



Communities  
In Schools

Chatham County

2019 NEWS

### Featured Match: Samantha, Amity, and Katie



Samantha and Kate Lindley

If you asked most parents, they would say their children change when they hit middle school. Amity John would whole-heartedly agree. As her daughter Samantha began middle school, she was a great student – good grades, good behavior, excited about her education, but then something happened. Samantha's grades plummeted and

her behavior changed. Suddenly, the Samantha she knew had become someone she did not recognize.

By the start of Samantha's 7th grade year, Amity was ready to throw up her hands. At that point, Amity contacted Student Support Specialist Tych Cowdin who began working with Samantha and thought she could really benefit from a mentor. Amity agreed. So, the search began.

Enter Katie Lindley, AVID teacher at CMS who worked briefly with Samantha in 6th grade. Katie already had great rapport with Samantha, and agreed to take on the role of mentor. Like magic, things started to change.

Samantha finished her 7th grade year strong; grades up, behavior referrals down and she even participated in a school sport for the first time - volleyball. "Samantha has made such a turnaround. She is planning to be even more focused than before. Katie has been wonderful!" said Amity.

Samantha also gives Katie a lot of credit for her change in attitude about school. At the nail salon, dinner, or even on the farm, they would talk about the future and where she saw herself in 5 years, 10 years. With Katie's support and a fresh start, Samantha has again realized that the possibilities are endless and she can be anything she wants to be!

### PROGRAMS: CIS IN BONLEE SCORES "E" FOR EVERYONE ENGAGED!



Wes Lail and students

Last year Student Support Specialist Wes Lail started our CIS Model program at Bonlee School

where he

works with educators and families to make students more excited and focused on their education. He knew that he would measure progress with CISC's standard "ABC+P" outcomes measures (Attendance, Behavior, Coursework + Parent/Guardian Engagement). What he discovered was the most important driver of this new school site's success was "E": excitement and engagement of students and their families in the new Bonlee After School Academy (BASA) enrichment program. Wes reports "An important sign of success is how the community responds. When interest outstrips capacity you know you have a hit!"

Bonlee is a small combined K-8 grade school in rural, south central Chatham with few resources for after-school support and enrichment activities. Wes provides social supports to 32 referred youth one-on-one and in small groups (10% of students), and he serves as a positive adult role model by offering school-wide programs. Last year, with school leadership approval he set up a learning space with PCs donated by CISC Corporate Partner SAS Institute. This year CEMC Operation Round Up is a funding partner.

During and after school hours this space supports one-on-one mentoring, computer-aided instruction, and hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) projects such as the highly popular "computer teardown" project that gave youth new ways to practice hands-on collaboration and spreadsheet skills. Bonlee student Sam tells us "When I need to get stuff done coming to BASA helps. I can use school resources and Mr. Lail keeps the room quiet so I can focus."



Demand for BASA, limited to 10 students, exceeds availability. Wes is seeking community help to offer more

activities like a Chess club. Volunteers needed! Interested? Contact Tych ([tcowdin@cischatham.org](mailto:tcowdin@cischatham.org)) and visit [https://cischatham.org/get\\_involved/](https://cischatham.org/get_involved/). We look forward to growing ABCP+E in Bonlee with your help!

### OUR MISSION

*to surround students with a network of support,  
empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.*

visit our website at [cischatham.org](http://cischatham.org)

## ALUMNI UPDATES!



**LATOYA WATSON** My grandmother raised 15 grandkids including me in a three-bedroom house trailer! She was very religious and we grew up singing in the church from knee high to the ground on up. When I was in second grade, CIS (CCT!) placed me with my Mentor, Gay Scannell. I was the second in my house to get a mentor; my brother had a mentor, Viola Gallagher who also tutored and spent time with me. I was in Girl Scouts from second grade to high school. I loved camping and exploring the outdoors and helping others. If it was not for my mentor and my awesome Girl Scout leader Genevieve Megginson taking me under their wings, I don't know where I would be.

I graduated from Northwood High School and went on to college, graduating with honors and a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Livingstone College in Salisbury, NC. I currently work full time at CIS of Durham as a Success Coach at Eno Valley Elementary School while taking care of my 6 year old nephew and my handicapped sister. I am proud to be a product of Communities In Schools of Chatham. It's a phenomenal program. I know the work they did with me and my brother, and the work we still do does make a difference in the lives of our children of the future!



**MIRIAM LYDE** I was matched with my Mentor, Ruth Boyce, when I was in the 4th grade. I had been in foster care for a short period of time after my three siblings and I had experienced a lot of trauma in our family's household like abuse and substance abuse. Ruth was the most structured person I had ever met. Even though Ruth, a Fearington resident, and I were from two different worlds, we found things to do together such as gardening, playing cards, cooking, and reading. As my Mentor she gave me many things and exposed me to opportunities to learn from. She gave me the confidence to be the best I could be with structure, time

management, and mutual understanding. She never made me feel any less because of where I came from. Her encouragement helped me to succeed in school and life. As a graduate of UNC Greensboro with a Master's degree from North Carolina A&T State University, I'm currently working as a substance abuse counselor at Moses Cone Hospital and raising six children (four are my nieces and nephews, including one who was just accepted at UNC Greensboro!).



**YAEI JARAMILLO** I remember myself as being shy and having low self-confidence. When I was in elementary school CCT! (CIS) matched me with my Mentor, Page Vernon, who helped me a lot. She and her husband, Jim (who was matched with my younger brother Irving) would take us out to skate, movies, festivals, and fishing trips. Page would always introduce me to all her family and friends and would say wonderful things about me. She made me feel great about myself and always pushed me to do my best. I didn't own a computer and Page would take us to her house to use her computer, help me with my projects, and cook us dinner. Page's time with me really helped me become who I am now. She was like my second mother. I think she helped me become a great mother to my kids. She helped me get back in school to get my high school diploma, so I

can be a good example for my children and to be able to help them with school work. If it wasn't for Page and Jim's time with me, I really don't know if I would have pushed myself to finish school and to be fearless and do my best in everything I do. She always stays in my mind and heart.



**RAMIRO MARTINEZ** I was originally a mentee in the founding organization, Chatham County Together!, while I was at Horton Middle School. I was matched with my Mentor, Fabian Sparrow. Having a Latino role model who encouraged me to focus on academics and to set long term goals helped me tremendously with planning for a professional life. My relationship with Fabian, along with my involvement with the AVID program and its program director, Terry Greenlund, set me up to become the first in my family to finish high school and attend college. I graduated from Pfeiffer College after receiving an academic and sports scholarship for playing soccer. After graduating, I worked for four years at the Triangle YMCA as a program director. Most recently I came back "home" to CIS Chatham and I'm now the Program Manager for both the **Community Service Restitution** and **Teen Court** programs.



### OUR STAFF

**Kim Caraganis, Executive Director**  
**Pam Johnson, Chief Operations Officer**  
**Shirille Lee, Student Support Specialist/ Youth F.I.R.S.T.**

**Maria Soto, Family Advocate**  
**Tych Cowdin, Program Director, CIS Model & Youth F.I.R.S.T.**

**Jazmin Mendoza Sosa, Student Support Specialist/Virginia Cross Elementary**  
**Tiara White, Student Support Specialist, Chatham Middle School**

**Wes Lail, Student Support Specialist/ Bonlee School**

**Pablo Avendano, Coordinator, Community Service/Restitution and Teen Court Programs**

**Ramiro Martinez, Program Manager, Community Service & Restitution and Teen Court Programs**

**Devin Callery, UNC MSW Intern**

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