



RITE OF PASSAGE

Canyon State Academy

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2011

Improving the lives of youth

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Pursuing Victory with Honor through Athletics

Of the 256 member schools, Canyon State Academy (CSA) was selected by the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) as Runner-Up in the Class 1A-3A school division for the prestigious Director's Cup Award.

The Director's Cup is given to a school whose athletes excelled in the classroom, participated in activities and pursued the AIA's *Victory with Honor* principle. CSA was recognized among other overachievers at the ninth annual AIA Champions Award Luncheon in Surprise, Arizona.

Canyon State takes a distinctive approach toward student participation in athletics and activities. Although CSA relishes the thought of winning championships, the greater focus and more sought-after accolade is to be recognized for sportsmanship or other character-based awards.

Athletics is a powerful tool that attracts our students to become involved and then engages them to learn, appreciate and practice core values that are essential to their success in life. Such values include, but are not limited to: self-discipline, teamwork, sportsmanship, work ethic, commitment, responsibility, leadership... and the list goes on.

In acknowledgement of the tremendous influence and role that athletics plays, Rite of Passage strongly fosters the connection between sports and self-improvement through character development. In an effort to expound upon the widely adopted *Pursuing Victory with Honor - Character Counts* (a program used in high schools throughout the United States), Rite of Passage ensures that every student participates in a sport and every athlete participates in community service. Furthermore, every student practices daily social skills derived from character traits identified through research as proven to reduce risky behaviors. In doing so, athletes gain a better perspective of what is most important,



Developing relationships is a positive byproduct of character-driven competition. CSA and Valley Christian enjoy time bonding after the game.

rather than focusing on winning alone.

A recent example is when an undefeated CSA wrestler allowed a special needs athlete from another school to pin him in a match. By demonstrating an act of pure selflessness, he experienced victory in a whole new way.

Aside from instilling values and characteristics, sports have yet another impact on students at Canyon State. In a widely publicized study, researchers found that students who did not participate in interscholastic sports were four times more likely to drop out of school before they graduate. As one researcher astutely noted, "If it were not for interscholastic athletics or something like it, the rebellion against the school, the rate of dropout, and the delinquency of boys might be far worse than they presently are."

Although Canyon State did not come home with the coveted Director's Cup this year, it was a distinct honor to be recognized in the top two percent of Arizona schools for displaying character on the field of play. For CSA, it reinforces that our efforts are on track and gives us another opportunity to accept an outcome in an honorable way. Congratulations to this year's recipient, Blue Ridge High School, on an exceptional year!



Wrestler D'Andre A. earned All-American Honors this year. See inside for more great stories

Program News

From the Desk of...

Brian Heath, Program Director



If you've ever watched Steve Nash shoot a free throw, you can appreciate the importance of time invested in skill development.

Although many will argue that nothing can help Shaquille O'Neal at the line, his stats have shown up to a 20% improvement while being trained by an expert who utilized the basic principles of skill development. At Canyon State, we are less concerned with free throws; our full attention is aimed at reducing risk.

Positive Skill Development (PSD) was introduced at Canyon State last summer in replacement of the former daily process groups. PSD groups are centered on building or teaching appropriate coping skills for risky situations. In order to effectively teach new behaviors, the PSD format requires a specific delivery of instruction.

While teaching roughly 70 social skills that range from 'Asking for Help' to 'Responding to Anger', Canyon State staff are trained in the art of transferring knowledge. The first step is to acknowledge risky behavior(s) and identify a coping skill. Next, group facilitators model the skill being trained, ensuring that each specific step is demonstrated. Through repetition, students then practice using personal experiences while being reinforced for proper execution. Lastly, when staff catch students using their new skills in real world applications and praise their effort, the process is fully embraced.

Research says that we remember 90% of what we see, hear, discuss and practice. Teaching good habits in that manner is just good business. In the same way that Shaq's NBA coaches search for the best intervention to win games, Canyon State is dedicated to preparing our students to be successful in life.

Active Parenting: A Bridge for the Future

Adolescence can often be characterized as a time of diminishing adult influence; a period in life when youth distance themselves from the desired values and behaviors of their elders. There is some validity to this observation, but when young people feel valued by their communities, trusted by teachers and connected to adults, they are far less likely to engage in risky behavior. Probably the most important connection that has a positive, lasting effect on adolescent behavior is the parent-child relationship.

Active Parenting is an evidence-based program that targets both participants in this dynamic. Led by therapist Janine Stanley and a team of trained facilitators, Canyon State provides parents and teens a forum to turn challenges during this developmental transition into opportunities for improved family relations.

Parents are invited each week to participate in workshops that begin with a family dinner, followed by in-class sessions. The first phase separates parents and students, guiding each group through interventions for identified issues

known to cause conflict and communication breakdowns. The sessions conclude by bringing the parents and teens together to practice the skills learned.

Parents and students are motivated by the improvements in their understanding of each other. This active approach is focused on improving family relationships by creating happier, healthier, and more productive teens as they continue their rite of passage into adulthood.



Active Parenting classes provide hands-on learning to help parents to communicate with their kids effectively, discipline them responsibly, and nurture strong character and self-esteem.

Now That's A-Mason!



EVIT teachers provide CSA Masonry students the skills to build a solid foundation

The term "masonry" refers to construction with stone. Someone who practices the art of masonry is called a stonemason or mason. Masonry is more than the building of structures from brick, stone, marble, granite, and concrete, it is also the quality of craftsmanship and workmanship skills of the mason.

Canyon State Academy has been developing masons for the past two years through its high quality instructional, hands-on, and labor

intensive masonry program. Led by certified masonry instructor Maroni Mejia, a certified journeyman bricklayer and masonry foreman with over 14 years experience, the program's goal is to provide students with practical training and skills needed to succeed in the industry. Students who successfully complete the program receive a nationally recognized Mason Tender Certification.

Students are taking their newly acquired skills and gaining recognition regionally. Most recently, they participated in and excelled at the *Region G Masonry Skills Challenge*, followed by the *East Valley Institute (EVIT) High School Masonry Skills* competition. Raymond N. finished 3rd place overall, winning a \$500 set of masonry tools and was guaranteed employment from a local business. Several qualified to participate in nationals at the *Arizona Skills USA Masonry Competition*. Two students placed in the top 10 of over 75 participants and both have received job offers with Rhino Masonry. By all accounts, these students are preparing themselves for a better future, and we are proud of them!

Community & Customer News

In Memoriam – Father William Mitchell 1923 - 2010

There are remarkable people who touch the lives of students at Canyon State Academy daily. Most of these people don't view themselves as exceptional they just enjoy what they do. One such individual was Father William Mitchell, a man who gave of himself unselfishly and will be sorely missed. Father Mitchell left a humble legacy of devoted service – to God, the Catholic Church, and God's people. This is evidenced by the relationships he built with young men at Canyon State Academy since 1984.

Baptisms, First Holy Communions and Confirmations were sacraments Father Mitchell administered to countless students at CSA over the years. Father Mitchell conducted catechism and Sunday Mass, and met with students daily for one-on-one spiritual counseling. In recognition of his 26 years of service to youth, Canyon State Academy paid tribute to Father Mitchell in October 2010 by constructing a

garden in his honor. The Father Mitchell Garden is a calming, peaceful place that is equal to Father Mitchell's spirit.

According to Father Mitchell, the rewarding part of his service was simply being with the kids, listening to their problems and having them say, "Pray for me." Students felt at ease with Father Mitchell. Conversations were comfortable and unhindered; age did not matter. He visited all students, Catholic and non-Catholics alike, in their cottages and around campus, saying hello to everyone. In many cases he knew the students and the staff by name, and more importantly, they knew he cared about them.

How blessed we were to have had the opportunity to honor him while he was with us. Father Mitchell's legacy will live on at Canyon State. Students who visit the garden will have



CSA staff and students honor Father Mitchell during the Garden Dedication ceremony

time to reflect on their lives and the changes they experience as they go through their rite of passage at CSA.

YPF Donation Honors Frank Kush

Youth Partners Foundation (YPF) has contributed \$100,000.00 for improvements to the Frank Kush Athletic Complex at Canyon State Academy.

A non-profit foundation, YPF has been granting monies to entities that help kids since 2000. Board members John DeWulf, Don Alvarez, and John Bebbling are long-time supporters of Canyon State Academy. "We have always had a soft spot for CSA from the beginning.

We have admired and respected Frank Kush for years. This is a way to benefit Canyon State in the name of Frank," said YPF Chairman, John DeWulf.

Plans for the Frank Kush Athletic Complex include improvements to the football stadium, gymnasium, track surface and field event areas as well as the addition of a new baseball field, golf practice area, and equestrian arenas.



CSA Students and Frank Kush accept a donation check for \$100,000 from YPF Board Members John DeWulf, John Bebbling and Don Alvarez

Special Thanks to Ryne and Margaret Sandberg

The Culinary Arts students were outstanding in their planning and execution of an al fresco dining experience held for the benefit of Canyon State Academy. The event, hosted by Ryne and Margaret Sandberg at their home, was an extravaganza of food stations that allowed students to showcase their catering skills in food preparation, presentation, demonstration, and serving.

The evening began with a champagne reception featuring assorted world cheeses. Guests then enjoyed a



Baseball Hall of Famer and Legendary Second Baseman for the Chicago Cubs, Ryne Sandberg, hosts a Fundraiser to highlight the talents of CSA's Culinary Students

variety of offerings at food stations staffed by culinary students. Food selections included crabcakes, seafood enchiladas, Thai chicken tenders, cucumber roulade, tenderloin and Jamaican chicken sliders, and a chocolate fountain with an assortment of delectable sweets.

In the ninth inning, the students were given a personal tour of Ryne Sandberg's trophy room. The culinary arts students really knocked this event out of the park!

Ram-Page



The soccer team supports their coach after announcing his retirement from the sport. After 30 years and many great memories, Paul Graham puts away his whistle and focuses all of his attention in the barber shop.



CHAMPIONS! The Track team takes the 2011 Regionals.



The Passport To Discovery event taught students about cultural diversity and reinforced the idea that we all must learn to wear different hats in life.



Team Building Activities - A great way to build trust, motivation and rapport.





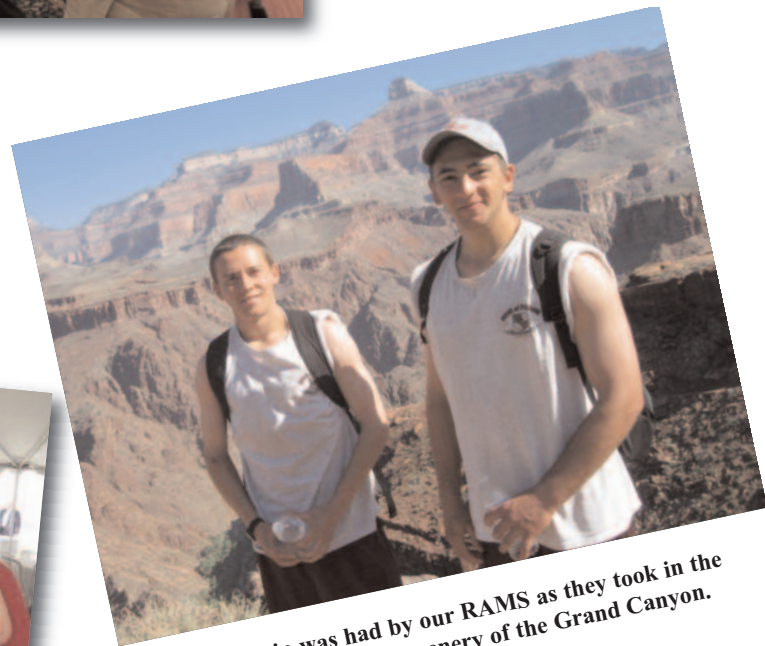
No matter age or circumstance, CSA is always eager to help in the community. (Canyon State students often volunteer at Special Olympics events, local YMCAs and senior centers.)



The CSA baseball team produced two All-Region athletes this year!



CSA supports the hard work of the Arizona Legislature by preparing and serving lunch on the Capitol lawn.



A "grand" trip was had by our RAMS as they took in the breathtaking views and scenery of the Grand Canyon.

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is only effective when it is well-designed and implemented in a way that maintains program integrity (Lowenkamp 2004). In fact, research indicates that poorly implemented EBP may not only be ineffective in reducing recidivism, it may actually increase recidivism rates (Latessa & Lowenkamp 2006; Washington State Institute for Public Policy 2004).

To enhance its implementation efforts, Rite of Passage started a new company-wide initiative called "Focus on Fidelity." The goal of this initiative is to implement EBP and systems that effectively deliver programs with fidelity to research-based guidelines and continuous quality improvement (CQI).

This is accomplished using the APIC model - Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate. At Rite of Passage this model is used from the time youth arrive until they are transitioned back into their community.

During the Admission and Assessment process, staff use motivational interviewing (MI), an evidence-based technique for effective intervention. This assists in reducing student anxiety and helps students overcome negative emotions regarding behavior changes. The assessment also follows research guidelines by measuring for static and dynamic risk factors and criminogenic needs, and by being validated on juvenile populations similar to those at Rite of Passage.

Next, staff identify the top three risk factors from the assessment process, and develop a Measured Achievement Plan (MAP) for each individual youth which is linked to the youth's criminogenic risk factors, education, and career

technical education needs. This allows students to focus on reducing their risk factors which in turn is proven to lower recidivism. It also allows students to focus on protective factors during their stay which in turn provides students with new skills for dealing with difficult situations once they return home.

Last, staff and students begin building a transition plan 90-120 days prior to returning home so that the youth at Rite of Passage have a plan when they leave. Staff provide resources, continued positive skill development classes, and higher education opportunities.

Current studies conducted by the University of Cincinnati show continued reductions in recidivism when at-risk youth in placement receive effective transition services. Research on the Dual Role Relationships Inventory-Revised has suggested that relationship quality in mandated treatment involves caring and fairness, trust, and an authoritative (not authoritarian) style (Skeem, Eno Loudon, Polaschek, and Camp, 2007).

To assure that the programs implemented at Rite of Passage have the greatest effect, a CQI component is in the implementation process for 2011.

Continuous Quality Improvement is more than a quality assurance program. CQI provides an on-going analysis of program implementation and determines where a program is strong and where there are areas for improvement. The definition of CQI is: A system that seeks to improve the provision of services with an emphasis on future results. Like total quality management, CQI uses a set of statistical tools to understand subsystems and uncover problems, but

its emphasis is on maintaining quality in the future, not just controlling a process. Once a process that needs improvement is identified, a team of knowledgeable individuals is gathered to research and document each step of that process. Once specific expectations and the means to measure them have been established, implementation aims at preventing future failures and involves the setting of goals, education, and the measurement of results. If necessary, the plan may be revised on the basis of the results, so that the improvement is ongoing (Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 2009). So, through implementation of evidence-based practices, training for key staff to assure fidelity of the practices being implemented, and continuous quality improvement



systems in place, Rite of Passage will provide a program which is dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk youth by lowering their rate of recidivism, and providing positive skills that will assist them in achieving their goals.

Works Cited

Lowenkamp, C. T. (2004). Correctional Program Integrity and Treatment Effectiveness: A Multi-site Program-level Analysis. The University of Cincinnati: Doctoral Dissertation.
Latessa, E.J., & Lowenkamp, C.T. (2006). What Works in Reducing Recidivism? University of St. Thomas Law Journal. 3 (3), pp. 521-535.
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2A Coach of the Year - Tracy Watkins



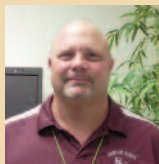
Recently voted *2A Coach of the Year* by his peer coaches at the close of the 2011 track season, Tracy Watkins continues to demonstrate his value to Rite of Passage and Canyon State Academy. It is with extreme pride that we recognize and acknowledge his most recent accomplishment.

From the Nevada desert to the CSA campus, Tracy has shared over 20 years of his life with ROP and has mentored and developed numerous student athletes. Tracy has held numerous positions throughout his career at ROP including Group Leader, Unit Supervisor, and Unit Manager. He has been Shift Supervisor at CSA since 2001. Growing up in South Central LA, he feels that football saved his life. Playing football at New Mexico State University, where he studied Criminal Justice, further reaffirmed his passion for sports, which continues to fuel his involvement with the athletic programs here at ROP. As varied as his career roles, Tracy has coached and supported junior varsity and varsity football, basketball and track.

Tracy feels his role of working with young men is the exact type of work he should be doing. His vast understanding of ROP's programs and operations contribute greatly to the progression of all his staff. His presence and confidence in his staff and students make the CSA campus a finely tuned facility. He takes pride in knowing that his commitment, consistency and "get it done" attitude to the daily operations are a benefit to students as well as staff.

Being named Coach of the Year not only brings well deserved recognition to Tracy, his track team and CSA, but also supports and exemplifies his steadfast commitment to helping young men become honorable, contributing members of our communities. Thank you Tracy, for your successes and involvement in changing the lives of youth.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



Robert Macintyre – From Coach Counselor to GL to Substitute Teacher in the orientation program, "Coach Mac" also assisted with last year's RAMS Varsity Football Team. His consistency and guidance to his students and athletes keeps them motivated and excited to achieve their goals. His supporting, even-tempered nature makes entry into the program for orientation students an easier transition.



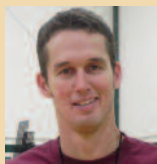
Casandra McCray – The Community Affairs Director dedicates her time and energies to organizing and directing CSA's community service activities. Her many relationships and partnerships throughout the community are instrumental in affording our students the ability to assist and contribute to very valuable and worthy organizations. Ms. McCray studied Marketing and Business at ASU, where she also performed as a cheerleader. Her success with both CSA sponsored events and grant applications have not only supported CSA athletic programs and site improvements but have also aided in securing continuing education and employment opportunities for our graduating students.



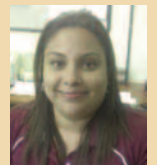
Dariek Cooper – Case Manager Cooper works with our younger population in the program. The age diversification (12-18 year olds) that exists on our campus makes adapting program elements for this age level a creative task. His innovative techniques and out-of-the-box thinking help provide options and program services to meet the needs of these students. Mr. Cooper holds a BA in Liberal Studies with a minor in Women's Studies from San Jose State University. His fair and consistent personality helps to develop a solid foundation for these students to grow on.



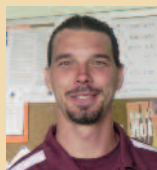
Mary Gorham – Case Manager extraordinaire with experience at all levels of our program including orientation, program, younger population and now shelter. Ms. Gorham is tenacious, steadfast and extremely dedicated to advocating for her students and supporting their efforts both on campus and at offsite recreational activities. Her focus with the students is thorough, positive and committed, and she thrives on knowing their success here at CSA readily prepares them for their future. Ms. Gorham holds a BS in Justice Studies from ASU and a MA in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.



Hurl Beechum – Mr. Beechum was hired on as a Coach Counselor and in his first year was promoted to a Case Manager. Mr. Beechum holds a BS in Sociology with a minor in Criminal Justice from Iowa State University. He played professional basketball for Telekom Baskets in Bonn, Germany and has almost 20 years of working with children teaching basketball in various countries including Germany, Spain, and the Czech Republic. His satisfaction today is watching the student athletes at CSA "achieve success and goals which they never thought were possible".



Maria Luisa Casillas – Ms. Casillas is the Medical Assistant supporting the day-to-day medical needs of our Student Athletes. Ms. Casillas has the demeanor and personality that is welcoming and relaxing to both students and staff. She shows concern for students and attends to her responsibilities with efficiency and professionalism. Whenever there are short staff situations in Medical, she can be relied on to pitch in and support whatever needs to be done.



Tom Robinson – As B Shift Supervisor and an eight plus year employee with ROP, Mr. Robinson maintains a solid presence. Tom's various positions at ROP have included GL and UM. Now as SS, he has a keen sense of what his employees are facing and managing. Serving four years in the Army, Mr. Robinson brings a calm, steady personality and quieting sense to those around him learning the many facets and obstacles encountered with working with kids. His relationship with the students is guiding and supportive, and he gives them the confidence that they can achieve any goal they set out to do.



Sheldon King – A developing leader in a fast-paced environment, Sheldon's quick start from CC to CM to acting Unit Manager seems to have showcased his talents over-night. His dedication and commitment to getting it done correctly and on-time is a credit to his steadfast and precise personality. He is guiding and caring not only to his students but to the staff he is helping to grow as his role evolves. His ever present involvement on campus makes him a solid member of a very dedicated team. Mr. King holds a BA in Sociology with a minor in Management Studies from Syracuse University where he played football. Mr. King also played Arena Football for the Mohegan Wolves in New London, Connecticut.



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