

**GREENCASTLE
COMMUNITY SCHOOL
CORPORATION**

Partnering for EXCELLENCE

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*This is the second
of a series of
four articles to
be published in
2016 that feature
Greencastle
Community School
Corporation.*



Greencastle Community School Corporation (GCSC) is located in a small town where the challenges of providing the highest quality education to our students are embraced by the entire community. “Knowing our followers” allows our school district to work side by side with partners who support the vision of our district and are eager to engage in the education of our youth. In this, the second article in our series of 2016, I am proud to highlight the community partnerships our school district and community members have that provide unique and enriching learning opportunities for our students.

A significant community resource in Greencastle is DePauw University. In 2011, the City of Greencastle and DePauw collaborated to secure the distinguished Stellar Communities Grant, resulting in the revitalization of the local downtown as well as the beautification of the entrance to the university. This successful partnership between the university and the city typifies the relationship between the university and the community – especially Greencastle Community Schools. Joint programs in music, art, project-based learning, and mentoring have been established exposing GCSC student to the resources DePauw’s faculty and students have to offer.

Music education is highly valued at GCSC and our relationship with DePauw University’s School of Music brings both cultural experiences and advanced opportunities for instrumental instruction and performance. For example, each year, the four high school bands from across Putnam County are invited to a full day of musical rehearsal in DePauw’s premiere performing arts center with a guest conductor. The culmination of the day’s rehearsal is a concert of the combined bands, featuring solo performances from outstanding individual student musicians.

Another component of music education that is provided through the partnership with the School of Music is the Greencastle Middle School (GMS) Jazz band. DePauw students, in cooperation with university professors and the GMS Band Director, meet weekly with students before school to conduct a middle school jazz band. The Jazz Band then performs at school concerts and at the DePauw University concerts as well. GMS Band Director, Kathryn Dory, praises the program, “The GMS Jazz Band gives the students exposure to solid jazz basics (blues, jazz, funk, swing and improvisation), and it also gives the DePauw

Jazz Musician Tad Robinson works with Greencastle Middle School students to write Blues songs to reflect the themes of the writing of Mark Twain.

Photo Courtesy of Banner Graphic



Fourth grade students from Tzouanakis Intermediate prepare to perform their first concert of the year for a full auditorium of community attendees at the DePauw University School of Music's Holiday Gala.

students an opportunity to teach and mentor middle school students. Begun three years ago, this program is thriving and is a definite win-win scenario!”

The newest musical offering at GCSC is the *Strings Program* which is the brainchild of DePauw University School Music Department Chair, Mark McCoy. Dr. McCoy, through the acquisition of grants, has collaborated with Tzouanakis Intermediate School Principal Jon Strube and Music Teacher Carrie Hamilton, to add violin instruction for all fourth grade students. The violins have been provided free of charge and the instruction is provided by visiting artists Shannon Crow and Ed Stauback. Each fourth grade student receives ten days of instruction as part of the school’s music classes, and then has the opportunity to continue with after-school lessons offered weekly – again free of charge. “We are thrilled to be partnering with Greencastle public schools in yet another innovative way,” Dean McCoy said. “Music is such a vital part of young people’s lives, and this will make it possible for fourth-graders in Greencastle to learn the joy of making

their own music.” In addition, students throughout the entire county are welcome to receive either vocal or instrumental lessons from DePauw University music students. The classes are offered at Music on the Square – a venue in downtown Greencastle funded by the DePauw School of Music’s 21st Century Musician program which is dedicated to community music making.

Yet another opportunity in the arts for Greencastle students is provided through *Shakespeare in the Schools* – a DePauw University Communication and Theatre course. DePauw students direct plays that feature the performances of students in grades eight through twelve. Students and staff from DePauw University work with students after school at GHS and GMS three times a week for ten weeks. Mrs. Alisa Isaacs serves as the school district’s supervisor for the program and recognizes the impact the program may have on students. “The Shakespeare program allows Greencastle students to read, speak, and hear Shakespeare for six hours or more every week. Not only that, but in the process of working as a

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team to create a show, our students also spend time with college students who care about Shakespeare, education, and young people. It is truly inspiring to be a part of it.”

The Castle program is a grant-supported community program that exists to support curricular opportunities in schools by integrating the arts with project-based learning. The program is led by professional educators who partner with the teachers at Greencastle Middle School to develop innovative workshops that support the curriculum and provide authentic learning experiences for students. Volunteers from the community bring their expertise to the classroom and work with students to encourage creative expression while focusing on the rigors of the required Indiana Academic Standards. The creative partners include various local artists such as Tad Robinson, a musician whose accolades include eight nominations for Blue Music Awards since 2005. Robinson led students in seventh grade language arts classes through the process of writing blues songs with a focus on poetry forms and the writing of Mark Twain. Another source of visiting talent for the workshops is DePauw University. Professors and students are often found in the classrooms of GMS providing instruction in topics such as Forms of Governments and Economies, Utopian and Dystopian Societies, Artistic Approach to Natural Disasters, and Chromatography and Archeology.

Sixth grade language arts teacher, Denise Meyer values the opportunities that *The Castle* program brings to her classroom. “The Castle program has offered excellent extension and unit enhancements for our sixth grade students. One example is

from an English/Language Arts workshop on social equality. Students analyzed music from the 1960s containing a social message that complimented a novel by Christopher Paul Curtis that students were reading in class. Students examined lyrics of music performed by Joan Baez, Peter, Paul, and Mary, Sam Cooke, and Pete Seeger and found the message behind the lyrics and discussed the potential impact the message had on the civil rights movement. Extending it one step further, students were encouraged to think of contemporary artists and the message behind their lyrics. This created a bridge between generations that allowed students to connect to part of our country’s past. Without the thoughtfully constructed lesson by Chris Wurster and Castle coordinators, that lesson, and others equally as well done, wouldn’t have made it into my classroom.”

A strong community partnership with organizers of the *Transferring a Little Knowledge Systemically Program* (TALKS) provides mentoring to students at both Greencastle Middle School and Greencastle High School. TALKS pairs community mentors with students who are potentially at-risk either socially or scholastically. The program is organized through a local church as part of the Transformers Program which strives to connect community leaders and members to develop a stronger community. TALKS first began working with students at GMS and grew as those students participating moved on to GHS. Now mentors for TALKS work with freshmen as a key component of the curriculum in our Connections program which targets at-risk students to provide academic, social, and emotional support for success. GHS Connections teacher, Lori Hile, views the TALKS program as a “positive, non-threatening (grades, discipline) interaction with a positive role model that students might not necessarily get from teachers. While we (teachers) aren’t privy to their discussions, most of the students have positive reactions and comments about their experiences with their mentors.”

Other mentors for Greencastle students come through DePauw University student programs. The Student Friends

Students from Greencastle Middle School bring to life the characters of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night under the direction of DePauw University students from the drama department.





Dr. Dave Roberts, professor of chemistry and biochemistry for DePauw University, works with the Tzouanakis Intermediate Science Team which won their state competition this year.

Program matches a GCSC student with a DePauw student who serves as a role model for targeted youth beginning as early as the primary grades and extending through high school. In addition, Spanish Enrichment Programs at the primary grades provide language acquisition activities while supporting the general learning elementary curriculum. The DePauw Football team participates annually in the elementary school's Winter Carnival and sororities and fraternities volunteer regularly at events such as the GMS Literacy Night.

The support that our school district receives from the community is not limited to student programming by any means. Each year for the past three years, the businesses and community partners in Greencastle have supported a week-long celebration of the work our staff does at Greencastle Schools. The Annual Staff Appreciation Week features business marques around town thanking staff for their contributions to the success of our students. Businesses donate thousands of dollars to be used for prizes and awards.

Every staff member – teacher, instructional assistant, cafeteria worker, transportation employee, custodial worker, administrator, secretary, nurse and central office employee—is recognized and treated to breakfast, lunch, gift certificates, and a week-long celebration that culminates with a full staff party where more than a hundred gifts are awarded by random drawing. The generosity of the community and businesses represents the positive attitude and grateful spirit of our stakeholders for the hard work, compassion, and energy of our entire staff.

Operating in the small town of Greencastle not only requires that we “know our followers”, but also that we work closely with our local partners in education and business to best serve our students. We are truly blessed and grateful for the support GCSC receives from DePauw University and our community and business partners. That support helps make Greencastle a great place to raise a family and is another factor in making GCSC an excellent school corporation. 🎓