

Connecting the dots in the community

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER | 2020 | WINTER EDITION



2020: A YEAR END REVIEW

Because of you, we are happy to celebrate another year of fantastic work with the community! We are grateful to all of the students, parents, activists, and stakeholders we were able to collaborate with.

This year, we expanded the services that we offered in the areas of college prep and education advocacy by engaging in additional projects as a partner with **In School Spirit, LLC**.

Our partnership with In School Spirit, LLC allows us to conduct crucial survey research with key demographic populations in the city of Decatur and beyond. These surveys provide essential data about the current barriers to empowerment that communities across Georgia face; using our surveys, we can also collect the invaluable feedback of program participants. It is this community feedback that helps us design quality programs that better nurture the positive development of our communities.

College Prep & Connect Clinic served the community in various ways this year, although it was initially challenging to decide how best to serve students and parents in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through continuous, strategic planning, however, we were able to secure multiple partnership opportunities with both outstanding individuals and nonprofit organizations. These invaluable partnerships include: the **Lillie's Foundation**, led by Jason Allen; GeorgiaCAN's **Steven Quinn**, as well as **Dekalb County's Police Athletic League**.

Thank you all for helping us grow, learn, and serve the community this year. We are excited to continue improving our organization's outreach efforts. We look forward to sharing our data report and 2020 findings with you all in the upcoming issue.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**2020: A Year End
Review**
p. 1

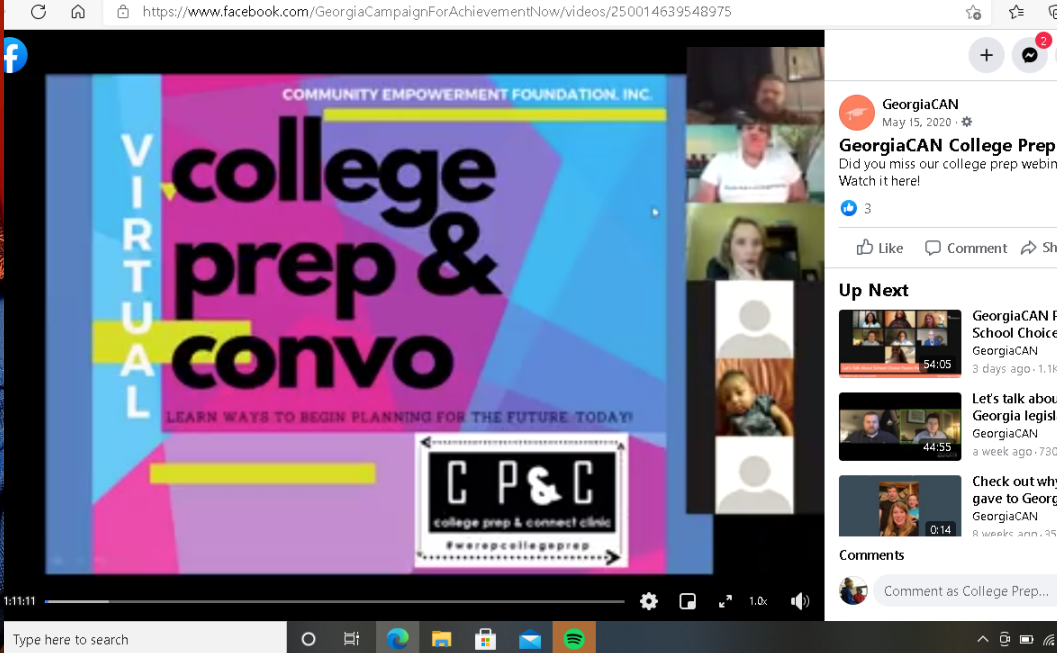
**College Prep
& Connect Clinic**
p. 2

**Education Advocacy
Awareness Month**
p. 3



"To create change, one must understand that change teaches us that we don't have to be perfect, just prepared and willing to evolve."

- Danielle A. Stewart, Ed.D.,
Founder



COLLEGE PREP & CONNECT CLINIC

College Prep & Connect Clinic commemorated its fourth year in 2020 by providing parents and students with college prep resources and advice. During the spring of 2020, **GeorgiaCAN** invited College Prep & Connect Clinic to host their first virtual workshop for parents of middle-school-aged and high-school-aged children. **Thirty-three parents** attended our first virtual meeting with GeorgiaCAN. At this event, our team introduced parents to multiple tools and resources to help them begin the college prep process for the upcoming school year.

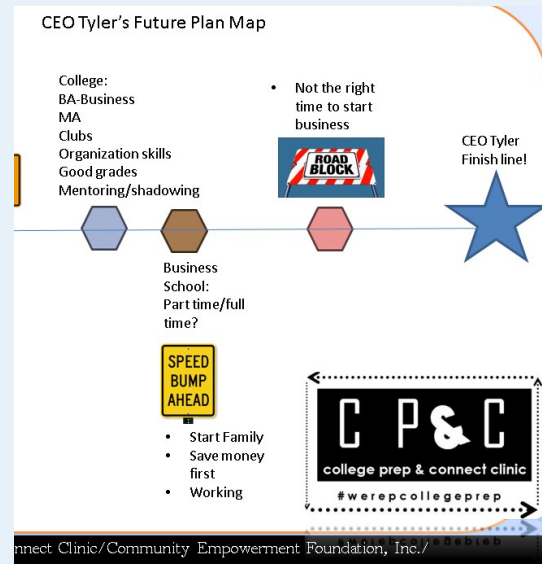
Samantha Dutto, a Community Empowerment board member provided insight on how parents and students can save money and prepare other financial plans for college. **Noelle Carson**, an independent, virtual school counselor, advised parents on how they and their children can connect with guidance counselors both virtually and in person. Lastly, **Candice Wilson-McCain**, another board member and the founder of **Fly Girls Math**, shared her experiences as a mother and as a professional education advocate. Wilson-McCain importantly counseled parents on how to start preparing middle-school-aged children for college prep.

During the summer of 2020, College Prep & Connect Clinic donated **8 weeks** of virtual workshop sessions to campers at **DeKalb County's Police Athletic League**. We worked with anywhere between 5-8 campers per session, twice a week. Students were between ages 8 and 16. Our team helped youth design a roadmap for their futures which included steps from elementary to adulthood and what goals they wanted to achieve. At the end, students were presented with an electronic copy of their road maps.

Our intern, the future **Dr. Stephenson-Frazier** administered virtual college tours to campers and additionally shared her personal experiences on how to save money for college. Dr. Stephenson-Frazier also instructed campers on how to make wise college decisions and get the most out of college opportunities by knowing their options. At the end of the program, we provided youth with a detailed copy of the roadmap we helped them build throughout the summer. The roadmap included all of the steps youth should take to achieve their long-term goals, depicting specific milestones and potential detours that could take place during future summers and throughout high school.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change the landscape in which students learn, we look forward to continuing our partnering with the DeKalb County Police Athletic League throughout the school year. This partnership provides fertile ground to work with local youth in our public school community.

Lastly, this year we also had the opportunity to partner with some amazing college aged volunteers including Natasha Mashubatu of Agnes Scott College, who helped us launch the first few episodes of our online show **"How We Rep College Prep"**. These are short, fun and entertaining episodes that give students simple tips on various topics and advice on building great habits for school and real life, such as career advice, on campus living and more.



HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH TRAUMA AND TRANSITION

A Fireside Chat for Educators

October 8, 2020 | 7 p.m. est



EDUCATION ADVOCACY AWARENESS



Trauma and Transitions Event with our facilitators: (from left to right) Tiffany Wilson, Jan Frazier Worthy, Noelle Carson and Lynn Hass Cook

EDUCATION ADVOCACY AWARENESS MONTH

This year, we celebrated our 3rd Education Advocacy Awareness month. Typically every October our month is filled with events that take place in the community with partnering organizations and in person advocacy training with parents and students. Even though we do this work year round but normally highlight October, this year we started our hard work in the summer when it appeared that the needs of the education community could not wait until October to be addressed.

Students at the end of the month who we train in partnership with the Dekalb County Gavel Club do a presentation at the end of the month to showcase who and what they are advocating for after we have had a month long discussion about what advocacy means and how students can advocate for educational resources and support.

Due to COVID and the challenges that it brought not only with social distancing but with how we all viewed education and schools this year, our conversations and assessments with educators in the community had us create a slightly different platform that would allow communities to come together to build new understanding and relationships between educators, parents and students in order to discover ways to support one another during this challenging year.

TRAUMA AND TRANSITIONS: advocating for educators, parents and students

We partnered with the Association of American Educators, In School Spirit, Comfy Couch Counseling, Ndele Yoga, and a host of specials guests and experts to host two fireside chat events to create safe spaces for these conversations to take place in order to exchange resources and tools that help families navigate through the trauma and the transitions of the school year. Both events were held virtually during the month of October. The first event for educators was on the evening of **October 8th**, and we had over **35 participants**. Our second session which was focused on parents on **October 15th** held **20 participants**.

Outcomes for these events have been to first create the safe spaces for these conversations and to further determine how we can advocate for the resources that the community needs in order to cope and to feel supported during these uncertain times. We are encouraging others to continue to have these conversations that will hopefully bring parents and teachers together to support each other in the name of their children and in the name of education.

HANDLE WITH CARE: advocating for grandparents raising children

This year we partnered with the Lillie's Foundation to launch an initiative in the midst of COVID to support grandparents who were raising children in order to determine what support they needed to help their children in various areas, including college prep, how to navigate through the school system and how to empower themselves with selfcare and technological support. We were able to participate and present with Atlanta Public School's Community Engagement Department. We reached over 25 grandparents for the Fall evening event as we presented the session titled "Handle with care: Grandparents online."



Calendar of Events:

June 2020- Launching of grandparents survey (ongoing call to action)- 20 respondents

July 2020- Mt. Pleasant Church- Back to school back pack drive/ on site grandparents interview and assessments / 30 participants

October 8, 2020- Trauma and Transitions: Fireside chat for educators /35 participants

October 15, 2020- Trauma and Transitions: Fireside chat for parents/20 participants

November 16, 2020-Handle with care: grandparents online: APS Community engagement event to advocate for grandparents and educational support/ 25 participants