



# Newsletter



Summer 2009

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## Students Plant Farm To Grow Food for County's Homeless Families

### Lessons in Planting, Nutrition and Community Service Highlight Partnership with County Food Bank

Showing leadership, compassion and no small amount of resourcefulness, St. Christopher's has created a new three-quarter-acre farm at the Jennie Clarkson campus and, in partnership with the Food Bank of Westchester, is growing vegetables that will be distributed to more than 180 soup kitchens in the county.

"We are very proud of this project because it will contribute to community well-being and teach valuable lessons to students, including caring for others, the value of hard work and the importance of positive nutrition," said Deborah Velez-Imbrogno, Unit Director at the Jennie Clarkson Campus of St. Christopher's.

"As part of the program, we are pleased to provide a nutritionist to teach students about food and good nutrition," said Dan Brady, Special Projects, Food Bank of Westchester. "We are very grateful that St. Chris-



Nurturing minds and bodies: (l-r) Toby Pidgeon, Food Bank of West; Justin Green, student; Dr. Robert Maher; Larry Hirshman and Russ Greenleaf of Greenleaf Gardens; Jose Herrera and Jamal Hall, students; Lorraine Galluzzo; Russ Gillmore; and Ralph Herrera help prepare for first planting on the new three-quarter acre farm at the Jennie Clarkson campus.

topher's students are giving back to the community in this meaningful manner."

The project, which started in May, is the most recent expansion

of the Academic Career Endeavors / Hands-on-Program (ACE/HOP), an instructional program that provides students with real world experience in a wide

range of sectors. A trained local agronomist, aptly named Russ Greenleaf, is providing important direction for the students.

Creating the farm includes establishing a gravel roadway, installing a fence along the perimeter, installing a watering system, cultivating the soil, and planting the crops. Harvesting will take place this summer. Items being grown include peppers, onions, tomatoes, melons, lettuce, beets, carrots, dill, parsley, oregano, basil, potatoes and the yacon, an unusual vegetable once grown by the Incas that is especially beneficial for diabetics.

St. Christopher's would like to acknowledge the leadership of Lorraine Galluzzo, Program Coordinator; Russ Gilmore, Director of General Services; and Dr. Robert Maher, Executive Director; as well as the outstanding Maintenance Team for its hard work on the garden project.

## An Open Letter from GNC's New Superintendent, Edward Placke

To the Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff, and All Friends of GNC,

It is an honor and privilege to serve the Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District as the newly appointed Superintendent. The first weeks of my tenure have been eventful in that I've learned a great deal about the students, faculty, staff and facilities. I have also learned of the tremendous potential of GNC UFSD and St. Christopher's, Inc.

My goal is to build on the history and success of both GNC UFSD and St. Christopher's, Inc. The academic and social achievement levels of our students will clearly be enhanced. It is imperative that achievement levels across curriculum areas are increased to prepare students for vocational training, college and ultimately employment.

In discussing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) President Obama highlighted the importance of a high quality education, "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite."

With this in mind our objective is clear and the future is bright. I look forward to leading GNC UFSD into the future.

Sincerely,

Edward Placke, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools  
Greenburgh-North Castle Union Free School District





# Kurt's Excellent Adventure: Trip To South Africa Is A Life Changing Experience For Five St. Chris Students

When St. Christopher's Director of National & International Fellows Programs, Kurt Kanne-meyer, began to plan a student trip to South Africa, he knew it would be a transformational experience for the travelers. That's because Kurt wouldn't be just a tourist: he is from the town of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and knows the profound impact the country has on foreign visitors.

"As one of our students said after the trip, 'Appreciate everything you have and never take things for granted that we enjoy so freely in the U.S.,'" said Kanne-meyer.

The trip, from March 26 to April 9, involved five students and four chaperones, and covered the cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. Among many highlights, they visited Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, and went to his childhood house in Soweto. The group toured the Cradle of Humankind, where the oldest ape-human remains have been discovered, and visited the Hector Pieterse Memorial, where hundreds of youths lost their lives in the struggle to obtain freedom. Students also visited an AIDS orphanage/shelter and two schools.

"Our students were moved with compassion when they discovered that the orphanage could not hold perishable foods as they did not have a refrigeration unit on the premises," said Kanne-meyer. "We plan to raise funds to obtain a freezer for the community, and a mattress for one family that currently sleeps on a dilapidated one."

Additionally, the students plan to raise awareness of the need for school supplies for South Africa. Some of the state funded schools are falling apart and are in dire need of increased public funding for relief, since state funding is inadequate. The students also hope to raise money for parents who can't afford to send children to school.



"I had a vision of exposing our students to a culture different from their own," said Kanne-meyer. "We had never embarked on a trip of this magnitude and wanted to form a bridge with schools in South Africa by which our students would be exposed to an ecumenical culture of learning."

Lives were changed and opportunities were granted to students who might never have had a chance to visit a foreign country. Not only did the students return empowered, but they came back wanting to improve the lives of students nationally and internationally, starting in South Africa.

The students ran many fundraising initiatives to pay for the

trip, including a banquet attended by New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. The Master of Ceremonies for the event was Glendon Fraser, an airline pilot and president of the area's chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. The kids also sold raffle tickets and assisted in bake sales.

In addition to Mr. Kanne-meyer, chaperones for the trip were Grace White, a teacher at the Greenburgh Academy; Atreyouil Hislop, social worker at Greenburgh Academy; and Tracy Clayton, with St. Christopher's residential services. St. Christopher's would like thank every sponsor who gave so generously, despite the economy, and who supported this vision of how this trip would help our students.

It was with a special sense of pride that Clark Academy social studies teacher Patrick Chidume traveled to Washington, D.C. in January for the inauguration of President Obama. Being from Nigeria, Africa, as well as being a social studies teacher, Mr. Chidume understood in a unique way the momentous meaning of this moment in history.

"I was inspired to go to the inauguration because President

Obama achieved an historic feat with worldwide implications," said Mr. Chidume. "The experience of attending the inauguration was deeply meaningful and fulfilling, and I shared this experience with my students upon my return."

Mr. Chidume believes that the election of President Obama inspires children around the world to have self-confidence and to strive for the highest goals in life. "I have seen a positive impact in my own students in just a brief period of time," he said.

The last time Mr. Chidume visited Washington was on a St. Christopher's class trip to reinforce classroom learning and broaden the students' vision on matters affecting social studies. Mr. Chidume and the students were joined by teaching assistant

## Clark Academy Senior Makes Address at Annual Junior

Ryan Crews and crisis staff member April McCormick.

Returning to Washington D.C. for the historic inauguration of President Obama was a strong reminder of the importance of exposing students to the living and breathing history of Washington, D.C., as well as other real-life experiences that can make learning more exciting and interesting for young people.



### AGENCY OFFICERS

St. Christopher's, Inc.

- Denis Barry, President
- Dr. Robert E. Maher, Exec. Dir.
- Cristian Correa, Assist. Exec. Dir. Of Program Operations
- Dr. Catherine Morrison, Asst. Exec. Dir. Of Clinical Services

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- Anne Crudge, President
- Dr. Edward Placke, Supt.
- Bill Federice, Asst. Supt.

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