



Amaya during CIS Think Summer showing her painting

#### DID YOU KNOW?

This summer, we moved into new office space. Particularly exciting is the opportunity to share space with The Kalamazoo Promise and continue collaborating and providing student supports in one central location. The new space incorporates comfortable spaces for students to meet, study, and engage with their peers. Ultimately, it's a safe space for young adults to decompress and maintain their focus.

CIS QUARTERLY - 07/2021

## Reflection on Partnership

with Von Washington Jr., Executive Director of Community Relations for The Kalamazoo Promise

*Since the 2006 inception of The Kalamazoo Promise, the Promise and Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo have worked in close partnership with the community to support Kalamazoo Public Schools students. We sat down with Von Washington, Jr. to talk about the partnership.*

**It feels like our missions work beautifully together. We are both about the business of breaking down barriers so our kids can realize their full potential. The Kalamazoo Promise helps remove the barriers of the cost of education. Communities In Schools helps overcome the barriers that derail kids, giving them hope and the belief they can succeed in school, graduate and be prepared for life.**

Our missions go hand-in-hand. When you are a high school principal, you have so many challenges in front of you each and every day. The number one focus is on the students and their experiences. And when you have interested and hard-working individuals like CIS in your building that you can turn to, to share that focus on the student and connect them to resources and experiences they would otherwise not receive, well, it's tantamount to their success.

Students come to you as a principal and say, "Hey, listen to me." Or, "I don't have a backpack." Or, "I don't have a meal." You try and point them in the various directions they need to go but when you have CIS in your school, you can point them to CIS and they will be with them side-by-side, helping them get where they need to go. This is monumental. It then helps students become positioned

to take advantage of the Promise scholarship.

Students can't have a shaky foundation and expect the scholarship to shore up all areas of their life. We need CIS to continue connecting students to those much-needed resources. We need the the community to keep choosing to work, volunteer, and partner with CIS to help fill those gaps and meet students where they are.

**A lot of things go into creating and nurturing a strong and enduring partnership. What, from your perspective, are two necessary ingredients to assuring a successful partnership?**

A vision and mission that has the same outcome in mind is just huge in a partnership. And if we asked anyone who works for CIS, and conversely, anyone who works for The Kalamazoo Promise, everyone would say that student success is the outcome we are all after.

Another necessary ingredient in partnerships is that you have to have strong leadership. And I am not just talking about that kind of leadership that is at the top. To be successful, that leadership is needed from every individual in the organization. Everyone must lead where they are. Both CIS and the Promise have done a wonderful job of making sure those leaders are at every level.

(continue on inside)

### News and CIS of Kalamazoo Updates

- The new school year starts August 30! We are excited to welcome students back into the classroom!
- We are participating in the Bike Friendly Kalamazoo Fall Bike Celebration on September 18th. Visit [www.fallbikecelebration.org](http://www.fallbikecelebration.org) to sign up to ride for CIS!
- See inside for participation information to join our Walking With Purpose event and fundraiser. Join today as a team captain. Participation starts in October!
- Save the date for the 2021 Ugly Sweater Party: Wednesday, December 8th.



## LIAM DONIAZ

6th grader – Linden Grove Middle School  
(rising student from Northglade Elementary)

- 1. What is your favorite part of school?** Math is my favorite part and I'm really good at it. Right now, I am learning about radius and diameters and formulas. I want to be a contractor. I like math and building Lego sets. I am working on collecting Minecraft sets to build a Minecraft world. Another favorite part of school is how nice the teachers are. I have always had the best teachers. Lucky for me! My favorite was Ms. Angela Smith, who I had for first through third grade. She was funny.
- 2. How would you describe your site coordinator/coach in one word?** My Think Summer coach, M. Alinah; NICE! She is always so calm and nice.
- 3. Is this your first year attending CIS Think Summer, or how many years have you joined?** The first time at the Think Summer program. The assistant of Ms. Smith recommended the program and I'm really enjoying it!
- 4. What are you most excited about when coming to the CIS Think Summer program?** All the arts and crafts. It is a very active program [Liam just came from enrichment with Guess Who's Dancing?] Also, breakfast. At home I eat cereal, but here [there] are a wide variety of breakfast foods.



## SAFNA RAMIREZ

5th grader – Washington Writers' Academy

- 1. What is your favorite part of school?** Playing soccer at school. I love that sport.
- 2. How would you describe your site coordinator/coach in one word?** CIS After-school Coordinator, Ms. Jenee McDaniel; FUN!
- 3. Is this your first year attending Think Summer, or how many years have you joined?** I have been in Think Summer since first grade. The days go by so fast here.
- 4. What are you most excited about when coming to the CIS Think Summer program?** To see my friends and meet new friends from other schools. I love this school!

# Thank you

CIS Think Summer is designed to reduce summer learning loss and increase academic and enrichment opportunities for Kalamazoo Public Schools students. We are grateful for those who joined our team to share their knowledge and expertise with our students. Thank you for joining our staff to provide engaging opportunities and introducing students to diverse professionals in our community!

For a full list of our guest presenters, please visit our recent blog post on [ciskalamazoo.org](http://ciskalamazoo.org).

The CIS Think Summer and After School program is supported by the Michigan Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers).



Photos left to right: Tiffany Burns, owner of Smile Savers Mobile Dental Service during the career fair, Laura Lafond and Kathryn Thamann, from Kalsec engaging with high school students, and Andrea Page, a KVCC MA instructor speaking with middle school students.

Each mile has meaning: we walk in honor of students who are working toward a brighter future.

Do you want to join us in Walking With Purpose? We are excited to launch a new fundraising initiative challenging ourselves and our community to walk a total of 12,000 miles to raise both awareness and funds for our work.

We are looking for 40 or more teams to help us reach our goals! This fun event takes place during the full month of October.

Sign up is simple. Visit our event page: [ciskalamazoo.org/walking-with-purpose](http://ciskalamazoo.org/walking-with-purpose) to join as a team captain, walk with purpose, or sponsor somebody's miles.

# Walking With Purpose

# Reflection on Partnership

CONTINUED

**The word “synergy” comes to mind when reflecting on the CIS/ Kalamazoo Promise partnership. By cooperating and working together on behalf of our kids—and getting the community to join us in these efforts—we produce a combined effect greater than the sum of our separate effects. What word or phrase comes to mind when you think about the partnership?**

“Team.” Teamwork is essential to get things done. When you are a member of a team, you know that sacrifice is going to have to take place to make the machine work. There are many times we get into collaborative partnerships where sacrifice is not an acceptable thing for those at the table. But something has to give in order to make the right decisions for the people we are serving.

Sacrifice doesn’t have to be a major sacrifice. You don’t need to give your right arm or write a huge check—though that is appreciated. It’s the small things that carry partnerships through, like opening the door when someone has papers in their hands.

**Eight years ago, in reflecting on The Kalamazoo Promise and the anonymous donors, you said that it’s not only important that students have an understanding at an early age about the Promise scholarship itself, but that they also have an awareness that “some people I don’t even know have invested in me.”**

I still believe there is a strong message in the fact that the donors are anonymous. There is power in knowing someone has invested in me. Someone is giving this gift to them while not asking for anything in return, but only to perform to the best of their ability in their academic endeavors so they can leverage the scholarship to follow the path that they chose, and to then lift up another on the way.

**Since the inception of The Kalamazoo Promise, it’s a bit mind blowing to think of all the people, the higher education institutions, businesses, faith-based and community organizations, who have given of their time, talents, and financial support to CIS as a way to lift up The Promise. Every day, their generosity helps students overcome barriers that stand in the way of their path to their promise, to The Kalamazoo Promise.**

Most definitely!

**Anything else you want folks to know?**

We’re very excited for the school year and to have students come to the new space, if merely to study after school, take advantage of the computer lab, tutoring services, be a part of The Promise Podcast, or just read a book, and socialize with friends.

Discover more from our conversation on the CIS blog at [ciskalamazoo.org](http://ciskalamazoo.org).

## STUDENT REFLECTION AND ANTICIPATION

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and conditions created by virtual schooling, CIS of Kalamazoo focused on the whole child to ensure that students had an opportunity to self-report on their wellbeing.

To learn more from students and families and to see how they are during virtual schooling, we asked them a range of questions. Here are some of their responses.

**What do you miss the most about school?**

“Mostly I miss my friends. Also, I miss hearing people laugh, whether it’s teachers talking to students or students goofing around with each other.”

“I miss the sense of community. I’m a very social person.”

**What do you think is most important for people to understand about virtual schooling?**

“You can’t expect us to learn and understand everything in virtual school. We had to learn to something that we never did before. We changed from seeing our friends every day at school to only seeing them online.”

“Some of us are having a hard time coping with all the stuff that we can no longer do. I’m looking forward to getting back to normal school and seeing and doing all the stuff that you’re supposed to do in school. Like going to games and hanging out.”

Excerpts were taken from *CIS100 stories project*. *CIS 100 stories* project included virtual interviews and informal conversations with students, caregivers, and other community members during the 2020-21 school year. The process was completed by Dr. Oliver, Senior Director of Quality & Evaluation.

## PARTNER SUPPORT

### Prepare Students “Beyond the Backpack”

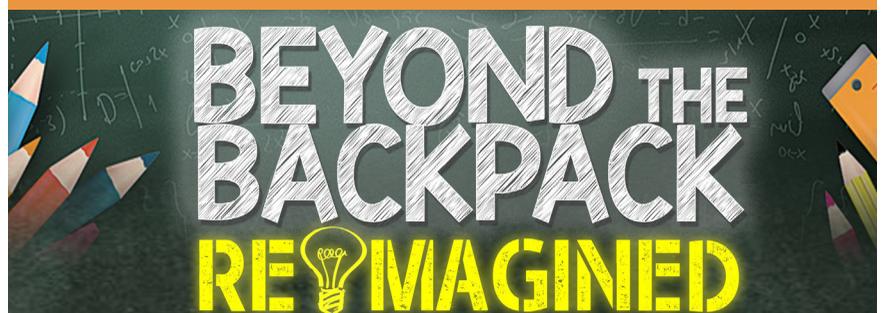
This year marks the second annual Beyond the Backpack event, hosted by Collaboration Kalamazoo. The event’s purpose is to simplify access to preparation services for children and their families as they gear up to return to school from summer recess. Collaboration Kalamazoo inspires and activates community togetherness by coordinating essential need services like medical, dental, mental health, and youth and family-centered services to K-12 students and their families from organizations diversely located around Kalamazoo into one central location.

The event this year is designed as a drive-thru/walk-thru on August 21st from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Hillside Middle School. Available to KPS students and families; please share with those who may be interested in visiting.

We are thrilled to be a part of the collaboration with other Kalamazoo organizations to host this amazing event. Thank you to the collaborators and this year’s sponsors!

This year’s collaborators are: Bible Baptist Church of Kalamazoo, The Kalamazoo Promise, Read and Write Kalamazoo, Charlie’s Place, Kalamazoo Public Schools, YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, and Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo

This year’s sponsors include: Kalamazoo Community Foundation, The Kalamazoo Promise, YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, and Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo.



## A message from our executive director

If you've ever planned a vacation, you likely understand the feeling that I am about to describe. In the early days of planning, the trip is so far away that time seems to move at a snail's pace. It feels like the day will never come. But strangely, even if the trip was planned a year in advance, the final days leading up to the trip seem like a mad dash. By the time the vacation starts, you have worked so hard to get ready that you are sapped of all strength and energy. You are exhausted—but still want to go on your trip. As the journey begins and you get closer to your destination, a second wind kicks in, causing you to forget about how hard you worked to get to "travel day," and you become energized again knowing that you will have new experiences and memories, even if you've visited that particular place before.

What I've just described is a perfect metaphor of what we are experiencing now at Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS). For approximately 18 months we've been longing for the day for our schools to open up, to see our students and colleagues again, and to begin our journey of learning, growth, and empowerment in the same spaces—buildings, rooms and playgrounds—that our students occupy. As slowly as time passed during the pause, the pace now seems to be accelerating each day as we move closer to the start of the school year. CIS and our partners are busy working to provide an awesome, welcoming, and nurturing environment for our students to help them reconnect, reengage and reach new heights. We may indeed find ourselves tapped out getting ready for the start of school. But as soon as we see the students on the first day of school, we too will be energized by the opportunity to have new experiences and the memories we will create with our students. It's going to be an awesome year!

James Devers, Executive Director



### VOLUNTEER

Change a child's life,  
and yours as well!



### DONATE

Invest in the future of our community.  
\$1,500 supports a student for a year.

If you believe in our efforts to ensure that ALL kids stay in school and achieve in life, please visit [www.ciskalamazoo.org](http://www.ciskalamazoo.org) or call 269.337.1601 for more details on getting involved with CIS.

The work of Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo is supported by the Kalamazoo Public Schools, the City of Kalamazoo, the Michigan Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers), local foundations, and donors like you.

Photos in this newsletter were taken by contributing CIS staff, unless otherwise noted.

