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## Meet the Communities In Schools 2012 Unsung Heroes

Five Communities In Schools site coordinators are winners of the annual Unsung Heroes Award, selected for their commitment to helping at-risk students overcome challenges and achieve their full potential. They were honored at a dinner that took place during the Communities In Schools Leadership Town Hall in Arlington, Va., in September.

“Although hard-working and passionate people populate our network, it is the site coordinators who personally connect with kids every day and prove that it is relationships, not programs, that transform lives,” said Communities In Schools President Dan Cardinali.

The 2012 Unsung Heroes Award recipients are:

### **Stephanie Armendariz, Communities In Schools of South Central Texas**

Stephanie Armendariz does whatever it takes to ensure every child gets what he or she needs to succeed. During the 2011-2012 school year, Armendariz completed nearly 6,500 hours of service at Schertz Elementary School, providing

targeted intervention services for 124 students, and encouraging 65 fathers to volunteer in a parent engagement program.

### **Steven Weeks, Communities In Schools of Greenville, S.C.**

At Greer Middle School, Steven Weeks works with more than 40 students to remove the barriers standing between them and high school graduation. Weeks not only provides for the middle school students on his current case load, but often checks in on the students he used to serve who are now in high school.

### **Paul Fagen, Communities In Schools of Chicago**

Paul Fagen is fueled by the desire to see the students at Chicago Talent Development Charter High School reach their full potential. At Chicago Talent, Fagen created “Keep the Peace,” a school-wide conflict resolution initiative. Peacekeepers, students trained by the Cook County Sheriff's Office and supervised by Fagen, have helped resolve more than 150 conflicts in the past school year.

*Continued on page 6*



Our 2012 Unsung Heroes Award winners Paul Fagen, Communities In Schools of Chicago; Linda Shelley, Communities In Schools of Peninsula, Wash.; Bobby Valcin, Communities In Schools of Palm Beach County, Fla.; Stephanie Armendariz, Communities In Schools of South Central Texas; and Steven Weeks, Communities In Schools of Greenville, S.C. at the award ceremony in Arlington, Va.

Photo by Scott Henrichsen

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### President

Daniel J. Cardinali  
Communities In Schools  
National Office

# President's Message

## Gifts of the Season

At Communities In Schools, we are very fortunate to cross paths with so many inspiring people — students, educators, community partners, funders and our dedicated network of staff and volunteers.

I'm happy to say that this is our third year of celebrating the Unsung Heroes of the Communities In Schools network — our site coordinators. Five of these inspirational individuals were honored at our Leadership Town Hall in September, when the Communities In Schools network, along with national and local board members, superintendents and funders, came together for fellowship and to learn from each other. Read more about these extraordinary heroes in this edition of *Inside CIS* and you'll understand why they and all of our incredible site coordinators have a pivotal role in our organization and our integrated student services model.

You'll also see an example of how the role of the site coordinator is instrumental in helping students transform their lives. In this edition of *Inside CIS*, you'll read about Ellie Densford, a student who was struggling with life circumstances in addition to her school work. But with the help of Ellie's Communities In Schools of South Central Texas site coordinator and the services provided, Ellie was able to envision a better life for herself and then take steps to make it happen.

We are excited about our partnership with Gap this season because it makes it easy for anyone to support Communities In Schools while holiday shopping. Read about how Gap's Give Twice program is giving back to Communities In Schools with the simple purchase of a gift card.

This holiday season, we are thankful for all of the dedicated staff members throughout our national network, in addition to the thousands of volunteers, donors and activists across the country who help create bright futures for young people through their generous gifts to Communities In Schools. Gifts of time and of caring. And yes, gifts of financial support. We couldn't celebrate our successes without this collective effort that strengthens our work.



Dan Cardinali, President, Communities In Schools  
Photo by William Waybourn

Please keep us in mind for your end-of-year charitable giving. Our donors know they can give confidently. With an average annual cost of less than \$200 per student, Communities In Schools provides services to young people efficiently and cost-effectively thanks to our largely volunteer network and community partnerships. And we have proven results. Approximately 97 percent of the students we serve stay in school and on track to graduation. For every dollar invested in Communities In Schools, \$11.60 is returned to society.\*

On behalf of the Communities In Schools national office, I wish you and your family all the joy that the season has to offer. ■

\* Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI). "The Economic Impact of Communities In Schools." Report prepared for Communities In Schools, Inc. Moscow, Idaho: EMSI, 2012.

## Ellie Densford: The Look of Success

### A Student Success Story

It has been more than five years, yet for Ellie Densford, the memory of that day still feels fresh. The officer was talking, "... your mother is in jail ...," she made out. She remembers immediately thinking, "What's she in for this time?" Her mother's drug addiction and previous arrests meant it was not unusual for Densford and her two younger sisters to find a squad car parked outside their home. "It was never a surprise to see the police," said Densford. "But that didn't mean it hurt any less."

Densford was 17 then and had already been saddled for years with such weighty adult issues as worrying if she'd be kicked out if she did not help to pay rent, and if she and her sisters — Aubrey, 15, and Kara, 16 — would end up being separated. In addition to her workload as a high school senior, Densford also had two part-time jobs that kept her busy at night and on weekends. And although she'd always loved fashion — when she was younger, she recalls her bows had to match her outfit — she never imagined having a career or that college was a place for her. That is until she started participating in an after-school tutoring program and was introduced to Communities In Schools of South Central Texas.

As part of a program called Project Success, Densford met weekly with Liberty Nicholas, the Communities In Schools site coordinator at New Braunfels High School. The sessions covered college readiness for roughly 100 students. Nicholas also helped Densford with setting and achieving goals, staying motivated and learning how to adapt to changing life situations. Within months, the power of this one-on-one relationship had helped Densford map out a strategy to become the first in her family to go to college.

"Meeting Miss Liberty was life changing," she said. "Before Communities In Schools, I didn't have mentors or anyone to guide me. They encouraged me. And at a time when things were down, I remember it made me feel uplifted. They made us feel like even though it was bad at the time, things did not always have to be that way."

Like a personal stylist in training, Densford paired the resources she received from



Ellie Densford, who is a student at Texas State University thanks to program support she received from Communities In Schools, makes time to give back to students and inspire others to achieve.

Photo Courtesy of Communities In Schools of South Central Texas

Communities In Schools with her own determination, and the resulting combination helped create a future where she'd have more opportunities.

"Ellie knew she wanted a better life," said Nicholas, a licensed social worker. "She was overwhelmed with her work, school and home life, but she also had drive. She did the work and did what she needed to make things better."

Project Success provided Densford and her sisters with health and human services support, school supplies and counseling to help them get through times when the family did not have a lot of food and times when they were on public assistance. Densford is particularly grateful for a Thanksgiving meal that Communities In Schools arranged to be delivered to her family, a ride she needed on the day she took her SATs and, most importantly, that Nicholas was someone she could always count on for compassion and calm.

"She never made me feel like I was hassling her with anything," said Densford.

Today Densford is 22 and a fashion merchandising major at Texas State

University, pursuing her goal of becoming a personal stylist. As part of the Project Success alumni program, Densford continues to receive comprehensive services that support her college success. Communities In Schools understands that help with yearly financial aid forms and costly dorm supplies can go a long way toward making sure first-generation students not only get to college, but stay and graduate.

Densford's sisters followed in her successful footsteps and are also currently enrolled in college. So appreciative is Densford of the support she receives from Communities In Schools that she volunteers to speak to students at her former high school, and has given tours of her college campus to inspire them.

"I want to let them know they *can* do it — overcome whatever obstacles they're facing and achieve their goals," said Densford. "I know it's possible because I did." ■

## Give Twice: Communities In Schools and Gap Partner to Keep Kids in School

This past May, Communities In Schools and Gap, Inc. launched a successful partnership with Gap's Casting Call promotion. This nationwide search for children who would become the faces of GapKids and BabyGap also featured \$10,000 donations to two Communities In Schools affiliates and promoted Communities In Schools on the Casting Call website.

On November 8, Communities In Schools and Gap expanded this partnership with the release of Gap's new global marketing campaign, "Love Comes In Every Shade," which celebrates the colorful, optimistic holiday product Gap is known for and illustrates some of the many forms of love.

As part of this campaign, Gap is launching a holiday gift card program called Give Twice.

The goal of Give Twice is to create a brighter future for women and youth worldwide. Gap has chosen Communities In Schools and CARE International as their nonprofit partners in this program. Communities In Schools and CARE are prominently featured at cash registers in Gap stores, and online at [www.gap.com/givetwice](http://www.gap.com/givetwice). Gap customers are encouraged to buy a Gap GiftCard with 2 percent of the face value of the card donated to Communities In Schools or CARE.

Gap also commissioned a hand-selected group of artists and illustrators to create one-of-a-kind graphic designs for the gift card envelopes, and substantially increased the size of the packaging to make it feel more like a gift.



When purchasing a Gap GiftCard online, scroll over the envelope design options to designate one that supports the work of Communities In Schools. ■

## Communities In Schools Showcased on Public Radio During First-Ever American Graduate Day

On September 22, Communities In Schools joined roughly 20 other organizations across the country for the first-ever American Graduate Day, presented by WNET New York Public Media and Public Radio Exchange. The Communities In Schools segment, moderated by ABC News Correspondent JuJu Chang, showcased the work Communities In Schools is doing at a community level to help students stay on track to graduate. Communities In Schools President Dan Cardinali spoke on behalf of the organization, alongside Communities In Schools of Philadelphia alum Rasheedah Phillips and Communities In Schools of the Charleston Area Site Coordinator Jean Rebecca.

All three participants gave program viewers a chance to learn about the organization from a variety of perspectives. Cardinali began the segment by explaining how Communities In Schools serves a role similar to that of a doctor by "giving the right prescription to the right kids." Rebecca explained what site coordinators provide for the students they serve. "What we try to bring in is self-confidence. We try to bring in resiliency and passion through building relationships and community support." When asked how



Communities In Schools impacted her life as a teenage mother, Phillips explained that because of the organization she can now provide a better life for her own daughter. "I can cultivate an environment for her that was different from mine where I had limited options and ended up pregnant," Phillips said. "I have changed my daughter's environment so that she has infinite possibilities to pursue what she wants, and she's not in the same position that I was."

The event, broadcast live from the Tisch WNET Studios at Lincoln Center, was

part of a larger public media initiative, American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen, aimed at helping local communities identify and implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis. American Graduate Day used all of public media's platforms — on-air, online and in the community — to help people understand the impact of the crisis and create champions for the cause. Access the entire show, with the Communities In Schools segment airing in the second hour, at [www.americangraduate.org/grad-day-programming](http://www.americangraduate.org/grad-day-programming). ■

# Alumni Leadership

## Demonstrating Support for Students and Communities by Giving Back

One of the Communities In Schools basic tenets is that while supporting students on the path toward high school graduation, we provide them with a chance to give back to peers and make a difference in their communities. Meet three Communities In Schools Alumni Network members who embody this message through the work they do.

### Eve McKinsey

Age: 25  
Site Coordinator  
Communities In Schools of Miami

When Eve McKinsey was served by Communities In Schools of Miami, she said the organization's one-on-one attention and caring attitude made her want to be involved with schools. For the past four years, McKinsey has been working for Communities In Schools of Miami, first as a tutor and now as a site coordinator. "My vision is to be able to provide Communities In Schools services to every Miami-Dade public school."



Photo by Jorge Goizueta

### Boris Henderson

Age: 34  
Former Board Member  
Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg

As he got older, Henderson said he began to realize just how big of an impact Communities In Schools has had on his life, both inside and outside the classroom. That's why he served for six years on the board of directors of Communities In Schools of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. "You realize the enormity and the seriousness of making sure some of these kids don't fall through the cracks. And that's what it's about — giving a kid the chance to live out the American dream."



Photo by Boris Henderson

### Rasheedah Phillips

Age: 28  
Member, Board of Directors  
Communities In Schools of Philadelphia

As a new member of the board of directors for Communities In Schools of Philadelphia, Phillips is looking forward to helping shape the affiliate's vision for the future while retaining the core values that have made Communities In Schools so impactful. "I truly appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the board of directors and to continue to use my story as a testament to how vital this program is to the lives of thousands of youth in helping them realize and unlock their potential."



Photo by Martin Regusters/Leaping Lion Photography

**"Our alumni are a transformative asset to the organization as it seeks to be a leader in the nonprofit sector as well as to discover genuine solutions to address the source of problems in our communities. No one has a greater vested interest in the growth of our communities than the students we've served."**

— Mordecai Scott, College and Career Readiness Specialist, Research, Innovation and Evaluation, Communities In Schools National Office and Communities In Schools of Charlotte, N.C. alum.

## Meet the Communities In Schools 2012 Unsung Heroes

*Continued from page 1*

### Linda Shelley, Communities In Schools of Peninsula, Wash.

In a school where roughly 72 percent of the students live in poverty, Linda Shelley always gives 100 percent to improving children's lives. Shelley connects students at Vaughn Elementary School to one-on-one tutoring, after-school activities and field trips to zoos, museums and aquariums. Thanks to Shelley, each student made significant gains in reading and math during the 2011-2012 school year.

### Bobby Valcin, Communities In Schools of Palm Beach County, Fla.

After an earthquake devastated Haiti in 2010, more than 625 students and their families sought refuge in Palm Beach County. Many were in desperate need of school uniforms, shoes, personal hygiene items, a translator and someone who could help them navigate their new school and life. Bobby Valcin, a site coordinator at John F. Kennedy Middle School who is fluent in Creole, was enlisted to serve these students.

To learn more about these Unsung Heroes, check out their videos online at [www.communitiesinschools.org/our-impact/unsung-heroes/2012/](http://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-impact/unsung-heroes/2012/).

This year, we also selected the following honorable mentions, site coordinators who have dedicated their lives to improve the education and wellbeing of every child:

**Marty Dreher**, Communities In Schools of Tacoma, Wash.; **Georgina Hernandez**, Communities In Schools of Federal Way, Wash.; **Donna Wiseman**, Communities In Schools of Rowan County, N.C.; **Brenda Middleton**, Communities In Schools of Charleston, S.C.; **Nolan Griffin**, Communities In Schools of Richmond, Va. ■

## Leadership Town Hall Creates Community, Renews Commitment

This past September, Communities In Schools staff, board members and funders from across the national network gathered in Arlington, Va., for the first Communities In Schools Leadership Town Hall. For two days, 180 participants had the opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer conversations with expert leaders at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel. A variety of panel discussions were held on the organization's strategic objectives: Unlocking the Potential, Changing the Frame, and Securing the Future.

"There's nothing like peer-to-peer exchange and having the chance to talk to people who have walked through the valley of the hard work it takes to do what we do," said Donna Weiss, Communities In Schools national board of directors member and chair of Communities In Schools of Los Angeles.

The Leadership Town Hall kicked off on September 20 with a breakfast and an enlightening conversation among Communities In Schools President Dan Cardinali, Board Chair Elaine Wynn and National Board Member Sherrie Rollins Westin. In addition to answering questions from the audience, they discussed the 10-year vision for the organization, the evolution the national board has gone

through to prepare for the opportunities ahead and the ways in which the national board chair and president have teamed up to meet the increased need for rigor and accountability facing nonprofits today.

Various plenary sessions were held throughout the day, with topics ranging from how Communities In Schools affiliates can serve more students, to how to encourage deeper participation from board members and funders. For people who wanted to attend the Leadership Town Hall but could not make it, the plenary sessions were available via webcast. The online audience was able to watch and even submit questions to presenters.

In addition to the plenary sessions, Leadership Town Hall attendees had the opportunity to get to know the national board members at a reception and 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner. There the audience was introduced to the 2012 Unsung Heroes Award recipients through powerful videos, available at [www.communitiesinschools.org/our-impact/unsung-heroes/2012/](http://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-impact/unsung-heroes/2012/), and each received a plaque and a monetary award from the Communities In Schools national office. ■



Participants in the panel, "Why Communities In Schools is a Sound Investment," included, (left to right) Tina Wilson, Board Chair, Communities In Schools of North Carolina and Manager, Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs, IBM; Rick Love, Director, MetLife Foundation; and Kathryn Fessler, Senior Manager, Corporate Contributions and Community Relations, Altria Group.

Photo by Scott Henrichsen

# Spotlight on Success

News Briefs from the Network



First J.R. Martinez danced with the stars, then he was the featured guest at the Communities In Schools of Baytown fundraiser where he danced with one lucky raffle winner. Photo by Dana Benzaia

**Communities In Schools of Baytown, Texas**, kicked off its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign in October with a fundraiser called “An Afternoon of Inspiration” featuring Iraq war veteran, motivational speaker, actor and author J.R. Martinez. Martinez is best known for his win on season 13 of ABC’s “Dancing with the Stars” and his role on “All My Children” as combat veteran Broth Monroe. He is recognized internationally for his inspirational story of hope, perseverance and resilience. The event included a salute to veterans and a raffle drawing for one person to dance with Martinez.

**Communities In Schools of Wake County, N.C.**, is the recipient of a \$45,000 grant from the PNC Foundation to establish pre-kindergarten initiatives at Communities In Schools of Wake County’s PNC Bank Learning Center at Heritage Park, as well as the SAS Learning Center in Kentwood. The grant was announced in September at Communities In Schools of Wake County’s Gifted Hands Breakfast.

**Communities In Schools of Greater Central Texas** was honored in mid-October by the Texas Veterans Commission with a Community Partnership Award for

Distinguished Service to Texas Veterans. The award signifies exceptional administration of the Fund for Veterans Assistance Grant and distinguished services to Texas Veterans and their families. In the past year, Communities In Schools of Greater Central Texas case management included outreach to more than 1,770 military-dependent children at the Fort Hood military base. Communities In Schools provides academic enhancement such as tutoring and homework groups, and supportive counseling, such as deployment lunch groups, to let youth know they are not alone in this critical period in their lives. A breakfast featured guest speaker Dr. Benjamin Carson, noted director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Md.

**Communities In Schools of Delaware** celebrated the announcement of a \$300,000 AT&T Aspire grant during a ceremony held at William Penn High School in mid-November. The grant will support Communities In Schools site coordinators at McKean, Dickinson and William Penn high schools. Delaware Governor Jack Markell was on hand for the event, along with several local political representatives. The grant is part of the \$250 million AT&T Aspire initiative. Communities In Schools of Delaware was one of seven affiliates that received a total of \$1,618,000.



Attendees at the AT&T Aspire grant ceremony event in Delaware included, (left to right) Leslie Opes, a student and Jeff Menzer, the principal at William Penn High School; Jim Purcell, Communities In Schools of Delaware president and Kate McGlinchey, Board Chair; Kia Lockhart, Regional Director, Communities In Schools of Wilmington; Michael Scheweder, Vice President, AT&T Mid Atlantic; The Honorable Jack Markell, Governor of Delaware; and Dr. Dorothy Linn, Superintendent, Colonial School District. Photo by Daniel Burke

**Communities In Schools of Nassau County, Fla.**, held its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Back-to-School Beach Run in October. More than 300 children participated in this year’s event, which had free registration thanks to individual sponsors. The Beach Run encourages families and children to enjoy quality time together and participate in a healthy activity.



Communities In Schools was recognized by the first-ever Social Impact 100 Index, a new effort that aggregates top-performing, evidence-based nonprofits so that donors can be confident they are contributing to organizations that consistently deliver impact. The S&I 100, released just prior to the year-end holiday giving season, features 100 high-performing nonprofits that focus on education, health, poverty alleviation and youth development. The complete index of recognized nonprofits is viewable at <http://www.socialimpactexchange.org/exchange/si-100>. ■

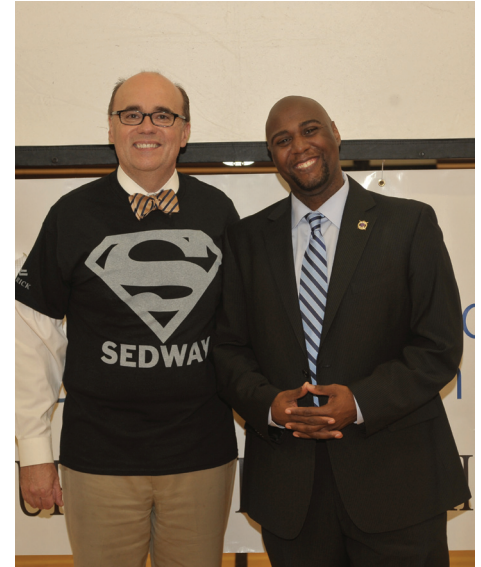
## Barrick Gold Corporation Commits \$1.2M to Communities In Schools of Nevada

This past September, at a student celebration at Marvin M. Sedway Middle School in North Las Vegas, Communities In Schools of Nevada announced a new partnership with Barrick Gold Corporation. Barrick Gold committed \$1.2 million over four years to fund programming at Sedway and Adobe middle schools.

“The youth of Nevada are facing more challenges than ever,” said Michael Brown, Barrick’s vice president of corporate and external affairs. Approximately 85 percent of the 1,400 students at Sedway and 40 percent of the 700 students at Adobe are currently living below the poverty line. “Barrick chose to partner with Communities In Schools because of its proven track record. This funding will enable students to receive critical services such as medical care, food, clothing and tutoring.”

At Sedway, funding will support two full-time site coordinators to facilitate programs and services, which include tutoring, a food pantry and a resource room with school supplies. A site coordinator and case manager will be based at Adobe to serve the needs of students, which include administering a school-wide breakfast program.

“I applaud Barrick for its commitment to these children and for supporting the services needed for them to achieve their goals and move forward to a successful life,” said Terri Clark, CEO of Communities In Schools of Nevada. “This funding will be vital to their future and will provide the services needed to transition into high school, higher education and a vocation.”



Michael Brown, left, Vice President of Corporate and External Affairs, Barrick Gold, with Dr. Zachary Robbins, Principal, Sedway Middle School, a Communities In Schools of Nevada site.  
Photo by Las Vegas Photo and Video

## Accreditation Update

### Communities In Schools Local Affiliates Meet Quality Standards to Improve Student Outcomes

One state office and several Communities In Schools local affiliates were accredited this fall under the Total Quality System (TQS). Communities In Schools launched TQS in 2008, with the goal of promoting uniform quality and improved outcomes for students being served by the organization. TQS establishes a common set of operational and business standards adopted by the Communities In Schools national office. These standards, based on nonprofit best practices, define what it means to be a

successful Communities In Schools affiliate and/or state office serving students.

These organizations join the 78 other Communities In Schools affiliates who have been reviewed and received their accreditation. There are 14 state offices and nearly 200 local affiliates in the Communities In Schools network in 28 states and the District of Columbia.

Congratulations to the board of directors, executive leadership and staff of the following most recently accredited affiliates:

**Communities In Schools of Candler County (Ga.)**

**Communities In Schools of Georgia**

**Communities In Schools of Grant County (Kan.)**

**Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (Mich.)**

**Family Connection-Communities In Schools of Athens (Ga.)**

### ATTENTION LOCAL AFFILIATES!

Help us tell your story to a national audience. Send story submissions to [salamatm@cisnet.org](mailto:salamatm@cisnet.org) or [reavist@cisnet.org](mailto:reavist@cisnet.org). Please include “Inside CIS Story” in the subject line.

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