

Where Are They Now? CIS Chatham Nurtures Growth

By Sarah Cooley

Communities In Schools Chatham County (CIS CC, and formerly Chatham County Together!) has been serving at-risk youth in Chatham County since 1989. Over the years, programs have evolved, new programs have been added, programs' names have been changed, and some programs have even been moved to other local agencies to oversee. What has stayed consistent is CIS CC's commitment to support Chatham County's youth. To achieve our mission—to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life—everything Communities In Schools does is guided by the following five essentials: A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start and a healthy future, a marketable skill to use upon graduation, and a chance to give back. Meet two remarkable individuals whose involvement with CIS CC has been very different—one a volunteer and one a program participant—but who both embody the spirit CIS CC works to promote.

Bieisy didn't speak English when she started the pre-K Head Start program in Siler City, but she was making almost all A's in her eighth-grade year at Chatham Middle School. Bieisy was one of a hand-picked group of students chosen to participate in Jordan-Matthews High School's AVID (Advancing Via Individual Determination) program. In high school, Bieisy took Advanced Placement Spanish, multiple honors' classes, and volunteered for CIS CC's Teen Court program. As a Teen Court volunteer, Bieisy served the roles of jury member, clerk of court, and she was in the process of being trained as an attorney. In addition to volunteering with CIS CC's Teen Court program for several years in high school, Bieisy also volunteered with Chatham Area Network for Therapeutic Riding (CAN-TR). She graduated from Jordan-Matthews in 2014 and started college at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

Due to some unexpected circumstances, Bieisy had to take time off from school at UNC-Pembroke and ended up back in Siler City for

Juke! Jive! Jazz for the Kids!

CIS Chatham's spring "Tapas" event — Juke! Jive! Jazz for the Kids! — represents its primary source of community support. Support that encourages kids like Bieisy and Jordan to stay in school and achieve in life. This year's **April 15** event is at the Agricultural Conference Center in Pittsboro. Catered locally by Angelina's and 39 West, it will include a silent auction, 50/50 raffle for a chance to win \$2,000 (only 100 tickets sold), and local music by the Onyx Club Boys, renown from Bynum to Bear Creek and beyond, featuring swing and gypsy jazz. Please join us at Juke, Jive & Jazz for the Kids. Sponsorship, event and raffle ticket sales, and additional details can be found at CIS Chatham's website www.cisatham.org

a while. Not one to sit idle, Bieisy returned to volunteer with CIS CC, this time with the Hablando Claro, or "Plain Talk" Program. She first came with a friend and saw that there were often young children present who needed supervision and engagement. Bieisy did a good job with the children and was asked to "officially" help with the kids each time the Hablando Claro program met. In the summer of 2016, CIS CC's Family Advocacy Program needed a part-time assistant. Bieisy had a good track record from helping with the children and was hired to work five hours a week assisting with paperwork and filing. She did this for one year.

What is Bieisy doing now? She is in her last semester at Randolph Community College where she'll be graduating in May of this year with a Human Services Technology Associate in Applied Science Degree and a Human Services Technology Substance Abuse Certificate. Oh, and she works full time with CIS CC as the Program Assistant for three programs: Community Service & Restitution, Family Advocacy, and Teen Court. When asked where she saw herself in five years, she said she wants to



pursue her Bachelor's Degree and eventually study Social Work.

Jordan, also a graduate of Jordan-Matthews High School, said that his family has been helped by CIS CC as long as he can remember. CIS CC secured school

supplies for Jordan and his two sisters, as well funding for all three children to attend summer camp, through the Send a Kid to Camp program of the Triangle Community Foundation. Both sisters had CIS CC mentors, and Jordan participated in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) when it was one of CIS CC's programs.

Jordan said that his grades in high school weren't very good and his options for college were limited. The WIA program provided opportunities for Jordan and other youth to prepare for and advance their education and careers. Jordan learned a lot of work-related skills and also skills he could use in real life such as how to bank and manage money. He was exposed to occupational skills training and employment services information through workshops and seminars. Travis Patterson, the WIA Program Manager at the time, was a mentor to Jordan. Travis assisted Jordan

in enrolling in Central Carolina Community College where Jordan earned his Associate in Arts Degree. Jordan said being part of the WIA program delivered the motivation he needed that ultimately led him to going on to college and choosing a career field in helping others as others had helped him.

What is Jordan doing now? He transferred to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is in his second semester where he is studying Elementary Education. He wants to teach Kindergarten through Second grade. Jordan also works while being a full-time student. He commutes to Greensboro three times a week, and back home in Siler City he works as an assistant manager at Wendy's.

Kim Caraganis, ED says of Bieisy and Jordan, I can't think of two better examples of advancing via individual determination! Bieisy says that ever since she was young she has wanted to help others because she wants to return the favor that other people have given her. Likewise, Jordan is excited about his future as a teacher. He looks forward to molding young people in positive ways.

Sarah Cooley is a staff member at CIS Chatham County.

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