



31 YEARS AND GROWING!

# Big NEWS

A COMMUNITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL PUBLICATION

FALL 2015

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## Alumni Mentoring Program Helps Community Prep Graduates Transition to High School

Community Prep 8th grade students graduate ready for high school and usually perform near the top of their new 9th grade class. However, the transition is not always easy. Students find themselves going to schools that are much larger or much less diverse than Community Prep. Their new classmates often have no understanding of the challenges that our graduates face outside of school. Mónica Rodríguez '99, Community Prep's Alumni and High School Placement Coordinator, has worked with the Alumni Relations Committee to launch a new mentoring program for graduating 8th graders.



Mentor Ashley Gomez '14 pins Venecia Mills '15. Ashley: "As a young alumna, the mentor program gives me the opportunity to reach out to new graduates and also have the connection with older professional alums who can guide me in the future."

**"Our school feels so safe, with a sense of family. It is important to preserve that family feeling during high school and college transitions."**

"We are very excited about this model of mentorship," explains Mónica. "We have created a cohort for graduates at Classical High School, independent schools, public/charter schools, and Catholic schools. Each cohort is subdivided by school. When our students graduate, they are welcomed into the group of alumni who attend or have

attended their high school." Rather than a one-to-one mentorship, the program brings CP graduates together by high school, with everyone--of all ages--benefitting from the others' experiences.

The members of the CP Class of 2015 received their alumni pins from a member of their cohort at 8th Grade Speech Night in June. Speech Night is a cherished tradition, when 8th graders reflect upon their Community Prep experience. After their introduction at Speech Night, the cohorts met at Community Prep in August, and will meet again later this fall at the individual high schools. There is a secure section of the alumni website where graduates



New alumni: Max Rodriguez, Nicole Cepeda-Merhi, Jason Hernandez, Jeffrey Gao, Melita Barbosa

can get each other's contact information, so communication can be ongoing.

Alumni Relations Committee Chair Trinh Truong '99 says, "the Alumni Mentoring program is a wonderful opportunity for grads, both recent and past, to stay connected at a much larger capacity. It provides support and networking opportunities for all of our graduates." "Our school feels so safe, with a sense of family," adds Mónica. "It is important to preserve that family feeling during high school and college transitions."

# Mrs. Ryan Retires

Judy Ryan retired in June after 19 years at Community Prep. Judy joined the school as a teacher and became Director of Education/Principal a few years later. Her thoughtful approach to education and her love of each student were important parts of the foundation of a Community Prep education for hundreds of students.

**Thank you,  
Mrs. Ryan, for  
all your love  
and hard work!**

“She was excellent at seeing situations from multiple perspectives and coming up with practical solutions that put the students first,” says Head of School Dan Corley. “Her sense of humor and deep caring make her someone that people can trust to help them with any situation. She was a wonderful resource to our students, graduates, parents and teachers.”

One of many students she impacted was Tahj Eddington '04. “I had a rocky childhood. Mrs. Ryan understood that and still didn't treat me differently from any of the other kids. She played a part in shaping me into the hardworking man I am today. She motivated me when I needed it and showed me love during the hard times.”

Mrs. Ryan and her husband, Hugh, are considering retirement options, with Florida topping the list. Thank you, Mrs. Ryan, for all your love and hard work for Community Prep!



## New Roles, New Faces



### Anita Bench, Principal

Anita takes over Judy Ryan's role leading the teachers and students. Mrs. Bench has been a middle school educator for the last thirteen years, working with diverse student populations in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Virginia, and Rhode Island. When Anita began teaching at Community Prep six years ago, she knew it was the place she wanted to spend the rest of her career in education. “Right away, Community Prep felt like home.” One of her main areas of interest in education is adolescent literacy. Anita recently attended an institute at Columbia University and initiated the adoption of a new Common Core-aligned writing curriculum at the school. “Two of my goals are to work with departments to analyze student assessments and institute school-wide teaching non-negotiables. Together we can increase effectiveness in the classroom so our students reach their full academic and leadership potential.”



### Yayaida De Jesús and Cauley Greene, CP After 3 Co-Directors

Yayaida and Cauley have been Community Prep's 7th grade homeroom teachers for five years and now lead the After-School Program as well. “CP After 3 continues our school day,” Cauley says. “We study, play, and go on fun field trips. It's important for students and parents to have an extended day option. And, we enjoy getting to know the students before we teach them in 7th grade.”



### Wendy Benjamin, Admissions Coordinator

Wendy has previously worked in CP's after-school program. She attended Roger Williams University and has worked with the Public Defenders Office.



### Chavelin Romero, Office Manager Receptionist

When you walk into Community Prep, it will usually be Chavelin greeting you at the front desk. She has worked as a teacher assistant and is enrolled at CCRI.

# Trenta Vino

30 Wines Celebrating 30 Years — April 30, 2015

Many thanks to chairs Ross Mattis and Lauren Miller, and all the generous sponsors and donor/attendees. We raised 2 scholarships!



## 7th grade teacher wins grant for innovative teaching



Yajaida De Jesús was this year's winner of the Thompson-Murdock *Fellowship for Innovative Teachers* for her use of song and storytelling to teach abstract math concepts to her Pre-Algebra students. "Students in middle school are energized by variety," says Yajaida. "Songs and stories make teaching and learning fun and engaging, which always leads to more academic success."

"The Tale of Addito" is a playful story Yajaida has written to help students learn how to add and subtract positive and negative integers. She is tracking her students' success in subsequent grades to measure the impact of her methods, and teaching students how to create their own songs to help learn difficult concepts. "Middle schoolers do not find it embarrassing to sing in class; they really love it, and it helps the lesson stick. They remember the "Adding Integers Song" (sung to the tune of "When the Saints Go Marching In") long after middle school."

## Community Prep Golf Classic

Another beautiful day and another great tournament at the Misquamicut Club. This year's golf tournament raised \$30,000 for scholarships. Thanks to the Walsh brothers and all the sponsors who made this event possible. A special thank-you to Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar for donating dining certificates for every golfer.



### Mark Your Calendars!

The 2016 Golf Classic is June 14, 2016 at the Misquamicut Club.

# ALUMNI UPDATES

**AMBER JOHNSON '07** is Community Prep's newest Fulbright Scholar.

Amber just graduated from Tufts University and will use her Fulbright Scholarship to conduct independent research on poetry and social justice in Toronto.

Amber will attend the University of Pennsylvania for a joint PhD in English and Africana Studies after her Fulbright year.



"CP provided me with the supportive community that validated my curiosity and empowered me to create my own knowledge. I was able to receive a Fulbright because years ago as a 6th grader, I had caring adults who believed that I had the potential to do great things and were willing to do whatever they could to push me higher. The confidence I built during my years at CP continues to guide my bold scholarly explorations today."

## Get ready for our Fall Online Auction November 3-19!

Click the auction preview link at [www.communityprep.org](http://www.communityprep.org)

We need **YOUR** help getting auction items. Golf, sports tickets, restaurant gift cards, and many other assorted items are needed!

Contact Diane at [dellis@communityprep.org](mailto:dellis@communityprep.org) or 401-521-9697 ext 3.

# Solar Savings at Community Preparatory School

**Community Prep started the school year under solar power** from its new 46 kilowatt photovoltaic panels. The 182 panels generate 52,000kwh/year--enough to power 10 homes! Electricity generated when school is not open is sold back into the grid, generating income for Community Prep as well. The school's solar program is thanks to Julian Dash '92, who is the managing partner of Clean Energy Directors, LLC, which designs and implements solar systems for schools, organizations and municipalities.

His company organized \$225K in funding, which enabled the school to get a highly insulated new roof, the solar panels, ongoing monitoring of the system, and an educational program for the school. Students will build a car that runs on solar power and compete in the Solar Car Challenge. In addition, Julian donated the \$25K that would have been his commission. And, the energy savings is enough to completely cover a student's tuition each year.

Julian is not only an alum, he serves on the Board of Trustees and is Dad to Jaiden '20 (see picture at right). "Without the education I got at CP," says Julian, "I would not be able to do any of this. I learned about service at Community Prep and the lesson has stayed with me."

Check out a video of the solar panel installation and see real-time statistics of how much energy they are producing at [www. communityprep.org](http://www.communityprep.org).



Jaiden Dash '20 is the only student allowed on the roof, and only when his dad brings him. "It was a little scary because it was really high. I liked seeing the panel showing how much energy is being generated."

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