



**CHESTER
CHILDREN'S
CHORUS**

VOICE

Fall 2025 Newsletter

INVESTING IN THEIR FUTURE

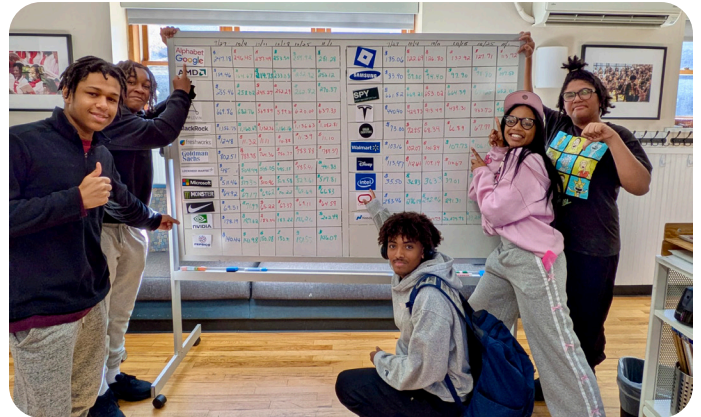
Not very often, if ever, do you hear middle and high school students discussing the stock market with their friends. Unless you're at the Chester Children's Chorus, because here it's a common occurrence.

Personal finance lessons were introduced into the CCC Math Practice Program in 2022.

"Financial literacy is as important as any mathematical concept we will cover in the Math Practice Program," said CCC Lead Math Teacher Kevin Downs. "Knowing how to make your money work for you, whether it's something as 'safe' as a savings account or something as volatile as the stock market, is essential for financial success. My hope is that our students will shift their mindset from being consumers to being investors sooner rather than later."

Each student researched companies that sparked their interest and, with guidance from a Swarthmore College math coach, selected one stock to invest in for the semester. Some chose favorite brands like Roblox or Nike, while others followed the tech trend with Nvidia or Intel. Every participant started with an imaginary \$1,000 to determine how many shares they could buy.

The students calculate their stocks' percentage change and profit/loss each week. These real-world applications of finding percentages, profits, losses, and fractions are regular concepts taught during math practice sessions.



CCC students track their chosen stocks as part of the Math Practice Program.
From left to right: Ronald, Trey, Sam (kneeling), Cyneathia, & Zion.

"I think Intel is going to win. Because right now, we're up four percent, and I'm pretty sure Alphabet, which is our biggest competitor, will go down," said ninth grader Sam. "This project helps us in the future in case we do want to invest, and it also helps with our math skills."

The stock lesson has since become more competitive, with prizes awarded to the top three students whose stock portfolios generated the most profit.

While ninth grader Camari's Urban Outfitters stock has been in the red, she is enjoying the project.

"I like the stock project because it teaches us what investing looks like in the real world. Unlike what I am learning in school, this project showed me what investors go through trying to keep up with the changing markets." 🎵



A SMART INVESTMENT WITH LASTING IMPACT

You can invest in our children's future by donating appreciated stock to the CCC. A gift of stock may allow you to avoid capital gains taxes while providing even greater support for our music and math programs.

To learn more about making a gift of stock, please visit **ChesterChildrensChorus.org** or contact Carolyn Marzo, director of development at **ckohn1@swarthmore.edu** or **610-328-8617**.



Group shot from "Friday Funday" with water slides.

A SUMMER OF DISCOVERY

We dare you to find another children's chorus where the children dissect pig hearts in a state-of-the-art college science lab. Yes, you read that correctly! While music and math are the primary focus of our program, during our five-week Summer Learning Program, our children also explore other interesting subjects, such as science, reading, and, new this year, creative writing. Keep reading for highlights from this past summer.



Basses Sam and Quandré make cupcakes in cooking class.



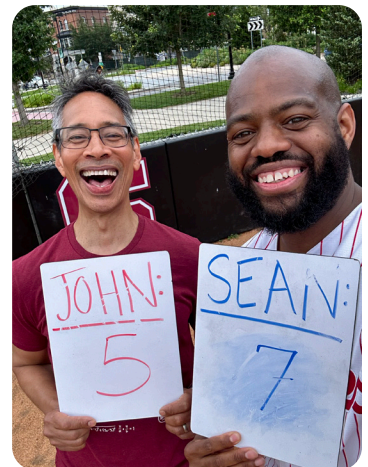
Messiah explores wildflowers in the Scott Arboretum class.



Aasim learns to float in the swim program for 3rd and 4th graders.



Shakur dyes fabric in art class.



CCC Director John Alston (left) took a loss to Assistant Music Director Sean Tripline at this year's annual kickball game.

SCIENCE FOR KIDS SPARKS DISCOVERY



Sixth grader Jayden conducts an experiment alongside Swarthmore College student, Catherine King.

More than 20 years ago, former Swarthmore College professor Liz Vallen approached the Chorus with an idea: create a science program tailored to middle schoolers in the CCC who would learn alongside college faculty and students in the College's science labs.

““““

I think what made science the most fun was the teachers. They were all kind and helpful.

Jayden, Sixth Grade

Since then, the Liz Vallen Science for Kids Program (SFK) has grown from one class per day to three. Fifth graders study biology, sixth graders study chemistry, and seventh graders study physics. College faculty teach the classes alongside lab instructors (also faculty members), and student research assistants.

“I think all young children are natural scientists. They're always trying to figure things out and asking, 'Why does this happen?'" said Deb Bergstrand, who has overseen the program since Vallen's passing in 2024. "In Science for Kids, we harness that natural urge to understand and add to it some fundamental and critical thinking skills. We write

things down, compare notes with classmates, and discuss the idea of an experiment and what we can learn from it.”

This summer's experiments included racing solar and electric cars that the children had built, throwing concrete discs off a building, observing the metamorphosis of butterflies, launching rockets, and studying the nervous system of flatworms.

“I think what made science the most fun was the teachers,” said sixth grader Jayden. “They were all kind and helpful.”

The SFK program wraps up with a poster session that celebrates all the learning and discovery. In the days leading up to it, the children design their posters and practice sharing their projects with confidence.

“It's one of those times where they take ownership of what they learned,” said Bergstrand. “And not only in terms of their kind of ownership or sense of confidence as a scientist, but also as a learner. You want a child to feel confident in answering questions about something they've learned or something they're interested in. I think it's an incredibly enriching experience for that reason.”



Fifth graders Jaxson (left) and Monet proudly display plants they grew in the summer science program.

CLASS OF '66: DECADES OF DEDICATION

The Swarthmore College Class of 1966 has proudly supported the SFK program since 2016, when the class dedicated its 50th reunion gift to help the program flourish. The endowment specifically funds the stipends for Swarthmore College research assistants who participate in the program each summer.

John Wehmiller, '66, emeritus professor of geology and longtime CCC champion, says “the gift continues a relationship with Chester that began decades ago when many from the Class of '66 and others from that era were active in the Chester community.”

The CCC will perform at Swarthmore's Alumni Weekend in May 2026, where the Class of '66 will be celebrating its 60th anniversary.

Read more about the Science for Kids program at ChesterChildrensChorus.org.

BUILDING BONDS THROUGH BOOKS

While many of our youngest children—rising third graders—will tell you that swimming is their favorite part of the Summer Learning Program, just as many say it's reading. Created 28 years ago, the Andrea Knox Summer Reading Program pairs community volunteers with children to spark a love of reading and build confidence.

"Seeing the pairs of children and adult reading volunteers spread around Lang Music Building was one of my greatest joys," said former CCC Managing Director Andrea Knox, who retired in 2011. "Many volunteers returned year after year, matched with a new third-grader, but eager to keep in touch with their previous 'buddies' as they matured. It was a delight to see these relationships continue through the years."

This summer, two volunteers—one returning, one brand new—found the same joy Knox described, as they built lasting connections with their reading buddies.



Chris McGinniss with third grader Jalaya.

She looks forward to the children greeting her each day with a hug and a smile before choosing a book together.

Chris McGinniss

For nearly a decade, Chris McGinniss has been sharing stories with the CCC's youngest members. The story of how she connected with the CCC is a special one, as her daughter and all three grandchildren have volunteered with the CCC.

"Reading opens up worlds that they would not normally experience. As a child, I grew up in a similar environment, and I remember reading about Pearl Buck and the anthropologist Jane Goodall, which opened an entire world that I would have never experienced otherwise. I hope that these children have the same experience, seeing that one can go from where one is to a bigger world out there."



Kathy Babin with Xyla.

Kathy Babin

Kathy Babin immediately thought of the CCC when considering volunteer opportunities post-retirement. She had attended dozens of concerts over the years and wanted to do more, so she signed up for the summer reading program.

"It was fun to connect with the kids. It felt natural and very engaging, and the kids were so excited. I had brought some of my kids' favorite books when they were little, and it was so joyous to see those stories rediscovered in a new way."

Saban was paired with Xyla, whose "enthusiasm was contagious." "She is adorable, enthusiastic, confident, and so excited. There isn't a shy bone in her body. She'd run up and give me a big hug when I arrived — how do you not just love that?"

Visit our **YouTube** page to watch a clip of our children performing the theme song to "Reading Rainbow" from our summer 2025 concert. 🎵

Learn more about becoming a reading volunteer at ChesterChildrensChorus.org



YOUNG AUTHOR INSPIRES SUMMER READERS

Our children read two special books this summer, "My Magic Stuff" and "A Trip to Candyland," both written by CCC's very own third-grader, Olivia Polk!

“““

I loved the summer reading program. I felt happy and excited to have the class read my books. And I was grateful that people supported my writing.

Olivia Polk

HONORING A CLASSIC TRADITION

Editor's note: CCC Assistant Music Director Sean Tripline reflects on his love of learning Mozart's *Requiem* as a teen, to now teaching it to teens who will perform the piece in March 2026.

When I first heard Mozart's *Requiem* as an 11th grader at the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts, I was completely captivated. Over winter break, I became so enamored with the tenor line that I decided to learn it on my own. I didn't have the funds to buy a score, so I downloaded an open-source orchestral version and printed it—two or three measures per page—using all of my grandmother's ink. What I discovered was that even an inner-city Philadelphia teen could fall in love with music that has spoken to generations and cultures for more than two centuries.

That same timeless beauty now lives within the Chester Children's Chorus. Next spring, our Concert Choir will join community members, alumni, and professional soloists and instrumentalists to perform Mozart's *Requiem* under the direction of CCC Executive and Artistic Director, John Alston. This monumental work has become something of a tradition here—a rite of passage that reminds us why we sing.



Sean Tripline performs with the CCC and community members during the 2023 Mozart's *Requiem* concert.
Photo credit: John Wehmiller

Alston often recalls one of our recent graduates, R.J., who loved *Requiem* so much that he memorized the entire piece from beginning to end. The discipline, stamina, and confidence that kind of effort requires speak volumes about what our young musicians gain through this experience.

Now, I once again have the privilege of teaching the tenor sectional for this new generation. Watching them count rests before their entrances and breathe together feels like déjà vu from my own teenage years. Even one of our seventh graders is tackling the Kyrie fugue entrances with enthusiasm that makes the whole room smile.

“““

“What moves me most is knowing that our children are accessing world-class repertoire at no cost.”

Sean Tripline

What moves me most is knowing that our children are accessing world-class repertoire at no cost. Programs like the CCC make that possible, transforming curiosity into confidence and exposure into excellence.

The same wonder that drew me to *Requiem* as a teenager now echoes in our rehearsal room. And this spring, when those voices rise together, I know I'll hear my younger self singing right alongside them. 🎵



“““

Singing Mozart's *Requiem* with the CCC has ignited a profound love for this piece within me.

The CCC is a haven where my love for music thrives, making every rehearsal and performance feel like home.

Makayla, Senior



“““

Mozart's *Requiem* is an interesting piece to learn because at first, the music is beautiful, but the true meaning behind the Latin prayer makes it so much better.

Sam, Sophomore



“““

Performing and learning Mozart's *Requiem* is a truly transformative experience. From the rich sound of the strings to the magnificent vocals that bring it all together, it's an amazing piece of art.

TyJani, Sophomore



John Alston

A GIFT THAT WILL GROW FOR GENERATIONS

During the CCC's 30th anniversary in 2024, John ('66) and Paula ('67) Lawrence-Wehmiller gifted a tree in honor of Executive and Artistic Director, John Alston. The Paperbark Maple was planted this past summer outside Lang Music Building, where John taught as a professor for 23 years and where the CCC has performed for decades.

**Dedicated to
John Alston, Founding Director
With gratitude for giving
us a glimpse of the Beloved
Community as the joyful
voices of the Chester
Children's Chorus are
raised in song.**

"I'm deeply touched by this gift and by the generosity of John and Paula. This tree will grow just outside Lang Music Building, where the children come to share the music they've worked so hard to create. My hope is that as this tree grows, it will remind us of what's possible when young people are nurtured and supported in their pursuit of excellence."

The tree is part of the Dedicated Tree Collection of the Scott Arboretum and Gardens. To learn more visit:
scottarboretum.org/support/dedicate-a-gift/ 🎵

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAYNE

This past May, Wayne Browne III, a 2023 CCC alumnus, toured the country playing bass in a five-member band for Chryst in Youth (CIY). The organization hosts summer camps for church youth groups nationwide, often with more than 1,000 children in attendance.

"After I got the job, I remember telling my mom about the opportunity, knowing I only had a few hours to decide," said Browne. "I definitely took a leap of faith. I had never been away from home for that long."

It paid off. In May, Browne flew to Joplin, Missouri, to meet his team and complete training before hitting the road for three months.

"They [CIY staff] told us we would almost be like celebrities to these kids, and putting on a show for them would feel very rock star-ish," said Browne. "None of us believed them until we actually stepped out and did it. And it was like, 'yeah, they weren't kidding. This feels awesome.'"

Over the course of three months, the group performed in Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, and Oregon. Browne quickly realized that life on the road isn't completely glamorous. As a band member, he performed two shows per day, but was also responsible for setting up (and tearing down) all of the sound equipment—enough to fill a tractor-trailer. When not performing, Browne was busy leading activities with the children.

"There were a handful of moments where I thought I might be biting off more than I could chew," said Browne, who relied on some of the skills he learned in the CCC. "When I was with the chorus, I helped set up the audio, lights, and risers for concerts. I also worked as a junior counselor in the summer program with the younger kids, so it was nothing I couldn't manage. On tour and throughout my time at CCC, I did a lot of things that I didn't know I was capable of."

Browne has been invited to rejoin the CIY tour next summer. 🎵



CCC alumnus Wayne Browne III. Photo by Caleb Elliot.



CCC Executive & Artistic Director John Alston (left) and Assistant Music Director Sean Tripline with the Chorus' new Yamaha CX5 piano, a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

A GIFT THAT STRIKES THE PERFECT NOTE

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Chester Children's Chorus was gifted funds to purchase a new Yamaha CX5, replacing the piano which had been with the chorus for more than 30 years and no longer held a tune.

The selection process was a performance in itself. CCC Executive and Artistic Director John Alston made his choice, then asked Assistant Music Director Sean Tripline to play two pianos—without knowing which one John had selected—to ensure a true blind sound test.

For those not familiar with the intricacies of a piano, Alston compares it to a chef selecting the perfect knife.

"It does exactly what you want it to do. You feel a little bit of the weight, but it never feels heavy. I am so grateful to have such a beautiful piano to play; it just sounds so good and will support our children's voices for years to come." 🎵

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: JUSTAMERE FOUNDATION



Third graders Samia (left) and Jennah practice multiplication.

Philanthropy has always been a hallmark of the Bentley family, who established the Justamere Foundation in 2021. One such example is that of Thomas P. Bentley, who utilized his engineering skills to repair all the broken wheelchairs in the hospital where he was admitted. The family named the foundation after its farm in upstate New York.

"While we are a family foundation, the focus isn't on our family. It's 'just a mere' foundation," said Program Officer Shelby Bentley. "The organizations that we work with are the ones doing the necessary work."

“””

I love seeing the children's joy and seeing their relationship with the CCC staff.

Shelby Bentley, Program Officer

The foundation's mission is to impact generational poverty through grants for career education and supporting programs focused on four areas: arts education, childhood literacy, veterans' resources, and trade education. The CCC's Math Practice Program is of particular interest to the foundation.

"The Justamere Foundation recognizes how important and necessary mathematical fluency is," said CCC Managing and Education Director Dana

Semos. "It opens doors for young people to have post-secondary options. We are grateful for our partnership with the foundation and its belief in our program."

During a summer visit to the CCC, staff from the Justamere Foundation had the opportunity to observe the math program in action.

"I love the children's joy and seeing their relationship with the CCC staff," said Bentley. "It's wonderful that they have such a safe place to be and learn and to be appreciated."

To learn more about the Justamere Foundation, visit justamerefoundation.org. 🎵

JF Justamere Foundation



CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

YOU HELP EVERY NOTE—AND NUMBER—COUNT

At the Chester Children's Chorus, children engage deeply with music and math through intensive, year-round programs—at no cost to their families. Your donation directly funds this work, providing meaningful instruction and lasting opportunities for growth. Thank you for helping us continue to invest in the potential of every child.

**Donate today
and make a difference!**

Give online
ChesterChildrensChorus.org/gift

By mail
Chester Children's Chorus
Attention: Gift Records
500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081

Scan QR code below



UPCOMING CONCERTS

Winter Concerts

Sunday, December 7, 2025
3:00 p.m.
Our Mother of Good Counsel
Pennswood Road
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Saturday, December 13* and
Sunday, December 14, 2025
4:00 p.m.
Lang Concert Hall
Swarthmore College
*performance will be livestreamed

The Skyy Brooks Quartet

Friday, January 9, 2026
7:30 p.m.
Park Avenue Community Center
Swarthmore, PA 19081

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert

Sunday, January 18, 2026
4:00 p.m.
Lang Concert Hall
Swarthmore College

Mozart's Requiem

Sunday, March 8, 2026
4:00 p.m.
Lang Concert Hall
Swarthmore College

Spring Concerts

Saturday, May 16
and Sunday, May 17, 2026
4:00 p.m.
Lang Concert Hall
Swarthmore College

Admission to all performances is free. Seating is limited and on a first-come, first-served basis. Dates and times are subject to change.

Watch an encore performance of our summer 2025 concert at ChesterChildrensChorus.org.

DONT MISS A BEAT!

**Stay connected with the
CCC beyond the stage!**

Follow us on Instagram,
Facebook, and YouTube
to see rehearsal snapshots,
concert highlights, behind-
the-scenes fun, and the joy
our children bring to every note.
Join us and help share their
voices with the world!



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