

VOICE



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

FALL 2022



THE SCHOOL YEAR AT A GLANCE

- The program is offered at no cost to families.
- Each child comes to the CCC twice a week.
- Weekdays include 1-1.5 hours of math instruction and 1-1.5 hours of music rehearsal.
- The full choir comes together on Saturdays to rehearse and practice math.
- Meals, snacks, and round-trip transportation are provided.
- Older children may participate in optional private voice and piano lessons.



SUMMER ROCK, FALL DISCO, AND MATH, MATH, MATH

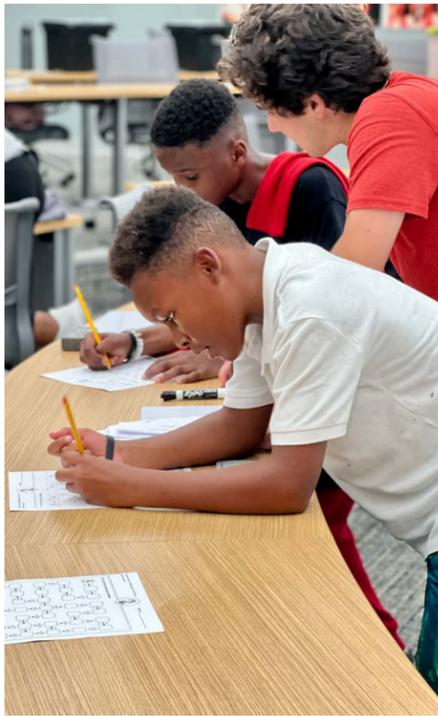
Our summer was filled with the sounds of 50s Rock & Roll. In what might have been our best concert ever, our children crushed "Let the Good Times Roll," "Blueberry Hill," and "Rock Around The Clock." Summer camp was also filled with lots of learning—math, science, reading, art, photography, dance, cooking, sports, and lots of laughter. Weekly COVID testing made it possible for us to stay healthy, maskless, and enjoy each other's beautiful smiles.

This fall, as we prepare Mozart's *Requiem* for next March, the CCC is working up a 70s Disco set with strings for our upcoming December concerts, including Abba's "Dancing Queen" and Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive." In a recent rehearsal, I played a song to introduce it to the middle school choir. When I stopped the recording, Mik, an 8th grade girl, shouted out, "You need to turn that back on...I was vibin' to it." She wanted more of The Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love." Soon she'll be wearing bell bottoms.

We now have 109 children in the CCC (way up from 85 last fall), and we are proud to share that 104 are in our Math Practice Program, practicing math as much as they practice music.

Our children, just like your children—when given the right amount of love, rigor, and laughter—will flourish.....and sing Disco music really well.

John Alston



CONNECTING THE DOTS— MAKING MATH COUNT

Remember math class?

Some of you were practically jumping out of your seats to give the answer while others of you were praying for a fire drill.

Just the word “math” can evoke feelings of love and hate. Many children lean toward the latter, finding math to be boring and difficult.

At the CCC, math is both challenging and fun. In fact, we’re likely the only children’s choir that has a full-time math teacher! That means learning math via scavenger hunts, creating skip counting caterpillars, puzzles, chess, and even making a music video about multiplication facts (watch it at bit.ly/CCCsixes). It also means advanced math practice—Algebra, Geometry, and SAT Prep.

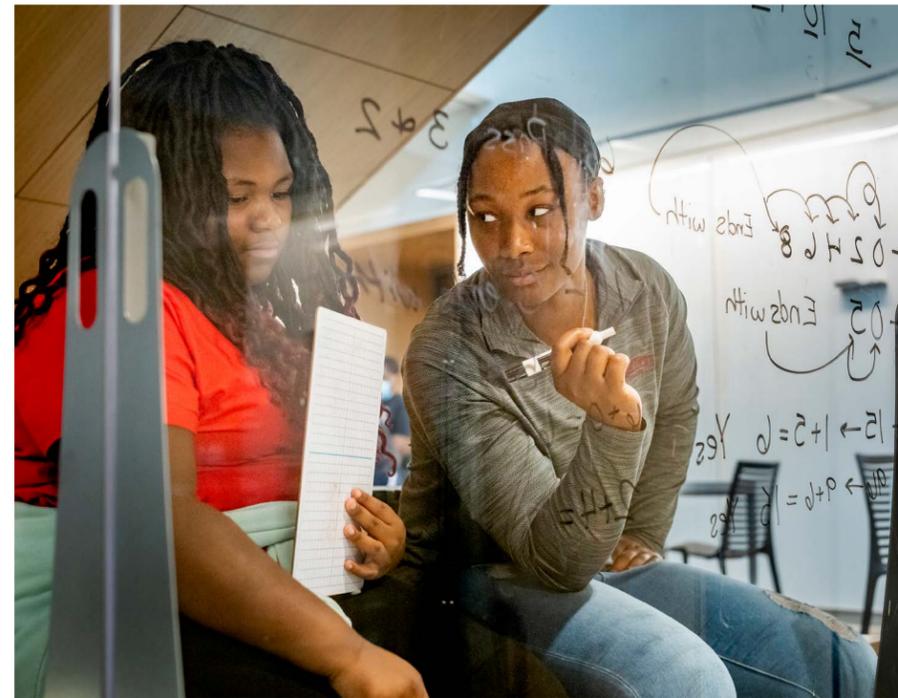
Today, 104 children in grades 3-12—our largest group to date—participate in the required program. For 2 to 3 hours per week, our children practice math alongside our full-time math teacher, Education Director, and 45 Swarthmore College student coaches. Several of our children have worked one-to-one with the same coach for years, developing both math and interpersonal skills.

Our math philosophy is simple: we assess, practice, encourage, and repeat.

We assess our children’s comprehension of foundational math concepts to identify any skill gaps. It is not uncommon—especially after the pandemic—for a child to be practicing math below their grade level.

Always up to the challenge, our children continue to work hard and surpass their goals. The 2022 end-of-school-year assessment showed that 31 children improved by a full grade level and 11 children improved by at least two grade levels. Two children tested out of their high school math classes.

“Mathematical fluency is a gateway to post-secondary choices,” explains Dana Semos, CCC’s Managing and Education Director. “We want our children to have every option for success beyond the CCC and high school, whether they choose college, a trade, or go directly into the workforce.” 🎵



“My daughter Maia received the Mathematician of the Month award. This is what the CCC Math Tutoring Program has done for Maia. She has the highest math grades in her school career! I am so thankful for her being in the choir and a part of the tutoring program.”





A SUMMER TO REMEMBER



“How was your summer?”

It’s a question nearly every child hears during the first week of school. Just imagine one of our CCC children answering that question.

“I sang in two concerts, choreographed an African dance piece, conducted science investigations, learned to cook eggs Benedict, sharpened my math skills, went to a water park, and exhibited my photography. Oh, and I did it all on a college campus.”

Needless to say (but we’ll say it anyway), our children flourished throughout our intensive six-week Summer Learning Program (SLP), filling the Swarthmore College campus with their joy and energy.

They filled science labs, dance and art studios, lecture halls, and possibly their favorite, Sharples Dining Hall. Inside those spaces, our children learned the science behind fireworks, drew self-portraits, mastered fractions and so much more.

Our children also enjoyed having a “home base” as they affectionately called the new CCC building on Swarthmore’s campus. It was used for math instruction, rehearsals, reading, cooking lessons, and as a lounge for the older students at the end of the day.

Throughout their time with the CCC, our children learn how to balance the fun with the serious.

The SLP is the perfect example of that philosophy—from science experiments and math equations in the morning to BBQs and water slides on Friday afternoons. What could be better? 🎵



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: A HIGH-FIVE TO OUR “FAB FIVE”



Zoe Gainer

Zoe made her musical debut singing the theme song to “Little Einsteins,” one of her favorite childhood shows that incorporated classical music into the story.

“When I was younger that was how I started to get into classical music. And when I joined the CCC I was able to recognize famous pieces because of the “Little Einsteins.”

At the CCC, Zoe went from singing theme songs to singing Mozart’s *Requiem*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and The Beatles’ “Let It Be.”

“Music is safe. It never fails to comfort me or lift my spirits. I am now able to sing the hard music and to sing the music that even adult choirs struggle with sometimes.

The CCC creates a safe space for a lot of people. If you had a bad day at school and are told that ‘it will be alright’ I think that’s really valuable. That’s something that a lot of people like about being in choir.”



Zoe attends Ithaca College where she hopes to sing some of that hard music during open mic night.



My'Réll Stone

My'Réll's face lights up when she talks about the CCC. And she's been talking all about the CCC at the University of Hartford where she is studying biology.

“The best part about coming from the CCC is that it’s something that you can claim, that you can own and then go out in the world and brag about. I’ve sung Mozart’s *Requiem*, I’ve sung with orchestra and with people from outside the CCC.”

My'Réll considers the people in the CCC as family, which was evident when she lost her father last year.

“The people in the choir are your backbone. Despite all of the things that I have gone through, I've always had the choir to lean on. The choir gives you hope. And the choir has been one of my biggest, most fun outlets.”



Micah Walker

Ask Micah what the key to his heart is and he'll instantly tell you it's cars. Since graduating, he's taken that love to Virginia Union University where he is double majoring in physics and engineering with the goal of becoming an automotive engineer.

Joining the CCC before he could even see over a steering wheel, Micah credits much of his growth as a man to John and Sean (CCC's Assistant Music Director).

“I've learned that the best way to be a man is to carry yourself with respect.”

It's a lesson that Micah believes all of his peers in the chorus have also learned.

“When we had rehearsals with John there was always this moment where he would put a sense of vulnerability into the rehearsal. He'd ask, ‘How was your day? How are you doing? Raise your hand if you have anything to say that you want to share with the group.’

That helped form a bond with all of the boys in the group that created a more vulnerable moment where we could just always talk to each other. He showed all of us what it takes to survive in the world.”

Mikal Young

Mikal remembers his first day at the CCC.

“When my mom was at the table signing me up, I actually met somebody that day who was also signing up. His name was John and he was my first friend in the choir. From there on, I just knew that I was going to have fun.”

There was never any shortage of fun for Mikal. Just ask him about the water balloon mishap.

“What I love about the CCC is that I can be around people and be myself and be comfortable. We all treat each other like family here.”

Mikal now serves as a Program Assistant and mentor for the bass section.

“I want to be a role model to people. I want people to look up to me and be proud of me, be proud of themselves, know that they can be better than me one day, know that they don't have to give up on their dreams. I want to be someone who makes people happy as I make myself happy. We're all improving as people.” 🎵



DON'T MISS A BEAT! Stay connected with our children by following the CCC on social media and by signing up for our email updates at ChesterChildrensChorus.org/signup.

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2023 UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

January 14, 2023

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert

March 12, 2023

Mozart's Requiem

May 12 & 13, 2023

Spring Concerts

All performances are held at Lang Music Building, Swarthmore College



CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

WINTER CONCERTS!

DECEMBER 9 AT 7:30 P.M.
DECEMBER 11 AT 4:00 P.M.

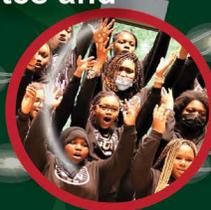
LANG MUSIC BUILDING, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Join our 109 Chester children
as they perform a mix of seasonal favorites and
hot hits from the 60s and 70s!

FREE ADMISSION!
SEATING IS LIMITED

CHESTERCHILDRENSCHORUS.ORG

Watch from home via the CCC YouTube and Facebook pages.



CCC STAFF

John Alston, Executive & Artistic Director

Elisa De Nofio, Program Coordinator

Kevin Downs, Lead Math Teacher

Carolyn Marzo, Director of Development

Christina Meehan, Marketing & Development Associate

Dana Semos, Managing & Education Director

Sean Tripline, Assistant Music Director

VOICE FALL 2022

Design: Karlyn Rosen Aires

Photography: John Wehmiller and CCC Staff

The Chester Children's Chorus
is an affiliated program
of Swarthmore College
and receives generous in-kind
support from the College,
but raises its own funds to
cover all direct expenses.

Official tax receipts for charitable
contributions to the Chorus come
directly from the College.

CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS
500 COLLEGE AVENUE
SWARTHMORE, PA 19081
610-328-8180



CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

STRONG VOICE • STRONG MIND • STRONG SPIRIT

www.chesterchildrenschorus.org



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