

# THE REPUBLIC CLASSROOMS

Monday, November 25, 2013

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## MAKING THE GRADE



Students benefiting from police volunteers

**A** program that pairs Columbus police with children who need help with their homework has been successful in raising students' grades and increasing the number helped, organizers and parents said.

Homework with an Officer draws about 20 students Monday afternoons at Pence Place Apartments, a public housing development at 505 Pence Ave. Jill Sharp, public housing manager for the Columbus Housing Authority, said a goal of attracting 10 students was set when the program began about a year ago; it drew about half that number initially.

Sharp said she thought the program would take a while to gain traction, but the increase testifies to its rising popularity among the Pence Place Apartments' children for whom it was created.

"It's a good chance to get involved in children's lives in a positive way," Sharp said. "I know kids just love coming here."

**Making a difference**

Homework with an Officer volunteers from Columbus Police Department include:

- Patrolwoman Julie Quesenberry
- Patrolman Paul Garnett
- Patrolman Clayton Nolting
- Police Chief Jason Maddix
- Detective Ryan Linneweber

**Also:**

- Jill Sharp, public housing manager for the Columbus Housing Authority, helps the children with their homework, as well as a couple of older Pence Place residents who just want to help.

Sharp's only concern with the growth in the past year is that the program is at capacity. She said the only way it can accommodate more growth would be to add a second day each week, find a second location or find another volunteer group in addition to the police officers.

No plan exists to expand the program for the time being, Sharp said.

The idea for the Monday afternoon program came in August 2012, when two Pence Place children, both about 10 years old, proposed the idea during a neighborhood meeting

with the police department and the Columbus Housing Authority. Their reasoning was that having police help children there with their homework would help them not only academically but also by building relationships between the groups and perhaps steering kids on a positive path.

Interested parties jumped on the idea. Parents would provide the children, the police department would provide the volunteers, and the Columbus Housing Authority, which owns Pence Place public housing, would

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### Honing in on homework

5-6	20	5	40
Number of children who participated in the Homework with an Officer program when introduced a year ago.	Current number of students who participate in the program.	Number of Columbus police officers who help students with their homework and build relationships with them.	Number of apartments at Pence Place public housing in East Columbus.

Story by Paul Minnis | Photos by Andrew Lakos

From top: Julie Quesenberry of the Columbus Police Department helps Alejandra Luna, 6, with a problem Nov. 18 during the Homework with an Officer program in the community building at Pence Place Apartments. Nicky Schartger, 13, works on a fractions worksheet.

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### EDUCATION BRIEF

**Obama honors teachers for bringing tech to classroom**

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is honoring teachers who use technology to help kids learn. Obama said the 10 "Champions of Change" are helping autistic children discover new abilities and students in an after-school technology club prepare for a good future.

Obama has set a goal of ensuring that 99 percent of American students have access to high-speed broadband or wireless Internet at school within 3 years.

— The Associated Press



Erin Lehman



Pam Schmelz

## Visit to China's classrooms offers global perspective

**I**n a computer lab in Wuxi, China, Professor Wang teaches Linux to college students.

He navigates both English and Chinese to help students understand the program.

In an animation course, Ms. Chen emphasizes that the customer is the difference between fine arts and design.

To examine personal values, Ms. Yu conducts an auction. Students bid on beauty, cash and a high-paying job. Then they bid on health, a library and friends.

Last month, two faculty members from Wuxi Professional College of Science and Technology (WXSCT) wrote a column about their stay with Ivy Tech Community College in Columbus.

This month, we are writing a follow-up column about our trip to Wuxi.

We have been lecturing to WXSCT students, discussing curriculum with administrators and coming to understand the universal importance of education.

We find that the Chinese students are inquisitive but reserved.

In our lectures, we have pigged their attention with Shakespearean sonnets, industry certifications and the rising cost of an American college education.

We spent time speaking with students.

They are interested in hearing English and practicing their own skills.

In China, English teachers are valued as the key to a brighter future. There were some bumps along the way.

On this four-week-long trip, we needed to use a Chinese washing machine. It's quite compact with a multitude of buttons and options. Unfortunately, all icons are labeled in Chinese.

On laundry day, we hauled our clothes down several flights of stairs and then simply stared at the appliance. Pam finally pushed the largest

button, and a high-pitched "Jingle Bells" screamed from the machine as red lights danced across the console. "Jingle Bells" seems to be a generic and common warning melody in China.

We eventually pushed enough buttons to wash our clothes and used our bathtub as drying racks. This experience has been disorienting and has helped us gain perspective at the same time.

When Wu Li and Jiang Peng visited us, we asked them to meet our students, share ideas and understand our culture.

We shuttled them to Indiana museums and amusement parks; we helped them navigate American meetings, stores and restaurants.

Now in Wuxi, we are teaching classes to Wu Li and Jiang Peng's students. Every weekend, Wu Li and Jiang Peng take us somewhere new to experience the city, including their favorite parks and restaurants.

They ask us if we feel tired, cold or thirsty. It has been humbling to first be the caregiver and then to be cared for.

We feel a deep kinship with our friends and colleagues located halfway around the world. They have let us enter their lives, walk in their footsteps and understand their world.

We notice that the Chinese are concerned about the future and are acutely aware that we all live in a competitive world.

They care about their families and want their children to be successful and happy.

Their focus on education and appreciation for the American higher education is fascinating; it makes us consider our own children and their lives with fresh eyes.

Erin Lehman is the assistant professor of English and Pam Schmelz is the assistant professor of information technology at Ivy Tech Community College — Columbus, Franklin.

### UNIVERSITY NEWS

**Graduate wins scholarship**

Jesse Freudenthaler, a 2013 graduate of Columbus North High School, has been awarded the Ben Baker Memorial Scholarship from The Arc of Bartholomew County.

Freudenthaler, who attends Eastern Illinois University, is majoring in exercise science with plans to earn a physical therapy degree. She is the daughter of Paul and Jaune Freudenthaler.

The scholarship was established in memory of Ben Baker, who was a local educator and an advocate for people with disabilities.

Recipients must demonstrate an interest in assisting or advocating for individuals who have disabilities or plan to pursue an education or career related to assisting those disabilities.

### SCHOOL NEWS

**Welcome back, graduates**

Columbus North and Columbus East high schools will conduct separate events Wednesday to welcome back their 2013 graduates.

The annual welcome back events at each school are a chance for juniors and seniors to hear a handful of graduates talk about how their educations prepared them for college, according to counselors.

North's event is in its auditorium. East's event will involve locations around the school.

All North and East juniors and seniors can attend.

**East a cappella concert**

Columbus East High School's a cappella group, the Acaplymphans, will perform in concert at 7 p.m. Dec. 13 at the East auditorium, 230 S. Marr Road.

**Students join orchestra**

Four students from Columbus North High School have been selected to perform with the Indiana All-State Orchestra. They are:

- Michael Freed, violin
- David Rich, trumpet
- Jacob Bricker, clarinet
- Yoko Yato, French horn

The students, who were selected based on recorded auditions, will rehearse and perform with the orchestra Jan. 24 and 25 at the Fort Wayne Convention Center.