The Cupola Academy Inquirer

A Collaborative Pod 3 Publication
Issue #6 Fall/Winter 2023

MAIN LINE PARENT LOVE AWARDS 2023 WINNER

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Summer Events!

@ CUPOLA ACADEMY

: Kelley C

The 2023-2024 year started with a bang! Members of every program and their families gathered together at Riverbend for an end-of-summer program kick-off, an annual event. Friends got to reunite after a fun summer, new youth and families were welcomed, and everyone got oriented and prepared for the program year. CA Facilitators gave tours of the program spaces, while CA youth, both returning and new, enjoyed connecting over group games.

CA youth enjoying the rain at the Open House

Open House

In the barn, facilitators and parents chatted while enjoying drinks and snacks. Lucy and Corinne talked with CP2 members about upcoming projects such as FIRST LEGO League and Fever novel study. CC got to peek at their newly designed loft space!

It was an extremely fun event and kicked off the 2023-2024 program year wonderfully!

In the farmhouse, Mike led a tour of the downstairs makerspace, highlighting the Glowforge and 3-D printer! As a demonstration, he carved some adorable fish, later used by CP3 for breaking into groups and various games. Sarah and Alyssa shared their plans for the science and math programs with parents.

Phillies Game!

@ Citizens Bank Park

✎: Ella G

Julia and Leila's selfie at Citizens Bank Park!

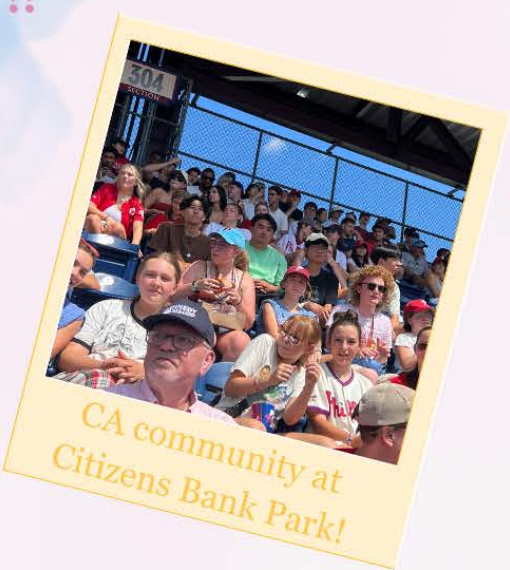
The CA community cheering for the Phillies!

On Sunday, August 27, Cupola Academy families attended a Phillies game! During this game, the Phillies played the Cardinals and won 3-0. We all sat together and watched the exciting game. Many of the group members walked around and enjoyed food such as crab fries, ice cream, and hot dogs. Towards the end of the game, our group was even displayed on the big screen twice! Even though it was hot and sticky, it was a super fun and eventful day!

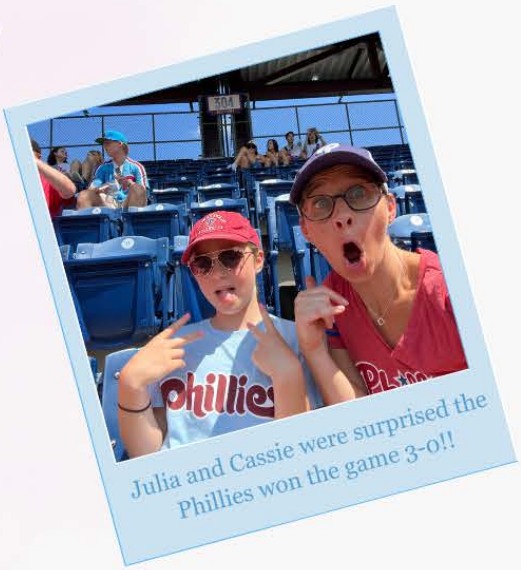
Overall, the Phillies had a great season, but unfortunately, they lost during the playoffs. Events like this provide CA families an opportunity to gather together to get to know each other and build community as well as giving Cupola exposure within the larger community.

PHILLIES WON !!
3-0

CP2 rooting for the Phillies and excited they won!!



CA community at Citizens Bank Park!



Julia and Cassie were surprised the Phillies won the game 3-0!!

Meet the Facilitators

Julia Bergson-Shilcock

Julia Bergson-Shilcock is one of the co-founders/directors of Cupola Academy, and she also facilitates CC (Creative Choice). Julia was a lifelong homeschooler until she entered college at Arcadia University, where she created multiple independent study courses focusing on alternative education. Julia sits on the Board of Directors at the Rock School for Dance Education and is the head of their parent volunteer committee.

Mike Hilbert

Mike Hilbert is one of the co-founders/directors of Cupola Academy and facilitates CP2 and CP3. Mike attended Villanova for an undergraduate education. He then attended Rivier, earning an M.A.T. (Master of Arts in Teaching) in secondary social studies. Mike taught in the public school system for a few years and spent summers as an athletic director for the Eagles Mere Athletic Association.

Scan here or visit CupolaAcademy.org/staff to read full bios of CA staff.

Alexandra Barainyak

Alexandra Barainyak is our lovely facilitator for CP1! She's well-versed in music, being a classically trained vocalist. She is also a fellow homeschooler. She graduated from Goucher College and studied abroad in Costa Rica, eventually going on to earn a master's in Music Education from Boston University.

Lucy Tyson

Lucy Tyson facilitates CP2 and CP3 and has worked with homeschoolers for over 25 years. Lucy has traveled abroad, where she earned a master's in Shakespeare studies from the University of Birmingham, UK. She has directed the many theater performances that occur throughout the program year.

Corinne Greskiewicz

Corinne Greskiewicz facilitates CP1, CP2, and CP3. She went to college at Arcadia University, graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology, minoring in art. She also has a master's in Creative Arts Therapy from Drexel University. Corinne has worked with small groups of homeschooled youth for the past nine years, sponsoring many fun projects for CA.

Sarah Himebauch

Sarah Himebauch is one of CA's adept CP3 facilitators. She has been working with children for over 25 years and has a bachelor's degree in the science of education. Sarah graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a master's in Education focusing on reading education and received a reading specialist certificate.

Laura Forsberg

Laura Forsberg facilitates CC along with Julia. Laura was born and raised in New York City. She enjoys spending time with young people and supporting them as they learn and grow. She graduated from SUNY New Paltz with a bachelor's degree in English, and she has a master's degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania.

Laura Mohanty

Laura Mohanty is new to CA this year and facilitates the new Materials Science program. She is very excited to join CA and works alongside Mike at Fluxspace where the program is held. Laura has a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering from Northeastern University and a master's in Material Science from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Alyssa Hull

Alyssa Hull is CP3's Science facilitator! With a diverse and rich background in biology, environmental science, health and wellness, and even art history, Alyssa brings a variety of interests and information to the CP3 group. She has a master's degree in Chemistry from Duke University and a bachelor's from the University of Delaware in Art Conservation.

Noah Greskiewicz

Noah Greskiewicz is an Intern and Youth Mentor to our CP2 FIRST LEGO League team, providing them with his rich knowledge of coding and robotics. He's also a soon-to-be graduate of Cupola (May 2024). He's planning to study mechanical engineering in college next fall!

Connor Moyer

Connor Moyer is a CA alumnus and intern working with Alexandra in CP1. Connor attends Montgomery County Community College and is a huge fan of Philly sports. He enthusiastically engages in many CP1 group games.

Cali and Eden during a Math Scavenger Hunt

Callie melting shredded plastics during the Materials Science program

CP3 at Escape Room Mystery in KOP

Fall Field Trip

By Cali G

Service Learning

@ the Barn at SpringBrook Farm

On Friday, November 17, families from CA visited The Barn at Spring Brook Farm, a nonprofit farm located in West Chester, PA. The farm provides animal-assisted and nature-based experiences to youth ages 2-12. They also offer programs for young people with disabilities to help them develop self-confidence and achieve therapeutic goals with assistance from their many friendly farm animals.

The CA youth were delighted to meet the farm animals at The Barn at Spring Brook and learn how to care for them. Youth also learned about the various farm responsibilities and got some hands-on work experience mucking stalls. Additionally, they learned about the farm's mission to aid children with disabilities. Nancy the pig, who was rescued and named after Julia Bergson-Shilcock's aunt, Nancy Shilcock, was one of the fan-favorite residents of Spring Brook.

Echo looks for a kiss!

Promoting Engagement and Motivation

Service learning allows youth to engage in community experiences and increases young people's exposure to different aspects of their community. "CA believes these experiences are crucial for developing empathy, responsibility, and a sense of community among our young people and families," stated Julia Bergson-Shilcock, CA Co-founder and facilitator. Cupola strongly believes that service learning can help youth develop responsible citizenship while strengthening the CA community and promoting engagement and motivation for youth inside and outside of program.

Program Update: Materials Science

@ FluxSpace

By: Laura Mohanty, facilitator

Materials Science is an interdisciplinary field that combines principles from physics, chemistry, and mechanical engineering. Cupola Academy stands as a pioneering homeschool program, making cutting-edge materials science curriculum accessible to high school students.

This distinctive program comprises two important components. The first encompasses a weekly lecture series, diving into the foundational aspects of material science. Beginning with an exploration of structure, processing, and properties, students understand how these components collectively determine material performance.

The course's focal point revolves around plastics, specifically HDPE (high-density polyethylene), or type 2 plastics. Young people delve into the environmental impact of plastics, the significance of recycling, and the complexities of sorting and recycling. The exploration extends to understanding the seven resin codes and their associated plastics. Furthermore, young people learn about the chemical and physical material structures, which influence properties such as crystallinity, glass transition, degradation, processing, and strength.

What truly sets this course apart is the invaluable collaboration with industry professionals. Recent guest speakers, including Cole from Precious Plastics and Dr. Rich Karpowicz, the CEO of Adhesive Tape Label LLC, have generously shared their expertise with the program. Complementing these guest lectures, young people read scientific publications from scholarly journals, authored by researchers in the field. This approach, guided by the belief that deep scientific comprehension is best achieved by studying expert perspectives, empowers young people to develop a profound grasp of the subject matter

The program's second component involves hands-on projects where young people apply their acquired knowledge to address real-world challenges. They embark on the mission of collecting HDPE, type 2 plastics, and employing polymer processing techniques to craft recycled products. Armed with a newly acquired shredder from the Precious Plastics marketplace, young people eagerly anticipate designing products and sharing them with the community.

The Materials Science program explores a wide array of scientific topics, ranging from plastics engineering to polymer characterization. While young people gain valuable critical thinking skills for effective problem-solving, the program's strength comes from the young people themselves. Their dedication to mitigating plastics pollution and their passionate drive to contribute positively to their community is the driving force of the program.

How can you help?

As stated above, as part of the Materials Science program, young people are collecting type 2 plastics. Examples of type 2 plastics include laundry detergent bottles, milk jugs, shampoo bottles, and other containers that once held a liquid. It would be greatly appreciated if you could help us collect the plastic and drop it off at one of the collection points arranged by the youth. Youth will be collecting plastics for the duration of the year and turning them into items that give back to the community.

Collection points include:

- Riverbend (large bin in the barn)
- Norristown Public Library
- Weaver's Way Co-op in Ambler

Read their blog here:

Cassie & Christian experimenting with chemistry!

Lelia, Caspar, and Seneca playing chess together!

Kai & Christian catching frogs!

Fall Recipes & Winter Word Search

By Lemon H & Sebastian E

Cinnamon Baked Apples

Vegan Pumpkin Sugar Cookies

Curried Butternut Squash Soup

Y	N	C	P	G	E	E	R	D	H	Z	L	I	F	A	S	E	R	X	D
C	U	E	A	D	R	T	R	E	E	K	L	P	F	H	B	X	N	P	E
N	C	B	C	N	Q	D	O	L	A	T	R	E	E	D	N	I	E	R	C
R	C	Y	G	Y	D	D	U	M	M	I	M	S	V	V	V	S	F	F	O
E	A	Q	E	H	Z	L	C	P	Q	G	K	N	F	C	A	C	F	D	R
T	N	E	C	A	L	P	E	R	I	F	Q	O	L	U	F	Y	M	D	A
N	D	E	Y	R	R	E	M	S	Y	I	M	W	Z	B	E	L	L	S	T
I	Y	Y	I	R	A	P	U	G	U	O	O	F	E	G	G	N	O	G	E
W	Y	C	T	Y	Y	J	E	I	H	H	J	L	E	D	I	E	R	D	O
X	S	L	Q	S	U	C	U	F	H	Y	R	A	T	Q	M	G	R	R	N
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T	L	K	I	J	U	I	O	V	U	O	O	S	L	I	L	P	U	C	J
X	E	I	M	B	D	K	T	L	I	W	D	K	Z	F	Q	O	P	I	W
F	I	N	Z	Q	I	H	B	E	M	N	R	U	U	V	A	X	E	U	P
U	G	G	C	E	Q	E	D	A	E	C	G	J	R	Q	N	D	V	G	Z
Q	H	S	J	L	H	E	N	E	U	R	S	K	A	T	I	N	G	L	V
G	I	N	G	E	R	B	R	E	A	D	G	G	Q	V	T	F	A	A	B

Word Bank

Skating Snowman
Gifts Tree Eggnog
Cookie Candles Joy
Light Gingerbread
Reindeer Elf Decorate
Sleigh Frosty Snowflake
Bells Merry Rudolph
Giving Icicle Candy
Jolly Milk Snow
Winter Fireplace
Stockings Dreidel
Greetings

Winter Riddles & Sudoku Puzzle

By Neshon L and Freya B

*Answers can be found at the bottom of this page.

1. I'm white, cold, and delicate, yet children love me to bits. What am I?

2. I'm a symbol of the season, I light up the night, and I'm often adorned with ornaments. What am I?

3. I'm made of snow, but I'm not a snowman. I'm cold but not an ice cube. What am I?

4. I'm a cozy place, full of warmth, where stories and laughter are often shared. What am I?

5. I'm a jolly man in a red suit, I deliver gifts, and my reindeer guide my route. Who am I?

6. I'm cold to the touch, come in various shapes, and kids use me for fun in the snow. What am I?

7. I'm a sweet treat, often hung on trees, and come in various shapes and flavors. What am I?

8. I'm a figure made of frozen water, sometimes resembling a person. Kids love to build me in winter. What am I?

		5	6	4	
		1	2		5
5	2	3		6	4
1				2	3
4				5	
		6			2

Rules to complete a Sudoku Puzzle

1. Each rectangle of six boxes should have numbers 1-6 listed once.
2. A number can not be repeated in the same row, horizontally or vertically.

*Riddle Answers: 1. Snow 2. Christmas Tree 3. Snowflake 4. Fireplace 5. Santa Claus 6. Snowball 7. Candy Cane 8. Snowman

The CA community kicks off the school year!

CP3 youth work on solving an escape room during a field trip.

Interview with Alumnus: Adam Lastowka

By Callie B-H and Maddie B-C

CP3 youth, Callie and Maddie, had the chance to meet with alumnus, Adam Lastowka. We are very grateful he took the time to meet with us to share his story of how homeschooling and partnership education positively affected his life.

When did you embark on your journey into Partnership Education?

"I officially began my self-directed learning in the eighth grade after incessantly pleading with my parents to let me homeschool. I had been attending a well-ranked public school, but I felt restrained and depressed by the environment there. Unofficially, I've always enjoyed the world enough to teach myself about it in my spare time."

What is your favorite memory from your time engaged in programs run by Mike and Julia?

"...everything related to the events we put on, especially dinner theaters, the big challenges at the end of the year, and any situation where the responsibility was on us, the youth, to come up with and execute a project. The chaos involved in that, everyone running around and all the organizational mess, was a lot of fun and representative of the real world."

What do you feel was the biggest benefit of being homeschooled and attending our programs?

"There are a few different things; one is definitely my attitude when it comes to approaching teachers and academics. Because in a traditional public school environment you are below the teacher, you feel as though you have a rank, and it's significantly less than the teachers, and you can't contradict them, you can't question their authority. [At Cupola], there is something nice about being able to talk to your instructor/facilitator and be like 'these are people'...and they are not untouchable entities." Adam also shared that he feels that in college education, professors are the most underutilized resource, and homeschooling helped him be able to go up to the professors and say, "Hey, what are you doing? I am interested in this!" Adam says partnership education prepared him for this, because [in partnership education] you interact with adults on a peer-to-peer basis.

What advice would you give a family who is considering Partnership Education but unsure of whether to take the plunge?

"...if you (or your child) are dissatisfied with the classic primary and secondary education environments, partnership education is worth a shot. Leaving [public school] expanded my access to opportunities, better prepared me for college, and gave me the time to develop skills that have proved invaluable in my current activities."

Program Update: CP2

By CP2 facilitators: Lucy Tyson, Corinne Greskiewicz, and Mike Hilbert

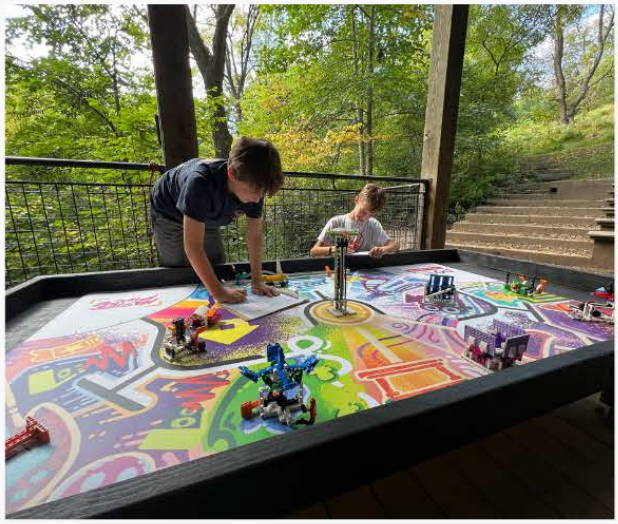
Tuesday mornings with Lucy:
The Collaborative Pod 2 (ages 11-12) has had a very busy fall! On Tuesday mornings, they work with Lucy focusing on the humanities. They began the year by reading the historical novel, Fever 1793, by Laurie Halse Anderson. This story follows fourteen-year-old Mattie as she and her family seek to survive the Yellow Fever epidemic that swept through Philadelphia in the summer of 1793. Each week the group would read several chapters at home, and then, in program, they would discuss plot events and vocabulary from the time period. They learned two words that mean nonsense: balderdash and bunkum and several words for bad smells: noxious fumes, miasma, and fetid. The group also read articles, watched videos, and looked at images that taught them about

- life in Philadelphia during the 18th century
- how children and adults dressed
- how the printing press worked
- researched original recipes from the colonial period
- examined newspapers from the late 1700s

At the conclusion of their reading and exploration of the book, the youth enjoyed two culminating events. First, they visited the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and worked with the educational staff there to learn about their Yellow Fever archives. The group got to touch and see letters written to Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and arguably the most famous doctor in America at the time. They read letters from his patients, getting first-hand accounts of symptoms and treatments. Secondly, the group hosted a colonial coffeehouse for the CP1 and CP3 groups. The main character's family ran a coffeehouse in Philadelphia where many people enjoyed small meals and heard the news of the day. For our coffeehouse, we made recipes from the period, serving hot chocolate, gingerbread, and sugar cakes (shortbread). We also wrote and designed a newspaper in the style of the ones we read from the 18th century.

Tuesday afternoons with Corinne:
As Cupola's goals are to provide collaborative experiences and new learning opportunities, we decided to incorporate a FIRST LEGO League (FLL) team experience into our fall Tuesday/Thursday program. Creating a FLL team through CA gives our youth the advantage of working with staff who are well-versed in CA's Process-Conscious approach. Components of the program happened on Tuesday afternoons with Corinne and part of the day on Thursdays with Mike. Noah, a young person in our oldest teen programs, shared his previous FLL coding and robotics knowledge with the team. With a diverse set of interests among our current group members, our goal was to give each youth leadership opportunities that line up with their skill sets and interests. Involvement in this team is a springboard to engage in a broad range of activities.

From FIRST'S website, "FIRST LEGO League introduces science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through fun, exciting hands-on learning. FIRST LEGO League participants gain real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided, global robotics program, helping today's students and teachers build a better future together. In FIRST LEGO League, students engage in hands-on STEM experiences, building confidence, growing their knowledge, and developing habits of learning. FIRST LEGO League's three divisions inspire youth to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills through hands-on STEM learning and robotics."



On Tuesday afternoons with Corinne, the group has:

- Designed and made our own team t-shirts
- Designed and made buttons/pins to give out to other teams at the FLL events
- Talked to an expert in the field and consulted the latest research on youth sports
    - Jennifer P. Agans, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pennsylvania State University
    - Project Play and their Youth Sports Playbook. Project Play develops, applies, and shares knowledge that helps build healthy communities through sports. Their goal is to get every kid in the game.
- Engaged in weekly Core Value challenges - hula hoop pass, marshmallow/toothpick building challenge, Flip the Tarp challenge, blindfolded rope challenge, and helium hula hoop.

Thursdays with Mike:

On Thursdays, the CP2 group works with Mike focusing on math and science. Like Tuesdays, FIRST LEGO league was a big focus this fall. On Thursdays with Mike, the group:

- Built the table that the robot moves on and completes all of its programmed “missions”
- Built the various missions, which are LEGO builds that the robot interacts with (e.g. the robot is coded to roll to a specific mission, lowers a bar that moves components on the mission, earning points for the team)
- Coded the robot with help from intern and youth mentor Noah to complete a minimum of seven independent missions.

CP2 also did a variety of hands-on science learning. They made density columns with different substances, measuring the mass of each. They also collected leaves from the Riverbend preserve to examine under microscopes. For math, the group experimented with value squares. They also did perspective drawing using Cuisenaire Rods.

Cade: I really enjoyed coding for FLL. Noah is a great coach; he is super fun and very helpful, and we would not be here now without him.

Clay: I liked perspective drawing with the Cuisenaire rods, because I made a great sculpture, and I liked the plant identification because we got to use microscopes. My favorite is FLL because we got to code with Noah.

Rukia: I liked planting the wild seeds and doing the leaf scavenger hunt and identification.

Wyatt: One of my favorite activities on Thursdays has been building and coding the FLL robot missions.

Zachary: Coding has been really fun because I feel like my partner, Cade, and I are really improving. Coding has been the highlight of my year. It has been amazing.

Tucker: I enjoyed FLL because it has a competitive aspect and expands my skills in problem-solving, coding, and teamwork.

Sarah and Laura at the BMFI preparing for CA program year!

CP3 Afternoon group game

Henryk studying and making imprints of nature objects!