

New Patrons for the Arts at GTSS

This spring's *Lasting Legacy Award* dinner drew 320 and grossed \$225,000 for the *Stephen and Julia Harmelin Fund for the Arts and Creative Expression*

Hundreds of business leaders, friends, and several television personalities came to the Union League on June 5th to honor Steve Harmelin and support the *Lasting Legacy Award* dinner. However, the biggest star of the night may have been **Green Tree School & Services (GTSS)** student Dacia Clark-Nedd, whose killer version of John Legend's number one hit, "All of Me," left most of the audience dabbing their eyes (and her first fan letter arrived at **GTSS** soon after).

The *Lasting Legacy Award* honors individuals who have been champions for initiatives and issues that transform Philadelphia and have a lasting impact on its citizens. This year's award was given to Steve Harmelin, whose character and accomplishments are described in a tribute video available on the **GTSS** website and YouTube channel. A video of Dacia's performance is also available.

Speakers at the dinner included 6abc reporter Shirleen Allicot; CBS News correspondent and Steve's daughter, Alison Harmelin; Joseph Neubauer; the First Lady of Pennsylvania, Susan Corbett; **GTSS** CEO Patricia Wellenbach; and Steve Harmelin. The 320 guests at the inaugural award dinner, and other friends, gave \$225,000 in support of Steve and to establish the *Stephen and Julia Harmelin Fund for the Arts and Creative Expression*. This fund will ensure that future generations



Stephen Harmelin, left, congratulated Dacia, a student in the GTSS AS program, and her proud parents, after Dacia's powerful performance of John Legend's "All of Me" at the Lasting Legacy Award dinner.

of students like Dacia will have the tools to develop their inner artists.

There are many benefits to arts education at **GTSS**. However, Steve Harmelin may have said it best during his acceptance speech. "If the exposure to one painting, if attendance at one musical or theatrical performance, if one melody made possible by your generosity, brings joy to these young warriors, then your sacrifice of time and money will be more than worth it."

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—Steve Harmelin

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Who Wants to Build a Playground?

Support from Amerihealth Caritas Partnership, Keystone First, and Midlantic Color Graphics, together with dozens of volunteers, constructed a playground in May



*Mikey got to test out the slide at the new playground on the **GTSS** campus. Thanks to support from generous donors and dozens of volunteers, students at **GTSS** were able to enjoy the physical, social, and health benefits of playgrounds when they returned to school this fall.*

When students at **GTSS's** school returned this fall, there was an exciting feature on their campus: a brand new playground! Amerihealth Caritas Partnership, Keystone First, and Midlantic Color Graphics sponsored the construction of the playground, which was completed on Thursday, May 15th. Volunteers from all three organizations, **GTSS**, and the local community were on-hand for a ribbon-cutting, and students got to test out the new equipment. Students like Mikey were quick to explore the playground's slides, swings, climbing structures, and rock wall. It was clear from their shouts of joy that the equipment met their approval.

This was the 12th playground built by Keystone First in Philadelphia since 2007. AmeriHealth Caritas Partnership took Keystone First's Safe Playground Build program national in 2011, and has since built similar playgrounds in Indiana, Louisiana, New Jersey and South Carolina.

At **GTSS's** school, a playground is not just a place of recreation, but is

often an avenue for teaching and practicing coping strategies and critical social interaction skills. Thanks to the support of playground sponsors, **GTSS** students are able to enjoy the same physical, social, and health benefits as their peers. Students also have access to an outdoor basketball court and gymnasium, and attend regular Physical Education class.

Physical exercise has special benefits for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, particularly autism. Children on the spectrum are more likely to be overweight, and may have difficulty with communication skills or behavior. Increased exercise has been shown to improve children's health and quality of life, and to decrease the frequency of negative behaviors. Studies have even shown that exercise can help improve focus and short-term memory in individual learners. Working together, **GTSS** and supporting partners will help provide children with special needs and abilities with the tools they need to achieve their full potential.

I Just Want to Bang on the Drum All Day

Musicopia and GTSS's music therapist led 20 GTSS students in a bucket drumming lesson and performance



(L-R) Robert, Steven, Lyle, Tyjon, and Vernon prepare for a lesson in five-gallon drumming, with Musicopia artist Leon Jordan, at right.

Green Tree School & Services students drummed on five-gallon buckets and played both well-known songs and made-up rhythms, during a *Musicopia* performance held on May 8, 2014. Family members, staff and other students gathered in the **GTSS** gymnasium for a toe-tapping performance which featured group and individual bucket drumming as part of a musical residency program.

Led by *Musicopia*'s Leon Jordan, who spearheads the Bucket Drumming Residency, over 20 students from **GTSS**'s Autism Spectrum program, Upper School and Lower School played together and took turns playing solos for an enthusiastic and engaged audience. **GTSS** students were accompanied by a bass guitarist, saxophonist, trumpeter, and drummer from *Musicopia*.

The Bucket Drumming Residency aims to help students, expand their musical knowledge and increase confidence. Educational, exciting and highly interactive, Leon Jordan's program teaches participants principles such as rhythm, meter, dynamics, and technique. Drummers are also introduced to more advanced concepts such as polyrhythms, division of meter and beat sub-division. *Musicopia*, whose mission is to bring a vibrant combination of music performance and education to students and communities throughout the Delaware Valley, has been offering programs at **GTSS** for the past four years.

Have You Been to GTSS?

Come visit the first Wednesday of the month starting November 5th, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.! Call ahead to Simon Kaufman, director of development, at extension 222.

By the Numbers

209 This summer, staff from Behavioral Health served 167 children and 42 students attended an extended school year at the APS.

35 The number of **GTSS** students who need unpaid work experience to prepare them for independent living - call Sarah Geary, transition coordinator, at extension 391 for more information.

30% The increase in the diagnosis of autism in the United States in the last two years.



Jamall shares a moment with graduation speaker and PA State Representative Cherelle Parker. Jamall was one of five students to graduate from **GTSS**'s APS in 2014.

321 Our United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey number is #321.

Good Hoops!

GTSS Cougars win Alternative Basketball League tournament



(L-R) Shadean, Coach Kelvin, Cean, Quadir, Roland, Coach Trish, Eric, and Steven display their championship trophies.

GTSS joined six other schools to create the Alternative Basketball League last school year. Teams played each other weekly, and four of the teams culminated their season with a double elimination tournament at GTSS's new gym! Three hard fought games later, the GTSS Cougars emerged victorious! Participation on the basketball team is dependent on classroom behavior and grades, so this is a special accomplishment for students in the GTSS Emotional Support program.

ESY Fun!

Bowling, swimming, traveling – new experiences during Extended School Year



Kathy from the AS program jumped right in to the engineer's cab during a summer field trip to The Franklin Institute.

Research has shown that most students lose about two months of math skills over the summer. Parents often struggle to find and pay for enrichment activities to keep children engaged. That's why the Extended School Year at GTSS is so important. Students maintained healthy minds and bodies with activities ranging from swimming to bowling, and full classroom lessons. A visitor over the summer may have seen students doing a dragon dance to learn about Chinese New Year, taking a "projector safari," watching a traveling show by The Franklin Institute, or just playing outside. Autistic students took weekly outings to local stores and restaurants to practice social interactions. Donors to GTSS help students grow all year long.

Dear Friends of **Green Tree School & Services**,

Welcome to the 2014-2015 school year!

Whether helping children experience camp through our behavioral health department, running an extended school year program, or maintaining an outpatient clinic for children whose emotional needs do not take a summer break — GTSS fulfills its mission all year long. We have also been planning for the upcoming year, the first full year in our new building!



Patricia Wellenbach
Chief Executive Officer



Julie Alleman
Chief Operating Officer

Highlights for the upcoming year include:

- Welcoming 12 new members of our educational staff in our school
- Measuring progress in academic, social, emotional, vocational, and activities of daily living standards in all operational divisions
- Implementing a new curriculum aligned with common core standards in the Emotional Support program
- Implementing *Response to Intervention*, a program to offer intensive reading and math services for students who are two levels or more below grade level
- A new vocational and transition program in the Autistic Support program
- Opening outpatient services to children in the community
- Implementing a hybrid of our successful Student Achievement Model in the Behavioral Health STS program
- The Anchor Program at the William Penn School District is expanding to include Penn Wood middle school
- Green Tree Partnerships will provide professional development to West Oak Lane Charter School teachers and offer an educational series for the school's special education parent population

This will be an exciting year for the board, staff, students, and supporters of **Green Tree School & Services**. Thank you for being a part of it!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Patricia Wellenbach".

Patricia Wellenbach
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Julie Alleman".

Julie Alleman
Chief Operating Officer