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March 5, 2007

Fruit of their labor? Education

New school in Indy will offer the poor a quality education and job to help pay for it

By **Staci Hupp**
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Trey Barnes wears baggy pants and struggles to get noticed at his Eastside middle school.



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Possibilities: Drew Ervin, 16, talked recently with Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp about options Providence Cristo Rey could offer. He likes that he could learn about hotel management. - Heather Charles / The Star

Providence Cristo Rey High School

- **Address:** 75 N. Belleview Place, Indianapolis.
- **Projected enrollment:** 100 freshmen and 30 sophomores.
- **Tuition:** About \$8,500 a year. Three-fourths is paid by the student's employer. Students can apply for financial aid to cover the

By this time next year, he hopes to wear neckties and rub elbows with corporate types who know his name.

Trey, 14, is applying for the first freshman class at Providence Cristo Rey High School, a career academy set to open next fall on the Near Westside.

Cristo Rey will stand out among metro-area schools for several reasons. First, the Catholic school is in Haughville, one of the city's poorest areas. Private schools usually open where the money is -- on a city's outskirts or in suburbs.

Then there's the school's position as a pipeline between pot dropouts and the workplace. Students at Cristo Rey schools other cities work five days a month at law firms, insurance c employers. Instead of paychecks, they earn about three-qu

In turn, the schools produce a wealth of college-bound grad scant number of dropouts.

Altogether, the approach drives home a message that might already: Education is the ticket to a better life.

"When they go to work and they see a variety of careers an themselves being successful at something in those environr make it out of reach for them," said Sister Jeanne Hagelska president. "It makes school relevant."

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• **Criteria:** School accepts students who are poor enough to qualify for free or discounted school lunches. Administrators say that a willingness to work hard is more important than a student's report card. Students must take a placement test and have recommendation letters from teachers and other school officials.

• **Phone:** (317) 860-1000.

• **Cristo Rey nationwide:** Twelve schools are open, and seven others, Indianapolis included, will open this year.

• **Cities:** Los Angeles; Cleveland; Chicago; Cambridge, Mass.; Denver; Kansas City, Mo.; Lawrence, Mass.; New York City; Portland, Ore.; Sacramento, Calif.; Tucson, Ariz.; Waukegan, Ill.

• **On the Web:**
providencecristorey.org.

Companies involved

Indianapolis-area companies that will hire students:

- AIT Laboratories.
- Advantage Health Solutions.
- Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield.
- Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
- Baker & Daniels, LLP.
- Barnes & Thornburg, LLP.
- Bingham McHale, LLP.
- CSO Schenkel Shultz.
- Deloitte & Touche, LLP.
- Duke Realty Corp.
- Eli Lilly and Co.
- Hawthorne Community Center.
- Habitat for Humanity.
- Ice Miller, LLP.
- Kite Realty Group Trust.
- Marian College.
- Marian Inc.
- OneAmerica Financial Partners.
- Office of the Controller.
- RJE Interiors.
- Shiel Sexton.
- St. Vincent Health.
- St. Francis Hospital & Health Centers.

"60 Minutes" on CBS in 2004.

Hagelskamp used the clip in her pitch to area business officials.

"Afterwards, we were speechless," said Louonna Kachur, human resources director for Ice Miller law firm. "We looked at each other like: 'Wow. How could we not do this?'"

Four Cristo Rey students will share one \$16-an-hour job at Ice Miller, Kachur said.

Trey likes the idea of spending part of his time on the job. He carved out a career path, "but I think that's what this school is about." "To get you to see what you want to be."

His mother, Kimberly Barnes, 39, wants a school that demands more of her son. That's not happening at Marshall Middle School, she said.

"I'm on him all the time about school," said Barnes, who juggles work and family. "You have to have the other end support him, too."

Success stories

Veronica Garza, 22, has seen the impact of an education at Cristo Rey. Her parents moved to the United States from Mexico, and she is being the first in her family to graduate from college.

She graduated from Cristo Rey's Chicago school in 2003 and attended Creighton University, completing degrees in Spanish and psychology. Two parents who valued education, she said she'd have been without Cristo Rey.

But the school's internships gave her the skills and experience for her workplace.

"I've been told by my supervisors that I know how to carry myself in a professional environment," she said, "and that's because I've been in one for two years old."

Cristo Rey is a network of 12 schools, but it started with one.

More than a decade ago, a Chicago priest wanted to open a school in a poor neighborhood.

The career element was added to keep tuition affordable. It has become the most important ingredient.

Cristo Rey schools boast a dropout rate of less than 3 percent of the class of 2006 enrolled in college last fall, and 95 percent accepted.

Word of its impact spread to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis a few years ago.

"We saw a real need in the center city for some type of education that was attractive to center-city high school kids," said Joe Peters, warden of the Catholic education office for the archdiocese. "Many times, those kids in our regular Catholic high schools."

The Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods agreed to open a school at the archdiocese's request.

The religious order brought in Hagelskamp, a former teacher and director of the teacher education department at the University of San Francisco.

About the same time, Cristo Rey's success was put into words.

The work will be clerical -- opening mail, filing papers -- but Kachur said it's work that the firm otherwise would have someone to do.

Company officials view the partnership as more than a conduit to cheap help. It's also a recruiting tool.

"Even if they don't want to be lawyers, we want them to know there are lots of different functions at the firm," Kachur said.

Seeking students

Two years of preparation went into the Indianapolis arm of Cristo Rey. Today, it has a new administrator. The school has a buy-in from at least 23 companies.

Now the school just needs students.

The school accepts students poor enough to qualify for free or discounted school lunches. They must pass a test and have recommendation letters from teachers and other school officials. Tuition is more than \$10,000 a year, but that is covered by businesses and available financial aid.

Recruitment has been slow-going. Pretzels and pinwheel snacks awaited guests at a parent information night last week, but nobody came.

Marketing can be a challenge for a Catholic school that isn't tied to a local parish. So Cristo Rey leads with a combination of mail, telephone calls and fliers.

So far, 38 students have been accepted. About 100 spots are left.

Mothers, fathers and children recently toured the nearly century-old school at 75 N. Belleview Place, home to Indianapolis Public School 50.

The sleek new office chairs and desks stood out among the old-fashioned chalkboards, light fixtures and bookshelves.

Susan Stone liked the big classrooms. Her daughter, Adriann, liked the idea of being in the first class.

"I like this school a lot," said Adriann, 14, an eighth-grader at Harshman Middle School. "I'll work hard to get in."

Trey, who was there with his mother, said little on the tour. His enthusiasm showed after they got home. "I'm excited," he said.

"He comes walking in here and he has on a dress shirt and he has a tie," his mother said. "It really means a lot."

Call Star reporter Staci Hupp at (317) 444-6253.

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