

Jeffrey Deygoo, M.D., *Alumnus*



I have a godly and wise mother who decided to send me to MCA's Preschool at 3 years of age. MCA's reputation for a healthy academic and spiritual My single foundation was important to her. My single Mom,

an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, wanted hope for my future and godly values for my character. I lived in an apartment in Washington Heights on West 156th Street as she worked her way through college, a degree in accounting, and the social work field in metro NYC.

I was bright in math and science from the beginning, but was quiet and lagged behind in the English language in the early years. I was impacted by MCA from the very beginning. MCA was like a family, and I am very close to my classmates to this day. The teachers were also like family to me. They provided structure and high expectations, helping to build my character and holding me accountable to acting right.

MCA and my mother pushed me to excel. My mother would take me to the library and work with me at home. I was pushed to be my best by the teachers at MCA who went beyond the classroom to invest in my life and well-being. You have to be a special person to teach at MCA. Mrs. Foell, my first

grade teacher, gave me piano lessons after school. I participated in regional inter-scholastic competitions like Math Olympics, Geography Bees, and Spelling Bees as well as MCA Science Fairs throughout the years. I was on the A honor roll every quarter of every year.

Mr. Delp and Miss Hykes coached me in basketball in grades 5- 8. We had good teams with great comradery that won championships. Sports was big at MCA. I still play basketball today with some of those same guys.

In 5th grade I participated in the Prep for Prep organization that prepares minority students for elite private schools, but after a year of preparation and then visiting elite private school classrooms, I told my Prep for Prep teachers I wanted to stay at MCA. MCA was family to me. In 7th grade math class, Miss Hykes pulled five of us aside and gave us advanced math instruction the entire year.

Because of the strong academics, competitions, athletics, and interaction at MCA, my English language skills improved greatly and helped me to advance to where I am today. After MCA, I went on to Fordham Preparatory High School, Syracuse University, Drexel University in Philadelphia and medical school at New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY. Last May, I became a doctor at Long Island Jewish Medical Center. Best of all, I love God and still attend church with my mother. I desire to give back, and I often speak to young people about life-long

service and leadership through knowing God and understanding His world.

Bethany Campbell, *Teacher*



I came to MCA 10 years ago after being directed by God to leave my life and family in South Carolina for the great adventures that He had for me here. My first interaction with this school and

my eventual church was sleeping in the classroom I am currently in while leading a missions trip with my youth from Charleston.

It was on the flight home that I felt like God was telling me to move to NYC and work with the youth of this city. I had no clue at the time the journey I was about to go on which eventually led to me being hired as a preschool assistant to then being asked to take on the job of a middle school English teacher the night before my first school day was to start.

I had never taught before but thankfully due to several supportive co-workers and the fact that God had already allowed me to work with some of my students at a camp upstate the previous summer, I was able to quickly assimilate into my new position.

The following year I was given the opportunity to take the position as middle school History teacher which I quickly fell in love with. Looking back now, to me this whole story has great irony as I had told the youth pastor at

my church in Charleston that I did not want to work with middle school students anymore. I had avoided education in college and rather pursued psychology largely because I always hated history when I was in school. Now I was doing all three of these things and loving them.

Since then I have pursued and completed my Masters in Education with a focus on literacy and learning in the content area. I have also become certified as a teacher with ACSI. I was given a great opportunity to attend an awesome class down at NYU through a scholarship from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. I also attended a seminar, on teaching finances to middle school and high school students, which has helped expanded my teaching with my students.

I was able to lead our school in to pursuing and achieving the addition of smart boards into all of our classrooms. I also am working on trying to unify the way we teach history in our school throughout all of the grades.

10 years after the fact and I am totally head over heels both with teaching students about the past

coupled with God's truth as well as simply having the privilege of investing in our students lives. They are the reason I moved here and have stayed here. I remember sitting in the gym at MCA and watching some youth play while on my mission's trip and wanting nothing more than to come and share God's love with them.

I have been able to develop a number a very good and lasting relationships with these students throughout the years. I have watched a number of my first group of students graduate from college this past year. I also have had the great opportunity to attend quite a few of their high school graduations. I go to their sports games and hangout with them when I can. They even come and hang out at my house.

I have several who have even become pretty much my own kids. That is probably the thing I love most about this school is that it creates an atmosphere of family where everyone is related through one major focus which is God and His love and because of this we can love each other.

I have worked in many jobs throughout my life but never found an atmosphere that even begins to compare with the one here at MCA. I love my bosses who not only treat their staff with respect but also who love us and even dare to invest in us as if we were their own family. The Bonifas family and their

home alone have been my home away from home.

Living in this city has not been easy, but thanks to my kids and my MCA family, I am happy and at home here. While I have been offered other positions at fine schools as well as begged by my students to teach at their schools, I can think of no other place I would rather be than here.

Justin Diaz, Alumnus



Difficulty shaped the early stages of my life, but it did not define me. My father died when I was 9 months old. He went swimming with his friends at a lake, and he drowned. I struggle with this story. When I was old enough to understand, my mother had finally explained to me what happened to my father.

At that time, the full reality of his death did not really dawn on me. It did not bear any weight. The more I learn about his death, the more I feel there is more to his death than was reported. Year by year, graduation after graduation, accomplishment after accomplishment, it really started to weigh on me. My father was not present



for any of my successes in life, and that hurt. I watched my friends receive the hugs and kisses, and “good jobs” from their fathers that I never received. I began to cry out for attention.

Ms. Hazel, my first grade teacher, understood that. I was a talkative child. Though I disrupted her class, she was very kind and gentle. As a matter of fact, all of my elementary teachers were aware. They had always kept in good contact with my mother who was also in and out of the hospital. I remember a time where my mom became very ill, and

I went to Mrs. Ortiz’s home for a sleepover for the weekend. Her family made it very comfortable for me to be there. I see Mrs. Ortiz as a part of my family.

In 5th grade, I was pulled out of MCA, and taken upstate into Orange County. My mother remarried and life seemed to be going well. Then unexpectedly, our family life took a dive. The amount of frustration in our home led my mother and stepfather to separate, and eventually divorce. At the time, I was confused. I thought I had found a father, but circumstances had proven otherwise. It took so many years to come with terms with all of this. I would spend many nights asking God why this was happening to me. There were so many unsettling feelings, and I just wanted answers.

I had so much anger in me. The lessons that my mother had taught me

and the lessons I learned in MCA about love and peace completely left my mind because I could not handle the stress. Most people would say that it is justified to come to that level of anger due to my circumstances. However, I had to stay in check with God and what he commands of me. I must be patient and keep the peace.

I returned to MCA in 2007. It was an uncomfortable transition from upstate to New York. Leaving behind those troubling feelings was impossible. I kept some distance for a time. Ms. Woodmansee gave me a warm welcome as I returned. I saw old teachers again like Ms. Hazel and Mrs. Ortiz. I met new teachers who were just as great.

The most impactful teacher I had that year was Ms. Campbell. My classmates and I described her as a teacher with a loving heart who ruled her class with an iron hand. This was exactly what I needed, though I did not agree at the time. I was constantly disruptive in class. I was this way in many classes. Honestly, it was a cry for help. That year I had plenty of ups and downs as I was still trying to cope with my past. However, I was finally back home, back in a safe environment, and among dependable people.

God was with me the whole way. I endured because of Him. I endured because of God's lessons taught by my teachers. I endured because I remembered the love shown by MCA



staff and my mother. That year established that MCA would always be a place I can turn to when I need help or advice. Graduating from middle school, I felt refreshed.

In high school, I attended Evangel Christian High School. I stayed there for two years and moved into public school due to traveling reasons. I lived in the Bronx and my high school was in Queens, so it was not very convenient. I left Evangel with confidence because of the spiritual reinforcement it gave me. In my new school, Pelham Prep Academy, I was faced with many challenges adjusting to being in a

public school. However, God is great, and His wisdom is infallible. I stayed in His Word to protect my mind and my heart, and I was able to stay focused on my education and earn my diploma. I graduated with a B+ average and had strong SAT scores.

I am now studying at John Jay College for Criminal Justice. I major in Criminology with plans to protect my city. I would also like to correct the issues of police brutality. I have been instilled with a desire to act respectfully regardless of the circumstance. This desire has motivated me in my plan to become the police commissioner of New York City. When the time comes, I will be protecting the same community that kept me safe.

No matter where God places me in life, I will do all things for His glory. This is what MCA instills in its students. It pushes them to be great despite their circumstances. My brother, who is currently attending MCA, is in a place I know where he will grow to be a great student and grow to be a better man. Most importantly, MCA gives a strong foundation for proper growth by teaching students how to turn knowledge into wisdom: That wisdom is what keeps me strong every day.

Guelybel Gullon, *ALUMNA*
on Rick Bonifas, *Principal*



I'd like to begin by congratulating Dr. Bonifas on 25 amazing years at Manhattan Christian Academy and by apologizing for not being able

to make it tonight and celebrating with you all. In actuality, the fact that I am not here is, in great part, a fault of Dr. Bonifas himself. Tonight I am attending class at Manhattan College in Riverdale, where I major in Biology and Psychology, and I would like you all to know what a large role Dr. Bonifas and his work at MCA, have played in getting me here.

I began attending MCA at the age of seven in the first grade. My life had



changed dramatically during this time; I had very recently been born again and, until then, had been attending a public school in which I was bullied by older students at the age of six. Even though I was placed in a lower grade due to MCA's higher quality education, I loved this new life very much and, for those first few years, life was bliss.

At around the age of 10, things changed again in my life. My Mother began to attend college and my two younger brothers and I began to spend our evenings at the Bonifas household. We would also be there early weekday mornings before school, as my Mom had to be at work and could not drop us off at the correct time. This may confuse some of you as we know that MCA offers both early and after school care for its students to accommodate for parents who cannot make the normal times.

What I did not know at the time was that my Mother couldn't afford to pay for either of these programs. Since starting at MCA my father had refused to help her financially, even before walking out on us. My Mom's only option, if she was to keep her job, was to take my brothers and me out of MCA and place us in public school once again.

Dr. and Mrs. Bonifas offered the alternative that kept us in MCA until the 8th grade; they would care for us both before and after school, and even feed us during these times, so that my Mother could continue to support us as best she

could. All of this, without accepting any sort of payment.

Not only this, but one particular Christmas, my Mother had been having large economic difficulties, and could not afford to pay what she owed at MCA for our schooling, much less buy us gifts. The Bonifas' not only bought my brothers and I gifts in my Mother's place, but they gave my Mom her own gift; a check with the exact amount of money she needed to pay so that we could continue our schooling.

However, economic support was *not* the only thing that has gotten me here today. Both Dr. and Mrs. Bonifas provided emotional support for my family and me in times of need. Early middle school, at around the 5th grade, my father came back into our lives, but not in a positive way. His reappearance caused trouble at home that we could not handle on our own.

On top of this, my brothers and I had been accepted into a charter school nearer to home that offered to put me into the grade I was supposed to be in. This time was particularly difficult for me; I struggled with trusting my father and getting my heart broken by him constantly, and I could not decide if staying at MCA was what would be best for me at the time.

One particular conversation I had with Dr. Bonifas at the time helped me get through a lot of these issues because I felt as though I could relate to him. He managed to convince me that staying at



MCA was the better option even if I was in the grade below, and that I could always get into my grade at a later point in life if I really wanted to.

He also helped me to forgive my father for who he was and what he was doing in our lives. Dr. Bonifas was so influential to me at this time that at the age of 13, even though he was not a pastor at Manhattan Bible Church, I asked for him to be the one to baptize me that summer. On the day of my baptism, he was there to surprise me and was part of one of the largest moments in my life.

Dr. Bonifas continued to help me get to where I am today even after I left MCA. He is the one who suggested that I go to Evangel Christian High School upon graduation, where I spent three amazing years growing academically and spiritually. It is where I made up my grade by doing two years in one and graduating early in my third year, encouraged greatly by Dr. Bonifas' words many years ago.

Dr. Bonifas was also the one who convinced my Mom to let me go away for college, if I so chose, so that I could pursue whatever path God laid down for me. Though I did end up staying in New York, I will be forever grateful for him being an advocate for me during this time.

All in all, Dr. Bonifas is one of the major reasons for me not being able to make it here tonight. If it wasn't for the Bonifas' assistance during economic

downfalls, I probably would not have had the academic foundation needed to be in the school I am in today.

If it wasn't for their support during problematic times with my father, I can honestly say I don't know if I would be who I am at this moment in my life. And if it wasn't for Dr. Bonifas' support and encouragement in my personal academic and spiritual life, I would neither have been as encouraged to go forward in my education as I am, nor would I be as strong as I am in my Faith today.

Dr. Bonifas doesn't just work for a school, as so many people believe he does; he works for his students, in and beyond the walls of MCA. Nothing he did for my family and I was something just any school Principal would do, and it was definitely not something he was obligated, or even persuaded to do.

So Dr. Bonifas, I would like to thank you for helping me to be where I am tonight, even though I would have loved to congratulate you in person along with everyone else here. God Bless You and the amazing work you and Mrs. Bonifas do at Manhattan Christian Academy every day for so many other students just like me. Congratulations and Thank you for changing my life for the better in every possible way you could have.

With much Love from the bottom of my heart!

**Kenneth Jones, by His Grandfather,
Rev. Ralph H. Hoist III**



Kenneth Jones is currently a Sixth Grade Student at MCA. His grandparents, who pastor the

Bethel Baptist Church in Queens, are raising him in a Christian home. Unfortunately it was not always like this for Kenneth. Kenneth's father brought Kenneth into a world of drugs and violence and was himself incarcerated. Kenneth's mother is not a motherly type, and her neglect of Kenneth was all too apparent. Kenneth was about to become another statistic of a society that has made the term throw away kids all too real. Kenneth's public school was a bad experience filled with harassment and ostracism.

Our son has turned his life around and is working as a chef and has accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. Kenneth now spends his summer vacations with his father in a stable and wholesome environment. Kenneth's father asked if we could raise his son since his job precluded him from being hands on and involved in Kenneth's life. The public school system was about to 'socially promote' Kenneth under the "No Child Left Behind Act." Which in our minds is another way of saying sweep the problem under the rug.

Kenneth came to MCA with no Math skills and barely a first grade reading

level as he entered the Third Grade. All of that is turned around thanks to a lot of work on the part of the teachers at MCA in conjunction with a home program that allows him to reach his full potential. Kenneth now reads above grade level with an enjoyment not seen before coming to MCA. His Math skills have also improved from a child who did not know his times tables to a young man, who in the midst of other tasks, recites any times table instantly.

At MCA God is ever present and this is visible by Kenneth's prayer life. He prays daily not for things but for his family, his classmates and those less fortunate than himself.

My wife and I have decided with Kenneth's father that it would be in the best interest of Kenneth to finish his primary education at MCA even though our son is capable of bringing him home today. All of us believe that when Kenneth is ready to matriculate into high school he will be better prepared because of MCA.

Sarah Cumming, Teacher



For three years after college, I taught middle school English and Bible in an affluent Christian prep school in

East Texas. Although I loved my school and students, in the summer of 2006 I spent some time daydreaming about



living in New York. During this silliness, I found and fell in love with MCA, so much so that I told people at my school how wonderful it is. When my husband Alan and I abruptly moved to New York City for his work, I knew exactly where I wanted to work: MCA.

At MCA, I learned to teach. MCA trains its teachers in two essential areas: instructional planning based on how the brain learns, and discipline based on a culture of respect and relationship. In my four years here, I've seen students come to us below grade standards and emerge with effective tools to become their own teachers. I've watched disruptive behavior evolve from fear to hope and peace. Students starting with no motivation have graduated as scholars. Beleaguered boys have developed confidence as future men. I've observed with joy as self-centered sixth grade girls blossom, their hearts turning out toward others.

I asked Gicell, an alum I taught, what she would share about MCA. She said she's alive because of MCA--mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. She said the teachers know how to answer with not just knowledge but wisdom, in and out of the classroom. "At MCA," she says, "our personal struggles become something good, something that makes us ready for life."

Our students are not defeated by background or future difficulty. We've been given a unique position to offer practical skills and real hope. I am

beyond grateful to engage in the work of elevating and igniting these children's imaginations.

Pastor Kermit Moss, Parent



As parent of an MCA alumnus and two current students, I recognize the significance of chapel in the moral and spiritual formation of children and early adolescents in an urban context.

Moreover, as the senior pastor of Manhattan Bible Church, I am accustomed to speaking to the students at Manhattan Christian Academy. Yet, a recent chapel experience was both a compelling and impactful reminder of the school's mission to transform lives.

At the close of the 3rd - 5th grade chapel service, I simply emphasized the love of God to the young people. I reiterated that God loved them notwithstanding the difficulties in which some of them lived. I was astonished at the unexpected response from the students related to an apparently normative statement. A number of students began to weep due to the despondency, despair and discouragement in their homes and neighborhoods. Teachers consoled and



prayed for these young people. Groups of 3rd - 5th graders boys and girls from various racial and ethnic backgrounds began to pray for each other.

This atypical but memorable chapel reflected the necessity of a secure and loving educational setting in contrast to the harshness of the city. One alumnus purported "Manhattan Christian Academy is like a country school in the midst of the urban jungle." Manhattan Christian Academy strives for educational excellence. Moreover, this educational oasis in the dessert of hopelessness also encourages urban youth in a compassionate manner--- unmatched by other schools---- while challenging them to develop their minds. Sadly, urban youth not in MCA's setting may fail miserably academically simply because of a lack of love.

A young child told me "thank you" at the end of the chapel because she was reminded about the love God has for

urban children. Subsequently, her expression of gratitude is a mirror of my own thankfulness as a parent. Upon entering MCA my oldest child was a shy but good student moving back to NYC from a public school in Virginia. He readily admits MCA helped form the confidence and discipline that helped him grow to become an honors student and leader in his high school. In addition, my two youngest children anticipate coming to school daily, enjoy learning and absolutely "glow" when talking about their teachers. As a parent this speaks volumes to the impact of the school. Christian Academy in the next decade is tremendous but is also a necessity in the community. Thus, I envision a greater and expanded future where multitudes of children will have access to an environment where educational excellence is possible.

What is Your Child Learning in School?

As you can see from these stories, Manhattan Christian Academy (MCA) has grounded the lives of many. These stories feature overcoming adversity through study and spiritual discipline.

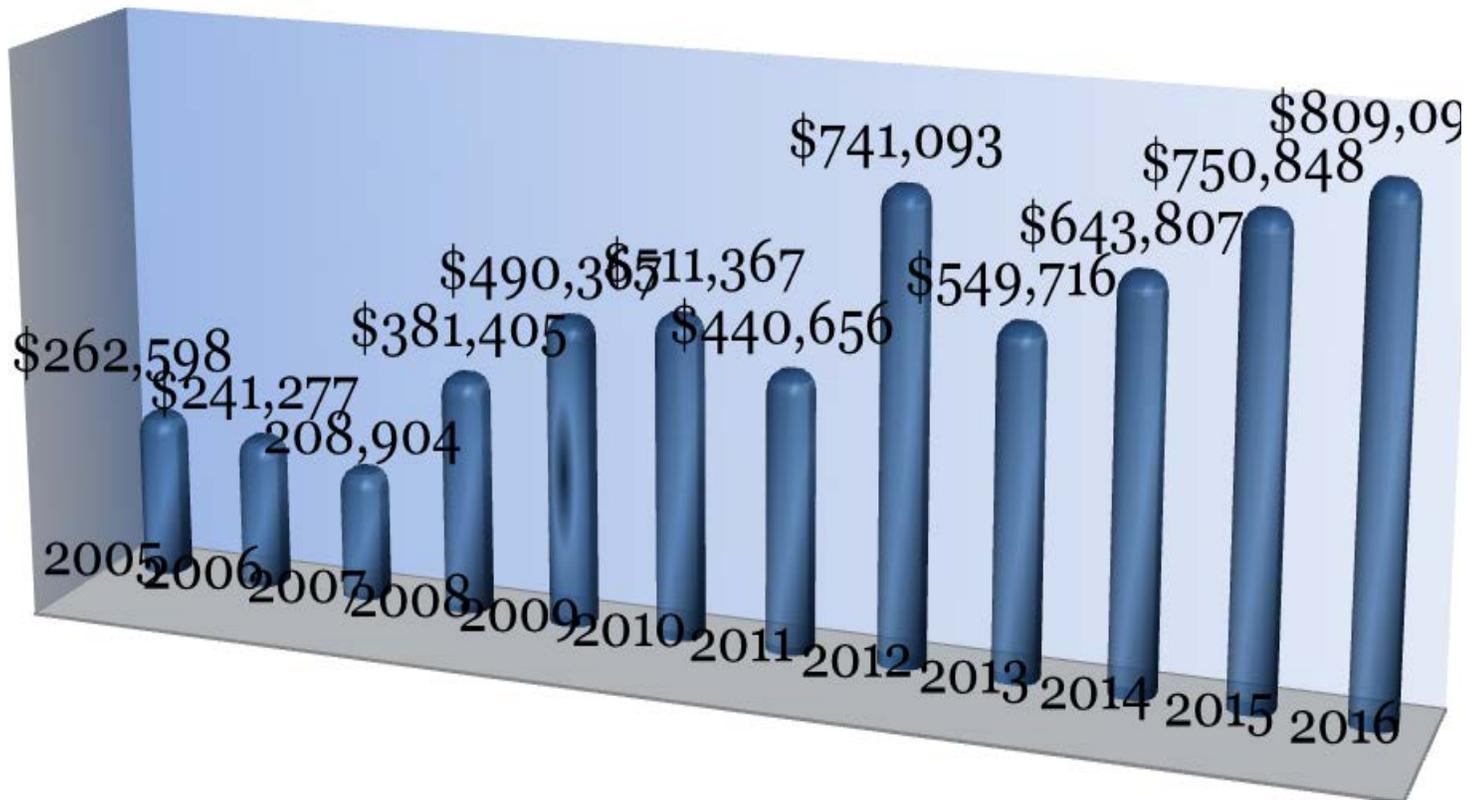
If you know a child from Preschool to the 8th Grade who you believe would benefit from an MCA education, please call or email Danielle Bonifas, Admissions Director at 212-567-5521 x221. Also please visit our website at mcanyc.org to learn more about the school.

Open House dates are October 13, November 10, December 8, January 12, February 9 March 16, April 6, May 11, and June 8 at 8:30 in the morning. It is not necessary to belong to a church to enroll your child. Nothing compares with a visit!

mcanyc.org



MCA Donation History Since 2005



About MCA

Manhattan Christian Academy (MCA) is a private independent Christian school located at 205th Street and 9th Avenue in Manhattan. MCA was founded in 1976 and has served thousands of children and their families. Located in an area with twice the poverty as New York City's average, these families cannot afford the school. MCA has told its story to people in metropolitan New York and beyond developing funding. Since 2008, MCA has raised \$5,000,000 in donations to support the mission. The funding of course has been a wonderful benefit for the children, families, and faculty, but it has also been a blessing for those who have become involved. If you would like to learn more, or schedule a visit, please call Paul Gojkovich, 212-567-5521 x249. mcanyc.org

mcanyc.org

MANHATTAN CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

