Believing in the Promise of Youth

Over 250 guests celebrate with us at our fall breakfast

Our 2013 Believe Breakfast was the place to be in November! We were thrilled to welcome so many guests who are dedicated to supporting the academic and career success of Rhode Island’s young people. We congratulate our honorees Dr. Irving Schneider, who received the Dr. Americo W. Petrocelli Distinguished Service Award, and Crusade alum Apryl Silva ’03, who received the Distinguished Alumni Award. We thank our event co-chairs William Hatfield from Bank of America and John Hazen White, Jr., from Taco. We also thank our major event sponsors: H. Carr & Sons, Inc., Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Brown University, Citizens Bank, Johnson & Wales University, Providence College, RI Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals, Bank of America, Cox Communications, Delta Dental of Rhode Island, Home Loan Investment Bank FSB, National Grid, RGB Architects, Roger Williams University, Taco/The White Family Foundation, and Yarlas, Kaplan, Santilli, Moran, Ltd.

Education – It’s a Family Affair

And last year, over 1,000 parents of Crusaders got involved

It’s five p.m. on a Tuesday evening at The College Crusade office, and Family Liaison Jenny Garcia is filling the coffeepot. At a time when most people are calling it a day and packing up for the commute home, our Family Engagement team is just warming up. Jenny, whose son Jeremy is a Crusader at Nathan Bishop Middle School in Providence, works with fellow Family Liaisons Maribel Marte, Claudia Galeano, and Gina Reynoso, and with the other members of our Family Engagement staff, to “engage, empower, and educate” parents of Crusaders. Tonight, Jenny will be co-presenting a workshop on “Coping as a Single Parent.” Thirty Crusade families are registered to attend, and she’s excited.

“Family Liaisons are a vital part of our services to parents,” says Family Engagement administrative support facilitator.

Did You Know...

This past fall, 622 Rhode Island students started school as Crusaders and dedicated themselves to be ready for higher education and good careers. They join thousands of other middle school and high school Crusaders and their families who are already members of our organization. The young people who joined The College Crusade this year are members of the Class of 2020!

We are grateful to Bank of America Charitable Foundation for providing $100,000 in the second year of a two-year Neighborhood Builders Award grant. The grant provides operating support, allows us to expand our family engagement and college completion programs, and offers leadership training opportunities for staff. We thank TG Public Benefit Grant Program for a second year of funding in a two-year $210,372 grant, which has helped to launch our college completion partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island. We are also thankful to Amgen Foundation for its $35,000 grant and to Textron Charitable Foundation for a gift of $7,500.

Our partnership initiatives are intensifying! As a major partner in the Rhode Island Partnership Project, we are contributing to the development of a “one-stop shop” for students who are pursuing a postsecondary degree or who are considering starting or returning to a degree program. We are also active in Partnerships for Success, a broad coalition of higher education entities working to enhance PK-16 school-based initiatives that prepare students to realize their goals in higher education, careers, and citizenship.

The mission of The College Crusade is to increase high school graduation, college and career readiness, and college completion for youth in our state’s low-income communities.

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Winter 2014 issue of Inspire Support Believe. Our feature story introduces you to The College Crusade’s successful Family Engagement program, which has undergone dramatic growth over the past year. Expanding our network of parents and families, in order to support student participation and success, is a major goal of our Strategic Plan for 2012-2017. We are excited about the many Family Engagement initiatives we have launched since then—and we are thrilled to share word about how families of Crusaders are responding to our programs. Credit for this remarkable progress is due to our Family Engagement staff’s hard work, matchless energy, and creativity in reaching out to parents and families.

We are also delighted to announce that The College Crusade is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. We plan to mark this occasion in many ways over the coming months, and we hope you will be part of the celebration. At our founding in 1989, few people could have foreseen the amazing changes of the last quarter-century—shifting demographics, new social and cultural trends, the relentless pace of technology. Throughout it all, one fact remains the same. Rhode Island’s low-income urban students must be prepared to compete academically and professionally in the global economy. Our mission to inspire, support, and believe in these young people continues.

The effectiveness of our program is evident in an analysis of college persistence rates performed by our evaluators at Drexel University’s Center for Labor Markets and Policy. Drs. Neeta P. Fogg and Paul E. Harrington finalized a study for us in September 2013 showing that Crusaders are achieving higher levels of success than all students at the state’s public and private colleges. We invite you to view the report, which is available at www.thecollegecrusade.org/drexelresearch.

Sincerely yours,

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**From page 1 – A Family Affair**

**Engagement Coordinator Candace Harper:** “In order to be effective, we have to know our families very well. Our liaisons build relationships. Parents of Crusaders know they can come here, be listened to, and be helped.”

Family Engagement workshops, held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, are popular offerings. With titles such as “How to Get Good Grades,” “Teenage Communication Styles,” and “Financing Higher Education,” workshops are presented in English and in Spanish. Workshop topics include: nutrition, IronwillKids, and how to keep the coffee pot humming. Engagement is the watchword.

“Research shows that when parents are engaged, students do better in school and in life,” Harper explains. “When parents are involved, they are more likely to encourage their children to do what it takes to succeed. Our parents are very eager to learn how to help their children excel and prepare for higher education and beyond.”

Often it’s about overcoming obstacles. Many parents of Crusaders have only a high school education themselves, or never completed high school. A lack of financial resources and financial knowledge often leads them to believe that they will not be able to afford postsecondary education for their children. Language barriers sometimes stand in the way, as do challenges with work schedules, transportation, and child care. Our Family Engagement team offers assistance, information, motivation, and encouragement for every Crusade family as they work through these issues and discover how to successfully affect their child’s educational journey.

We are grateful for assistance from generous partners who visit with our parents to share knowledge. In September, for example, General Treasurer Gina Raimondo spoke to a packed room of parents during a visit from the Capital Good Fund and the Rhode Island Financial Coaching Corps. The College Planning Center of Rhode Island has presented workshops for families on how to prepare for college fairs and the college application process. The Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RIsla) has supplied financial aid materials that our staff uses throughout the year.

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**Sylvia Natale**

“I believe in what The College Crusade does because I saw firsthand as a principal that their strategies make a difference for our most vulnerable students. Most people don’t know about the experiences that families in poverty go through to keep their children fed and clothed. It is nearly impossible to focus on education when you are just trying to survive. I have seen how hard it is to break the cycle.

Education is the doorway. Getting a good education equips young people with the self-confidence they need to hold onto high career and life expectations. The College Crusade is reaching out to them the support they need to rise.”

Sylvia Natale has had a long career as an educator in Rhode Island. She served as principal of Governor Aram J. Pather Elementary School and Citizens Memorial Elementary School in Woonsocket. She also worked as an ESL coordinator and assistant principal in West Warwick. She is a board member of The College Crusade.

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**Tony Maione**

“United Way of Rhode Island is proud to support The College Crusade in increasing educational opportunities for low-income students statewide. We believe that out-of-school enrichment programming helps students develop skills essential to college and career success. For example, through The College Crusade’s Media Literacy “Write Stuff” program, students are applying critical thinking, writing, public speaking and research skills to create exciting media campaign projects. Investing in students today helps build a stronger community for all Rhode Islanders.”

Tony Maione is CEO and President of United Way of Rhode Island.

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**Crusade families flocked to information sessions held by our student Advisory Staff at a Family Open House in October.**

Families are responding. Last year, over 1,000 parents of Crusaders participated in College Crusade programs and services. “Socioeconomic disparity exists, but our family support services are helping to level the field,” says Harper. “Our goal is to bridge the gap so Crusaders will have equal access to higher education and equal opportunities for educational success.”

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**Write Stuff**

Tony Maione, General Treasurer of the Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA) said, “The College Crusade is the ‘write stuff’ for families. They are providing students with information and opportunities to be prepared for college and career success.”

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**Why We Give**

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Sylvia Natale
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Parents can also get involved in our Parent Council, a leadership development group and volunteer network, and our monthly Family Forums, where families come together to discuss challenges and find common solutions. Other Family Engagement programs include F.A.C.T. Coffees, which host school principals as speakers, and personalized one-on-one meetings with parents of new Crusaders. When you add in the quarterly Family Summit, annual Family Open House, Family Fun Day, and an upcoming 10-week summer curriculum on nutrition from IronwillKids, it’s easy to see why we need to keep the coffeepot humming. Engagement is the watchword.

“Research shows that when parents are engaged, students do better in school and in life,” Harper explains. “When parents are involved, they are more likely to encourage their children to do what it takes to succeed. Our parents are very eager to learn how to help their children excel and prepare for higher education and beyond.”

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High school Crusaders in a writing workshop at Providence College.

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Crusade News Briefs

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Thanks to a $60,000 grant from the RI Office of Higher Education, an increasing number of high school Crusaders are earning college credit early through dual enrollment programs. The grant offsets tuition costs for Crusaders so they can take advantage of programs offered by the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Brown University, Citizens Bank, Johnson & Wales University, Providence College, R.I. Federation of Teachers & Health Professionals, Bank of America, Cox Communications, Delta Dental of Rhode Island, Home Loan Investment Bank FSB, National Grid, RGB Architects, Roger Williams University, Taco/The White Family Foundation, and Yarlus, Kaplan, Santilli, Moran, Ltd.

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We Are 25!

In 2014 The College Crusade celebrates its 25th anniversary year. Please stay tuned for news of events and special gatherings. We hope you will celebrate with us!

Staff & Board News

Warren Simmons, executive director of Brown University’s Annenberg Institute for School Reform and vice chair of The College Crusade board of directors, was elected to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation board of directors.

Todd Flaherty, president & CEO of The College Crusade, was named the recipient of the Paul W. Crowley Award for 2014 by the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association.

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