



# International Community School

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2017

## from the principal

Greetings ICS Community,



Our recent anniversary weekend is one we will remember for years to come. From the Kurdish dance at UN Day to the large turnout (218 registered athletes) for the ICS Runs The World 5K, there was something for everyone to enjoy. The ICS staff worked tirelessly to ensure that students were prepared for performances, we had all of the proper equipment set up, and everyone enjoyed the festivities.

We were and are one. Through the dynamics of preparing for UN and Day and the 5K, there were times when the staff was tired and frustrated. As a Principal, you want everything to run smoothly during practices and the performance, but as we all know, it does not work that way. While practicing, students forgot lyrics, the sound didn't work well, and the dance moves were off. Nevertheless, we pushed through, knowing that our preparation would make both UN Day and the 5K worth it.

As I observed the students, staff, and guests on UN Day, discord, anxiety and tension were absent. We were one. We felt the rhythm in each dance, heard the harmony in each song, and enjoyed the passion in each word spoken. We celebrated our differences, for our differences make us beautiful.

No other school like ICS exists. It is thanks to generous supporters, like yourself, that we are able to offer unique programming that helps our students achieve at high levels. If you have not, I encourage you to donate your time and money to help further ICS's vision of providing our students with a rigorous and holistic education. If you want to see more, contact the school to attend our next Donor's Tour and see our model of education in action. You will not be disappointed!

Chad Velde-Cabrera



# I love my job

## Donna Brisse – Reading Recovery & EIP Teacher

The first time I walked onto the ICS campus as a volunteer in 2007, I saw the two Reading Recovery teachers working with students one-on-one next to the School Within a School room in Avondale. I remember thinking, and even asking them, “How did you get **this** job?” I was already thinking, “I want their job!”

Five years later, I was given the wonderful opportunity to train as a Reading Recovery teacher at Georgia State, and began to teach Reading Recovery at our new ICS location in Decatur. What is Reading Recovery? In a nutshell, it is an early literacy intervention designed for individuals and delivered by teachers trained in special procedures for first graders who find it difficult to read and write. The instruction is tailored to the particular needs of each child, engaging him or her in active problem-solving while reading texts and writing their own stories.



Reading Recovery, with its focus on the individual needs of the child and what is required to engage and accelerate their reading and writing, is wonderful for all first graders who have fallen behind in reading, but especially powerful for our students who are English language learners. They get an individualized English language experience with a teacher for 30 minutes a day. The child reads fun books at their level, we talk about them, and they write their own story with teacher help. And how surprised they are when they realize they are reading books!

Former and current first grade teachers (here and worldwide) rave about how effective Reading Recovery is, and the amazing progress they have seen students make. But this program is designed to serve the lowest 20% of first graders. With only one Reading Recovery teacher, ICS can only serve half this number. Additional funding is needed for us to return to our previous level of two teachers for our school. Our hope is that next year we will be able to bring an additional Reading Recovery teacher to ICS!

## Development News



Thank you to all who came out to support our *ICS Runs the World 5k and 1 Mile Fundraiser*. It was a huge success. It was a community building event that uniquely celebrated our 15th anniversary. A huge thank you as well to our sponsors (GoGo Racing, The Lovett School, Turner Broadcasting, Raging Burrito, and Sycamore Consulting Inc.) and our supporters (Earth Fare, Dad's Garage, Chai Pani, Crown Sports and Hibbett Sports).

This year, GaGives joined forces with GivingTuesday on November 28. We are grateful to those who chose our school as their favorite non-profit. We raised \$4,200.

ICS 2018 calendars are now for sale. They display beautiful pictures of our children on UN Day. Stop by the office for one!

If you are interested in a tour of ICS to learn more about our mission and vision as well as upcoming events, please let me know. We have a tour almost every month. If you know anyone in the community that is a potential donor for ICS, please contact me to share your connection or help set up a meeting.

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# Educating the whole child

Katelynn Villary, School Counselor

When earning my bachelor's degree in Social Work, my first internship was the International Rescue Center in the refugee resettlement program. It was there that I first saw the need for services to address the emotional and mental health for refugee and immigrant children. With this thought always in the back of my mind, I pursued my Masters of Clinical Social Work degree and state clinical license. I was so excited to start my first year at ICS in the Fall of 2016 as the school counselor. Coming from a mental health background, I knew it would be difficult to begin working at an agency whose primary goal was education. I was delighted to find that the staff at ICS have an acute understanding of the need for educating the whole child.



As we know, you can not expect a child to learn to read and write when they are hungry, you can not expect them to pass a MAP score when they feel unsafe in their home, and you can not expect them to walk in a straight line in the hallway if they are dealing with the after effects of trauma from being a displaced person. When refugees and asylum seekers are resettled, the public may think they are "safe now" and everything is changing for the better. We know that the stress of supporting a family on a minimum wage salary below your qualifications, navigating a country whose policies and language you don't understand, and also being exposed everyday to institutionalized -as well as blatant-racism, are just some of the day-to-day issues our students face.



In the beginning days of its charter, ICS had two school counselors to help provide the much needed emotional services to its children and families. While many things have changed over the years, the understanding and desire to provide these services for our students has not gone away. With the help of the wonderful teachers and many parents at ICS, we have been able to keep up some of supportive services to help children express and address their emotional needs, as well as create new programs.

Here are some of the ways in which the school currently helps our students meet their emotional needs:

The initiation of the home visit program has helped further cement the strong relationships teachers form with their students and help show parents that we, as a community, want to know where our students live and what their day to day lives look like.

The **See Beautiful Club** gives an opportunity for girls to express what the word "beautiful" means to them and how they can create this feeling of support in their community.



Continuing the **Global Citizen** program allows teachers to shine a light on students they feel are examples of the type of learners and people ICS wants to create: someone who accepts all people, protects the environment, helps all people and works for peace.

The **Soccer School** program gives older students the opportunity to be peer coaches and display IB attitudes to the younger children, as well as creates a closeness among the students as well.

The **counseling department** maintains a caseload of individual students who may need extra support as well as social skills groups to help the students practice and express important life long interpersonal skills.

While there are many ways we can help support our students' socio emotional health with many changes over the years, it does give me great hope that the staff at ICS continue to support the counseling department and understand the importance of educating the whole child. I believe our staff's focus is still, to quote founder Bill Moon, "to serve one another, to understand the ones who are not like us, to realize that each person, even the most suffering and oppressed, has gifts to share with us." We are taking strides as a staff to help continue in this mission even in small ways every day.

# Reaching out to our community

## Service learning project - helping our country

**Nadia Reese – Third Grade Teacher**

My students were moved to action after learning about the hurricane devastation in the US and abroad.

Students developed teams and personally donated money, blankets, water, and baby/children items for families who were affected. Money was donated to Save the Children, while other items will be personally dropped off by Keller Williams. Thanks to students and parents for your support!



*Zoe, Anna, Rafael, Otar, Eunice, Lydia, Cole, helped to collect items*

## Kids helping kids - in our neighborhood

**Suzanne Balint – ESOL Teacher**

Recently after learning of a family that suffered a terrible loss in Clarkston, my second grade English class told me that they wanted to do something to help the family.

They made cards for the family, wrote a fundraising proposal, made jewelry to sell, put up signs to advertise, made morning announcements, and sold their jewelry in the morning before school. They will donate all of that money to the family. I love working in a school where there is a focus on caring for others and where kids feel empowered to do something to help someone in need.



*Lay, Rebecca, Aung, Jaring, Morry, Tuang, and Lal Rin selling jewelry*

## Dates to know

Feb.16- Tour for the community

Jan. 26 & 31 – Tour for prospective families

February 3 – Open House

February 22 – Fine Arts Night



## Support Us

Consider making a gift donation to ICS.

Much of our operating expense needs are provided by the DeKalb County School System, but others, like school transportation and teacher assistants, are not. You can securely make a donation on our school's website: <https://icsgeorgia.org/donate>

## Get in touch with us!

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