



RITE OF PASSAGE

Fall 2008

Improving the lives of youth

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Canyon State Academy

Newsletter

CSA Students Honored With Presidential Award

Running a mile or enduring a succession of right angle push-ups are both ways to ensure increased circulation and the release of endorphins within the brain that lead to positive sensations. They're also a great alternative to sitting in front of a television, computer, or video game console which teens are doing at an alarming rate. In a study highlighted in the Journal of the American Medical Association this summer, 1,000 U.S. children were studied between 2000 and 2006 to determine the amount of exercise they were receiving. It found that 90% of nine year olds got a couple hours of exercise most days whereas fewer than 3% of fifteen year olds did. In addition, it found that less than one-third of the teens received the minimum government amount of vigorous exercise recommended (1 hour) per day.

Although this study applied to children across the country, the students at Canyon State Academy were the exception. Excelling at physical fitness and exercises such as those previously mentioned is what recently led the Canyon State students to attain the 2007-08 State Champion Physical Fitness award as part of the President's Challenge of the National Youth Physical Fitness Program.

The award, initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966, is given to students in schools in which the highest number of them excel in all categories of the program's five assessments for children ages 6-17. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports was established in 1956 through an executive order issued by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as part of a national campaign to help America's younger generation get physically fit. The categories include curl-ups for abdominal strength, a shuttle run for agility, an endurance run for heart and lungs, pull ups, right angle push ups, or flexed-arm hangs for upper body strength, and sit and

reach exercises for muscular flexibility. Rite of Passage has embraced such initiatives by incorporating fitness programs similar to the national presidential program in the daily regimen of its academies for nearly 25 years. It was this daily training that prepared the students at CSA to accept the President's Challenge and set an Arizona state record.



When the results were tallied, 75% of the entire student body received an award. Of that percentage, 26% were recognized with the National Award, which is given to students who reach levels of achievement representing at least the 50th percentile or better based on a National School Population Fitness Survey. Even more amazing was the 49% of students recognized with the Presidential Award for performing at the 85th percentile or better.

Aside from recognition, research has proven that regular exercise improves mood, focus, and children's ability to learn more effectively, and promotes better sleep. Armed with this knowledge and evidence showing that children who are more sedentary are at a higher risk for serious health problems such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, it's clear that Rite of Passage's comprehensive mission of "improving the lives of youth" through the encouragement of healthy life choices continues to be carried on.



Repeat State Champs



CSA recognized as the most fit high school in Arizona 2A.

Program News

From the Desk of....

Brian Heath

Program Director, Canyon State Academy



Arizona's Fall climate change is welcomed with open arms as we notice changes around the valley like runners and cyclists emerging, incredible pink-painted sunsets, and the occasional

need for a jacket. The changes at CSA are just as obvious and you don't have to look far to find transformations that are equally as pleasing, although they have far greater personal impact.

Recently, I had the privilege of witnessing a number of small miracles such as watching a young man, who barely knew how to swim before coming to CSA, be named as Arizona's best diver (along with two of his peers who followed suit by placing 2nd and 4th). I saw 20 eighteen year olds, whose previous idea of civic duty was spray painting graffiti on walls, learn the election process and submit official votes. I saw boys demonstrate school spirit, maturity, and good character during a string of high school homecoming activities that included a spirit assembly, court elections, a pre-game tailgate barbeque, a football game, the crowning of a king, and a co-ed dance. I watched staff members get choked up while introducing program graduates, who in turn gave their own heart-warming speeches to the entire student body and faculty. I got to see the pure joy of nine junior high flag-footballers as they were named regional tournament champions and then notified by the NFL that they'd be flown to Orlando for the National Championships.

The fact is that in 20 years of providing services to troubled youth, I've never worked for an agency that offered so many vehicles for change. By inundating our students with opportunity and exposing them to a normalized lifestyle, they stand a greater chance to succeed. So, as we embrace the seasonal transition, it's hard not to be reminded of the daily transitions that takes place at our school—and embrace it, I will.

More Than a Homecoming

The king and queen are crowned. She gets teary-eyed and has a picture taken for the school newspaper. The football team runs through a banner as the crowd roars. Stakeholders and alumni return to see old friends and cheer on their school. The king and queen have a song together at the homecoming dance as the rest of the student body looks on. Roughly 90% of homecoming traditions are commonplace across America—rituals done at one school and repeated at thousands more.

You might not expect to see such tradition at a school like Canyon State, but the goal here is to provide normalized high school experiences in order to adequately prepare for a successful return to the community.

Homecoming week reminded us that Canyon State Academy is a great place to be. The campus may be a home-away-from-home, but it certainly offers opportunities that rival any school. Homecoming week—a week of

voting, crowning, feeding, football, music, dancing, rallying, and competing kept students busier than usual. Teachers infused the students with information about the then-upcoming candidacy for U.S. President. The student body stood ready, each holding his own voter registration card. Polling stations were arranged and everyone had a chance to submit their vote for the presidency, student council officers, a homecoming king, and various other school related topics.

The week was evidence that school spirit is alive and well at Canyon State Academy. It also signified the importance for every teen to have the chance to belong to something worthwhile that will provide them with positive leadership roles. Experiences like these are more than just a fun week—they are critical opportunities to mold our students for a better future.



A charming coronation ceremony recognized the crowning of new royalty.

We're Going to Disneyworld!



Celebrating "dreams come true" with AZ Cardinal's Big Red.

"When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are. When you wish upon a star, your dreams come true..." Some of us remember the opening theme song to the popular Disney television show. If CSA's Junior Flag Football players don't know it, they soon will. The team ran, passed, and caught themselves a trip to Orlando by beating Nevada's defending champions and winning the Regional Tournament at the

University of Phoenix Stadium on October 18th.

The heart of our regional champs pounded even louder after the game when they learned that they were invited to play for the National Championship in Orlando, Florida. That's right, they're going to Disneyworld! The NFL will sponsor the trip, and for that, the players, coaches, and entire staff and student body at Canyon State are incredibly grateful.

This team, comprised of young men in junior high school, is exactly why Walt Disney built his Magic Kingdoms—for youngsters of all ages who continue to believe, who persevere, who strive, succeed, and have fun. These student athletes attend CSA for a variety of reasons—each one with a story of overcoming obstacles. They have been on our campus for mere weeks and months and their determination, energy, and spirit is contagious. Congratulations Junior Rams!

Community & Customer News

Eagle Candidates Complete Projects on CSA Campus

At the end of 2005, it was determined that out of 83,486,083 total Boy Scouts (since 1911), only 1,835,410 have attained the rank of Eagle Scout (approximately 2% of the total membership). An Eagle Scout is the most prestigious and highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America.

The Eagle Scout is awarded to a Boy Scout who's been a Life Scout (a Scout who has assumed additional responsibilities, fulfilled extra service hours, and earned additional merit badges) for at least six months, has earned at least 21 merit badges, demonstrates "Scout Spirit," and shows leadership in his troop, team, crew, or ship. Also, he must plan, develop, and lead a service project, which is known as the "Eagle Project."

In October, nine Scouts (Ted Bell, Phyllip Curtis, Jake Elmer, Coe Mangisi, Jack Marple, Michael Montes de Oca, Jacob Palfreyman, Andrew Shelley, and Scott Warner) teamed with more than 350 Gilbert community volunteers to complete their massive service projects at CSA. Every leader

was assigned a volunteer staff that ranged from the very young to the very young-at-heart, and through their determined efforts, they applied fresh coats of paint to the pens, corrals, fencing, storage sheds, ramadas, a barn, the 4-H classroom, and a uniquely trimmed building in the middle of campus.

Additionally, they prepared the farm area with a garden ready for planting and completed the rock landscaping around the dining hall and school buildings. Jake Elmer stated, "I liked being out there the most and just doing the project. It went really smooth." He worked with 42 volunteers to clear and repair irrigation ditches used to water the horse pastures and alfalfa fields.

Karen Gruninger, an Eagle Scout Volunteer who helped spearhead the project with Bryan Anderson, another volunteer, and Cassandra McCray, the CSA Community Affairs Director, said that "the point of an Eagle project is to show and provide leadership. There is

a lot of preparation involved, and these boys really stepped up."

CSA was immensely grateful for the Scouts' dedication to service and the community's spirit and generosity. Reflecting on the experience, Bryan Anderson stated that "each of the boys showed fantastic leadership and exemplified everything that an Eagle Scout should be as they helped others at all times."



Siblings' Picnic a "Bittersweet Experience"

Imagine being separated from your siblings and unable to have regular, meaningful interaction with them while growing up. This is the reality for many foster children who are often divided between multiple agencies and/or family members, group homes, or placements. When they do see each other, it's regularly at a court hearing and there's seldom time "for catching up."

Recently the peer-mentoring organization called *In My Shoes* hosted Pima County's fourth annual Sibling Reunion Day Picnic in collaboration with Child Protective Services, Foster Care Review Board, the Pima County Juvenile Court, Community Partners of Southern Arizona, and Family Connections. The picnic was designed to promote sibling bonds and relationships through a healthy, child friendly environment. At this year's picnic, four students from CSA joined 90 foster children representing 33 sibling groups.

The picnic's theme incorporated autumn elements like colorful leaves, pumpkins, and hay bales. Children played football, some

quietly enjoyed board games, and a couple of jesters clowned around, creating extravagant hats, flowers, and animals. Some siblings



were treated to hair braiding while others honed their skills at the Witch Ring Toss, Pumpkin Toss, and Balloon Darts. Many of the kids don't have family photos so portraits were taken and disposable cameras were issued which were then developed and returned in albums filled with their pictures. There were even a few vampires, ghouls, and goblins roaming the area thanks to expert face painters.

One CSA student said that "it was fun. I liked chillin' and kickin' back and getting to see my sisters who I hadn't seen in a few months."

CSA Group Living Director Marlon Morrow said that "it was a bittersweet experience because it was difficult to watch everyone say goodbye after having had such a good time together." Another student stated, "I enjoyed watching my little sister play and be happy, especially with my family's troubles."

CSA would like to thank Judge John Wagener of Pima County for being in attendance along with the representatives of each of the sponsoring agencies, including detention, probation, court reporting, Dependency Unit, and CASA coordinators. Also, a special thanks to the planning committee of Cathleen Fitzgerald (PCJCC and In My Shoes); Chris Casey and Christa Drake (In My Shoes); David Croxton, Angela Martinez, and Cheryl Russell (CPS); Leslie Guitard (Family Connections); Sandy Guizetti (FCRB); and Toni Marongelli (Dependency Unit).



Ram-Page

The RAMS reached the summit of Mount Humphreys (the highest peak in Arizona) where they learned that there "ain't no mountain high enough" for them to overcome.



On a spooky moonlit night, CSA Rams shuttered and shook at the haunted house outing in Chandler, AZ.



"Big Red" recognizes CSA Flag Football team's undefeated season- next stop: the National Tournament in Orlando, Florida, and Disneyworld.



The RAMS dodged their opponents often throughout the season.



An informative lesson plan and mock election preceded 18 year old CSA students as they cast their official vote for the first time.



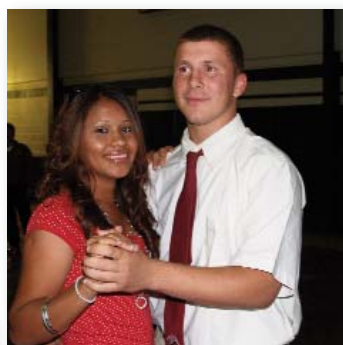
CSA Equestrian students show off their talent in front of a crowd.



Culture and Tradition experienced first hand by the CSA Cross Country Team.



CSA students cheered on the Special Olympics Athletes in the aquatics division.



Homecoming traditions were alive at CSA. The excitement from activities that led up to the big game, the coronation ceremony, and the dance kept the campus buzzing with school pride.

Why do we do what we do? We do what we do because we want to improve the lives of youth—it's our mission. To guide Rite of Passage in its mission, it uses evidence-based practices and a cognitive-based curriculum. When a curriculum is developed for at-risk youth, the course of study also needs to be dynamic and flexible in order to address the student's specific needs and learning styles. Research indicates that program success happens when "offenders do something about their difficulties rather than just talk about them. These types of [behavioral] interventions teach offenders new, pro-social skills... through modeling, practice, increasing difficulty of the skill, and reinforcement." (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2006)

Rite of Passage provides its students with an action-oriented, cognitive-based curriculum designed to guide them toward a healthy reintegration into the community. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is evidence-based, which means that it's supported by research proving its efficacy in helping people make emotional and behavioral changes. Rite of Passage uses several evidence-based curriculums that support its students' therapeutic needs such as *Thinking for a Change*, *Active Parenting*, and *Aggression Replacement Training*.

Rite of Passage recently published, for all of its sites, the first installments of its curriculum, or RAMS manual... an acronym for Respect, Attitude, Motivation, and Spirit. It's an eight-volume (referred to as *concepts*), structured guideline that teaches students to be good citizens and functioning members not only on their school campus but in the general community as well. This article will look closely at the first four concepts which are titled *Understanding How Systems & Organizations Work*; *Creating The Future You Want*; *Using Your Strengths & Developing Resiliency*; and *Understanding How Our Internal World Affects Us*.

Concept 1: Understanding How Systems & Organizations Work. Business organizations aren't only made up of people—they also have methods, procedures, routines, techniques, structure, and practices to keep everything organized. In Concept 1, students are shown that these elements exist not only at Rite of Passage but in other organizations as well. Comparisons are drawn by teaching and having the students learn fundamentals such as norms and rules (unwritten rules of conduct and formal

directives); guided group meetings and team meetings (business or committee meetings); and student evaluations through force field analysis (employee/performance evaluations). Once the students recognize, understand, and put into practice the parallels between Rite of Passage and other organizations, they're better able to effectively participate in school, jobs, or community groups when they exit the program.

Concept 2: Creating the Future You Want. What does the future hold for us? It's an all-important question and it's difficult to foresee exactly what it holds, but, we can be the creator of our future.

We all have ambitions, aspirations, goals, and objectives. In order to accomplish these goals, regardless of size, Rite of Passage students are taught to use a definitive problem-solving system adopted from *Thinking for a Change*. The system asks the student to: stop and think; give a description to the problem; gather information to set a goal; understand what their choices are and then, the consequences of those choices; choose, plan, and do; and finally, evaluate. Whether the student works on a school project, lays out a career path, or has to deal with unwelcome news from home, they learn that this six-step problem solving system is universal.

Concept 2 also discusses surrounding one's self with people whom we admire and who inspire us. These people are *role models*—they can help in creating the future we want. Rite of Passage has many role models who encourage and succeed in involving the students with outside organizations, community events, and participation in *doing for others*. In the process, students are exposed to positive community role models who can help them along their path to success.

Concept 3: Using Your Strengths & Developing Resiliency. There are many words to describe *resiliency*, such as flexible, tough, strong, or being able to "bounce back." In Concept 3, students learn to become resilient by using their strengths. Rite of Passage believes that every student has unique strengths and character traits they can utilize to achieve their goals and overcome challenges. The curriculum at Rite of Passage teaches students to find and improve upon their strengths and positive character traits and, at the same time, develop resiliency so that challenges or failures won't prevent them from persevering in whatever endeavor they embrace. First, we identify or do an assessment, and then, there's time for self-reflection. The assessment used is the Positive

Achievement Change Tool (PACT) that identifies not only the student's *risk factors*, such as substance use, aggression, or living conditions, but also their *protective factors*, such as school status, current relationships, or employment. In her 1992 definitive follow-up study of resilient, challenged youth, Emmy Werner provides evidence showing "that risk factors are not as powerful as protective factors in predicting adult outcomes—even for extremely challenged young people."

Concept 4: Understanding How Our Internal World Influences Us. There is no question that each of us, on a daily basis, is influenced by our internal "world." Happiness is not dependent on anyone else's approval. At Rite of Passage, each student is taught that internal thoughts, feelings, and attitudes control how we act—not external stimulus like people, places, or events. In the process of changing the student's beliefs about the power of thought, the student can identify the thinking errors and the triggers that cause them to consider negative behavior. The bottom line is that triggers always are internal. They're thoughts in our head—people, places, and events that surround us, but actually have no meaning until we assign them meaning.

The curriculum focuses on how to deal with and overcome thinking errors and behavioral problems—such as anti-social peer association, anti-social personality traits, substance abuse, lack of problem-solving and self-control skills, and other factors "that are highly correlated with criminal conduct, i.e., criminogenic factors" (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). To help students discern their triggers, Concept 4 re-introduces the "Six Problem Solving Steps," applying them to fictional characters in hypothetical situations. The stories illustrate how the characters might rethink their choices for a more favorable outcome.

Rite of Passage has been "improving the lives of youth" for the past 25 years. The new RAMS Manual supports this mission by providing a clear, definitive path for its students to walk.

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Staff Update

Employee

Elmer Broyles

After nearly a quarter century in the child care industry, Elmer Broyles has retired. He began his career at Western Academy in Litchfield Park, Arizona, then joined the staff of Rite of Passage's predecessor at the CSA campus where he had the distinction of having worked at every campus location. Mr. Broyles is a retired Army Sergeant Major who served our



Broyles has been a permanent fixture at the academy and will clearly be missed by all.

Spotlight

Transportation Officer

country for 24 years. His career included the charge of 1500 soldiers and he was assigned to 29 public affairs attachments from Maine to Florida and the Virgin Islands. Born, raised, and still residing in Mesa, Arizona, Mr. Broyles is looking forward to some relaxation and hanging up the "Gone Fishin'..." sign.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



June

Leonardo Marin- When you walk around the CSA Campus, you always see our Grounds and Maintenance crew hard at work building or retrofitting a structure, clearing the fallen branches from a nasty summer monsoon, fixing lights that aren't working, hanging new shelves, and numerous more activities that make our site run smoothly and look professional. Hard at work guiding the department is Leonardo. An almost two-year veteran with CSA, Leonardo leads with a gentle nature, "makes it happen," and has solid respect from his co-workers and CSA staff.



July

David Cortez- A fixture, smile, and "reference guide" for the Education Department, student athletes and staff, David has been a CSA employee for three years. His welcoming personality and ever present "how can I help you" attitude shines not only in the Education Department but throughout the campus. He's a "go to" person, a mentor for the students, a friend to his co-workers, and a committed member of the CSA team. His contribution to site-wide activities during the regular work day and after hours is just another elevated level of his willingness and commitment to supporting the students and staff at CSA.



August

Kenneth Tormala- If the animals could talk at CSA, they would tell you that they're Ken's biggest fans, especially our mascot, the ram. A dedicated and genuine employee to our Animal Husbandry and Equestrian program over the last four years, Ken not only tends to the animals but teaches and mentors our student athletes. He's shown and taught them the disciplines, practices, and vocations of maintaining the nutrition, training, and health care of all the animals. He has guided and supported the efforts of our students with 4H, FFA and state and local agricultural competitions and events.



Margaret Tucker- Margaret is affectionately known by the students and staff at CSA as "Ms. Mike." Ms. Mike has contributed to the special education students and staff over the past four years and has graciously supported other elements outside of her teaching responsibilities. She has helped on numerous special projects, including, assisting the registrar with student records, assessments, and organization. In her classroom, the commitment to students' studies, upholding norms, and attention to activities is paramount. Under the watchful eye of Ms. Mike and the personable classroom mascot, "Chewy," students know their studies are an important element to their continued growth and development at CSA.



September

Paul McCurtain- Case Management Coordinator Paul McCurtain holds a degree in sociology from the University of Oklahoma. Paul is a four-year employee with ROP and previously held the position of Case Manager for our student athletes' independent living program. Paul is a former player with the Florida Marlins minor leagues organization and worked on-call with the Arizona Diamondbacks organization. His passion for athletics and outdoor activities has greatly benefited our students in the day-to-day programs. His commitment to our students is evident in his involvement with our RAMS Club. Although he's new as the Case Management Coordinator, his staff, co-workers, and managers support and respect his style of solid communication and integrity.

Get It Straight At Canyon State . . .

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Megan Masarsky | A. Went to high school with 2008 Jamaican 100M Olympic record holder |
| 2. Steven Bates | B. Member of the Pinal County Sheriff's Equine Mounted Search and Rescue Team |
| 3. Antoinette Brown | C. Is friends with Chelsea International Soccer Team member, Michael Essien |
| 4. Martin Jones | D. Went on active duty to Iraq in place of a friend having to leave who was becoming a father |
| 5. Aaron Lawson | E. Former Princess of the Fort Mojave American Indian Tribe |
| 6. Melody Lewis | F. Played minor-league baseball with the Florida Marlins |
| 7. Paul McCurtain | G. Was a former undercover private investigator in New York City |

1.B; 2.D; 3.A; 4.F; 5.C; 6.G; 7.F
Answer Key:



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Rite of Passage

20061 E. Rittenhouse Road
Queen Creek, AZ 85242
Phone (480) 987-9700
Fax (480) 987-9701
www.riteofpassage.com
www.canyonstateacademy.com



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CSA graduate Private West and Case Manager Kim Dublak.

Former Canyon State graduate, Christopher West, visited the academy recently and spoke words of wisdom and encouragement at a recent graduation ceremony. He said that CSA had prepared him educationally and physically for his future in the US Army. In fact, West said, "Learning the skill set, discipline, and leadership from CSA has given me the confidence to serve in the Armed Forces."

During his address, he reminded the students that, "Attitude is key to everything. It's one of the main things that I've taken from the academy. Your life is how you view it. Keep perspective and find things in this program that can help you. I know I did." Private Christopher West just completed boot camp and is headed to Fort Hood for further training.