



EXCEL ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

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Girls On the Run Is So Much Fun!

RECENTLY, FIFTEEN EXCEL THIRD Graders (and five of their parents!) completed their first 5k as a part of Excel's inaugural season of Girls on the Run. Girls on the Run is a national program that aims to foster a positive self-image in young girls through running. Our scholars trained with their coaches twice a week after school for three months, developing their running skills and discussing important topics as a team such as practicing healthy lifestyle habits, standing up to peer pressure, and having a positive sense of self. The 5k brought together Girls on the Run teams from across DC, Maryland, and Virginia on the campus of American University. Each Excel scholar ran with a Running Buddy and all of our runners crossed the finish line with big smiles. Thank you to everyone who made our first season a big success! The girls are already counting the days until the spring season begins in March!



Excel Academy's Girls on the Run team at American University



Stone Ridge holiday party

Holiday Cheer at Stone Ridge School and Excel Academy

In December, Excel's First Grade scholars traveled to Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart for a holiday party. The morning was a thrill for our scholars, who enjoyed cookie decorating, performances by Stone Ridge students, and a tour of the school. Our visit to Stone Ridge for some holiday cheer is a much-beloved annual tradition. Thank you, Stone Ridge for making the season bright for our scholars!

Excel scholars also celebrated the holidays at the Excel campus on December 14 and 15, performing songs learned in Dr. Haywood's music class. For the first time, Excel scholars performed as a chorus on risers, which were generously out on loan from Sidwell Friends and The Madeira School. Excel scholars stood tall as a chorus on the borrowed risers and hope to soon have risers of our own.

Disney on Ice Helps Excel Scholars Dream Big

In October, an impressive group of DC's prominent female leaders visited Excel to speak with our scholars. These women discussed their careers and the obstacles they have overcome to achieve success and answered thoughtful questions posed by our Second and Third grade scholars. The panel was led by Juliette Feld, co-producer of *Disney on Ice Presents Dare to Dream*, and included Laura Evans, Fox 5 news anchor; Debra Lee, Chairman and CEO of BET Networks; Kaye Savage, Founder and CEO of Excel Academy; and Dr. Rhonique Shields-Harris, Executive Director of Public Sector Partnerships and Medical Director of Mobile Health Programs at Children's National Medical Center. Excel's second and third grade scholars were able to discuss important issues with the panelists, including how to overcome stereotypes, make good decisions, and achieve one's dreams despite the odds. At the end of the panel, the scholars were presented with a

Disney on Ice surprise: Princess Tiana, from Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*, made an appearance and distributed tiaras for each of the scholars to take home.

As a follow up to this wonderful event and through the gracious support of Feld Entertainment, Excel scholars were provided free passes to attend the Disney on Ice Celebrates 100 Years of Magic on February 15 and 16 at the Verizon Center. Scholars enjoyed seeing their favorite Disney characters come to life on ice, including: Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Goofy, Donald Duck, Jiminy Cricket and Pinocchio. They were excited to also see characters from well-known Disney/Pixar films: Toy Story, Finding Nemo, The Incredibles, Mulan, and The Lion King.



Excel scholars pose with Princess Tiana



Excel Third Graders display their new gloves



Amazing Acts of Kindness

During the month of December, the Junior League of Washington, Horton's Kids Inc., and Excel's Board Chair Vito John Germinario donated goodies for each scholar to take home for the holidays. The Junior League donated a pair of mittens for every scholar and also decorated holiday cards for every classroom to enjoy. Horton's Kids donated DVDs to Excel, allowing each scholar to take home three DVDs for entertainment over the holiday break, and Mr. Germinario designed and donated an Excel hat for each scholar.

These donations mean so much to our school community. The combined generosity of the Junior League, Horton's Kids, and Mr. Germinario will allow, our scholars to stay warm and busy over their two-week break. For the first time, our scholars were sent home with a goodie bag stuffed with holiday gifts.

Excel is so grateful to have such amazing friends. The Junior League of Washington, Horton's Kids, and Mr. Germinario have been enormously supportive of our mission. We cannot thank them enough for their heartfelt donations!

National Girls and Women in Sports Day

This January, a group of 2nd and 3rd grade scholars from Excel Academy had the opportunity to participate in National Girls and Women in Sports Day (NGWSD) at Georgetown University. NGWSD began in 1987 as a day to remember Olympic volleyball player Flo Hyman for her athletic achievements and her work to assure equality for women's sports. Hyman died of Marfan's Syndrome in 1986 while competing in a volleyball tournament in

Japan. Since that time, NGWSD has evolved into a day to acknowledge the past and recognize current sports achievements, the positive influence of sports participation and the continuing struggle for equality and access for women in sports.

Scholars participated in mini sports clinics that included coaches and players from the women's lacrosse, women's soccer, women's basketball, softball, volleyball and women's golf

teams at Georgetown.

Following the clinics, scholars enjoyed an afternoon pizza party with other NGSWD participants. The day culminated with the scholars going to the Georgetown women's basketball game versus Rutgers University. The lady Hoyas were victorious, beating Rutgers by a score of 54-36.

Scholars were able to meet



Scholars learn basketball fundamentals at Georgetown

and greet the players to get autographs following the game.

Georgetown University Women's Basketball Brings Inspiration



Georgetown Women's Basketball brings the joy of movement to Excel scholars

Excel Academy was privileged to host a visit for eleven members of the Georgetown Women's Basketball Team. The Georgetown scholar-athletes answered questions from Excel scholars about how difficult it can be to balance extra-curricular sports with studies, and what college life is like. The team also encouraged scholars to keep working hard to make their dreams of college a reality someday!



In Memoriam: C. Kenneth Johnson

This February, Excel Academy lost one of our most caring and devoted community members.

Mr. Johnson's tenacity in caring for nearly 100 children needing love and affection won him the prestigious humanitarian award at the Essence Image Awards in New York in 1997 where world renowned recording artist, Prince, narrated Ken's life story. He wanted to be remembered as someone who helped others.

As a former teacher, who earned a Master of Art in Teaching from Yale University in 1955, Mr. Johnson was relentless in his efforts to ensure that his 3 grandchildren at Excel Academy were well "taken care of". Despite his most challenging times during his recent bout with cancer, he made sure that they arrived to school and they were picked up on time every day for the past 3 years. He was never too busy to stop and talk to Excel staff about how the girls were doing in school and always provided updates regarding their home situations. It is because of his devotion and unwillingness to give up that his grandchildren have been able to transcend challenging times in their own lives. He will be deeply missed by the Excel family.

Excel Academy Visits the White House!

Thanks to the gracious support of Chanelle Hardy our entire first grade class was able to travel to the White House on February 17th and see history up close. The excitement was evident from the moment the bus arrived in front of the iconic building.

As the girls walked past portraits of the Presidents and learned about the history of in each room. They were able see the impact that these rooms have had on American history. As they entered the grand East Room, our Excel scholars were greeted with a special surprise, the songs of the North Carolina A&T State University Choir.

In the time that we were there we were able to see the Blue room, the Green room, the rooms that have held State Dinners and rooms where the President often addresses the press. It was a walk through American history that our first grade class will not soon forget!



The Excel first graders line up outside the White House

A Note from our Founder:

I AM DEEPLY GRATEFUL for your continued investment in and support of our school community, the scholars we serve, and hope for change we bring to the larger community. We firmly believe that an outstanding education will prepare our scholars to effectively compete, achieve and succeed in the larger society. We are providing an excellent educational experience complimented by strong character development and enrichment programs.

Now in our fourth year, we are serving more than 400 scholars, preschool through third grade, and are expanding our network of friends and partnerships.

Girls can and will change the world by delaying pregnancy, continuing their education through college graduation and returning to their community to make a difference.

Thank you,
Kaye Savage
Founder & CEO



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