has made research-based changes in its curriculum, upgraded its laboratory, and added numerous field trips. "High standards are incredibly important—but you have to give educators the tools they need to help children meet those expectations," principal Kelly Tyson said.

Corporations, foundations, and individuals throughout the community see great potential in our students. According to Sue Schlichter, executive director of the ExpressScripts Foundation, "If children are provided with the foundation of a

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# Partnering With Parents



Cue the salsa music, and imagine this... In the school gym, a group of children and their parents (in addition to a few staff members) are giggling and twisting. A salsa instructor

from COCA guides the group, but this is less about getting the moves right—and more about building community.

City Academy principal Kelly Tyson is delighted by events like Salsa Night. Parental involvement is a critical factor in student success. When parents feel comfortable in the school environment, they're more likely to work in tandem with the school when critical issues arise. So, what does City Academy do to build partnerships with parents?

## Face to Face

Nearly all schools require regular parent-teacher conferences—but Tyson seeks deeper engagement. Parents are required to volunteer at school for at least 20 hours annually. “We call them ‘volunteer hours,’” Tyson said, “but we think of them as ‘face-to-face contact hours,’ when parents are present and involved in their child’s life at school.”

For example, earlier this fall parents earned volunteer hours by participating in a cooking class with their children. Homeroom teachers also used the session to touch base with parents.

## Peer-to-Peer

During each family’s first year at City Academy, a parent is required to attend a series of discussions about strategies for effective parenting. The discussions are led by parents rather than by school faculty or administrators.

## Parents Welcome

The school welcomes parents at all events—and designs some especially for them. Parents’ Day allows parents to shadow their children at school. During Fireside Chats, parents give feedback to the principal and raise issues of concern. An active parent organization (CAPS) meets monthly.

## Staying in Touch

Parents also know they can call or e-mail teachers to discuss concerns. They receive a biweekly newsletter from the principal in addition to quarterly report cards featuring detailed narratives about student performance.

Tyson points out that parents often experience an “information blackout” as children approach adolescence; however, research shows parental involvement is very important at this age. At City Academy, teachers of upper grades send a daily mass e-mail to parents, using a simple color code (green, yellow, or red) to indicate how the class’s day went. This gives parents a starting point for talking with preteens about what happened at school.

## Are you smarter than a City Academy student?

Q: The ratio of the number of Susan’s books to Luigi’s is 3 : 4. Luigi has 60 books. If Luigi gives 30 books to Susan, what will the new ratio of the number of Susan’s books to Luigi’s be?

Answer on page 5.

## ISACS Accreditation

Our school has been unanimously recommended for ISACS (Independent Schools Association of the Central States) accreditation! Last year, we wrote a comprehensive report (100+ pages) analyzing our school. Then we hosted a team of expert educators for a three-day investigative visit. Their tasks were to verify the accuracy of our report, identify the school’s strengths, suggest areas for improvement, and decide whether to recommend us for accreditation. We are grateful to the committee for their recommendation and their helpful advice about how we can continue our success.

*“We were wowed that you have come this far in just ten years. It is an amazing, amazing feat.”*

*~ISACS Visiting Team Leader  
Lisa Lyle, Head of MICDS*

When one City Academy student (we'll call her Ashley) joined our new Girls On The Run program, she could barely jog a lap. Her friends had an easier time. Ashley decided that if they could do it, so could she—for ten weeks, she would run after school.

P.E. teacher Mandy Rajchart, along with director of admissions Nikki Doughty, coached our chapter of Girls On The Run (GOTR), a national program. The curriculum pairs character education with running. Each session begins with a 15-minute discussion or activity focused on the girls' values, identity, and relationships. And then—for 45 minutes—they run. The program culminates in a 5K run in Forest Park.

Rajchart believes that GOTR has been successful. In a recent P.E. class, she asked all students to run a mile. Some of the boys began with great speed, eventually slowing to a walk. Several girls jogged steadily. Near the end of the mile, a lagging student asked, "How are you still running? You haven't stopped at all." His classmate explained, "Well, Girls on the Run taught us to pace ourselves."

Rajchart sees off-the-field effects too, including improvements in the girls' self-confidence and social skills. She noted, "These young women are thinking differently about what they can accomplish." Rajchart also described how, in P.E. class, she has seen GOTR participants encourage slower runners, applying the teamwork skills they developed in the program.

Recently Rajchart received a phone call from Ashley's



mother. Rajchart recalled, "Ashley said she had run three miles that day, and her mother did not believe her. I was thrilled to say that it was true. We are all so proud of Ashley!"

Jill Indovino, council director of Girls On The Run St. Louis, noted, "The beauty of this program is that it can teach young girls how to set a goal and work towards it and they realize just how rewarding that can be. It also teaches girls to be positive, honest and respectful, and to celebrate being themselves which will ultimately build their self-esteem."

The girls—and Rajchart—would like to participate again next year. The program costs \$145 per girl, which includes 20 lessons, running shoes (donated by New Balance), race entry fee, and two t-shirts. A gift of \$2,000 from a corporate or individual sponsor would secure our GOTR program for 2009-2010. Please contact Ginger Imster at 382-0085 for more information.

## Buddy Morning

After our fall 2008 Buddy Morning, we received some encouraging letters. One of our Buddies made a significant gift in honor of his Student Buddy, and we received a lovely note from City Academy Buddy Sarah Denos:

*I can't tell you how fabulous and heartwarming it was to spend time with the City Academy students last Friday. They were all so kind, well-mannered, and enthusiastic. I love to tell people about City Academy because I feel so strongly that what you are doing there is groundbreaking.... No matter what your students choose to do with their lives, you are giving them the tools to do it with dignity, confidence, fervor, and ingenuity. I look forward to seeing much more of City Academy.*



Buddies Jasmyne Bradley (left) and Sarah Denos (right)

Thanks to our City Academy Buddies for taking time out of a busy day to encourage our students. Please join us for our next Buddy Morning on Friday, May 1, 2009 (8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.).

# Sharing the Birthday Spirit

Seven second graders from Community School—all celebrating October birthdays—decided to have a group birthday party. They invited their friends to bring children’s books as presents. The birthday honorees were pleased to see old favorites and interesting new titles.

Then, with their friends’ approval, the birthday celebrants donated all 150 books to City Academy’s library! Our students were startled by this generosity.

Many thanks to Ross Danforth, Will Forsen, Jennifer Goldberg, Julia Hagan, Tyler Palan, Ollie Reeb, Kate Trowbridge, and their friends at Community School.



City Academy student Christina Haymon enjoys one of the donated books.

*“Most people would think second graders would want presents on their birthdays but instead you and your friends did a nice thing.”*

*~Zuri Thomas,  
City Academy Student*

Additionally, we want to express our gratitude to the Sixth Grade Service Bureau League Dancers who also shared books with us recently! City Academy students for years to come will appreciate your generous donations. As third grader Taj Robinson wrote, “To me your books are like gold.”

## CA Graduate Follows His Own Beat



“You have to figure out what’s most important.” City Academy graduate Chris Gatewood shared this advice with our students at a recent assembly. Chris, a ninth grade student at Crossroads College Prep, is an expert on prioritizing. He excels in academics at a high school with a rigorous curriculum. As co-owner of Drummer Boy Inc., he performs African and Latin rhythms on the drum at churches, schools, parties, and tournaments. Meanwhile, he is trying to learn more about digital editing and recording, having explored that interest as a summer intern at Channel 9. Oh, and Chris just broke his high school’s record in running the 1200 meter.

Chris thinks City Academy’s small classes and high expectations readied him to handle the workload at a demanding secondary school while also pursuing outside interests like music and running. He reminded our current students, “If you develop good habits now—staying on top of your work—it’ll be easier for you in high school.”

**Thanks!**

Our students and their families extend their thanks to the Centene Corporation for donating 50 tickets to a St. Louis Blues hockey game—a good time was had by all!

# Former Engineer Still Solving Problems

The total value of  $x$  quarters and  $y$  nickels in dollars

**A**

The total value of  $(x-1)$  quarters and  $(y+5)$  nickels in dollars

**B**

Which statement is true?

- a. A is greater than B.
- b. B is greater than A.
- c. A and B are equal.
- d. There is not enough information to tell which is greater.



Samantha Bledsoe

City Academy students in grades five and six will face such questions this spring when they take the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) standardized test and Independent Schools Entrance Examination (ISEE). Quantitative Reasoning involves analyzing and comparing mathematical quantities. The math skills are nothing new—but the format can be daunting.

To become familiar with Quantitative Reasoning problems, fifth and sixth grade students take part in a weekly class taught by volunteer Samantha Bledsoe. “I play down the ISEE and approach the class as a time for students to stretch their ability to look at mathematics,” Samantha said.

Samantha is no stranger to complicated math problems. She loved taking math courses while earning her engineering

degree at the University of Missouri-Rolla. Before raising her four sons (who attend Community School and John Burroughs School), Samantha worked at McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing), helping test the F-18 Avionics system used in the Kuwait conflict. She specialized in the operations of the intercom.

Samantha learned of City Academy from a *Post-Dispatch* article. “I thought, ‘What a fantastic undertaking... I want to be part of that!’” She initially tutored students in reading, then founded the Quantitative Reasoning class, and now also serves on the school’s board of trustees. We are so grateful to Samantha and all our volunteers. Your time, energy, and professional expertise help to ensure our students’ success!

**ANSWER: C**

## Kids Vote!

On Election Day, our students cast ballots as part of the Kids Voting USA program. As you can see, they took it very seriously!



## Science Program

(cont. from page 1):

strong science program at an early age, they are more likely to succeed as they continue in school.” Schlichter added, “We’re so pleased to help support City Academy’s new science initiative. We believe their terrific students are tomorrow’s leaders.”

Deborah Patterson, president of the Monsanto Fund, agreed: “Scientific advancement and achievement is so vital to our future. It is wonderful to be able to provide the next generation with the skills and knowledge they need to make a difference in the world.”

Math problem answer ... 5:2.

## City Academy Board of Trustees

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## City Academy Wish List



Playground balls  
Jump ropes  
Hula hoops  
Children's hats, scarves, gloves, socks, tights  
Student dictionaries and thesauruses  
Child development books for parents  
Test prep materials (call for details)  
Three-ring binders (1- or 2-inch width)  
Overhead projectors  
Digital video camera

For more information, contact  
Ginger Imster at 314-382-0085, ext. 110  
or [gimster@cityacademyschool.org](mailto:gimster@cityacademyschool.org)

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St. Louis, MO 63115

4175 North Kingshighway



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