



**DIVERSITY. MULTICULTURALISM. INCLUSION.** Nearly every independent school today converses in the positive language of difference. Schools are emphasizing and seeking out greater diversity among their student and faculty populations and putting into place programs and practices to ensure community members feel included.

Ravenscroft's partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership focuses on the importance of collaboration and calls for students to relate to one another with fairness and empathy. In line with these goals, this past year Tijuana and Ken Crosby and Adama and Dewayne Washington established the Crosby-Washington Diversity and Inclusion Fund to provide support for the School as it undertakes a variety of programs for students, parents, faculty, and staff that foster a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives.

"We saw in Ravenscroft early on a school that had tremendous tradition. We know that the landscape of society is changing, and we want Ravenscroft to stay a leader not just in the city of Raleigh, but in the entire state and nation," Ravenscroft Trustee Dewayne

Washington says. "That requires an increased awareness of what's happening outside the school. Diversity, and particularly inclusion, is at the forefront of every sector of life."

"The school has really put a stake in the ground, if you will, with what it's doing with the Center for Creative Leadership," he adds. "There's an awareness that leaders are going to have to work effectively with people who are different than themselves. It's a great step in trying to build leaders."

As parents of children in all three school divisions, the Crosby and Washington families envision their endowment fund supporting social events and guest speakers on campus; being used to send members of the Ravenscroft community to events like the Triangle Diversity Conference and the People of Color conference; and providing awards to honor faculty and staff who successfully incorporate diversity and inclusion into their work. The fund will begin distributing money during the 2013-2014 school year.

"We not only want this for our children, but for the entire Ravenscroft community," Tijuana Crosby says. "We wanted to create a space where people would feel comfortable talking about dif-

ferent experiences with people. We don't want to exclude anyone."

The Crosbys and Washingtons define diversity broadly to include age, culture, disabilities, ethnicity, family structure, gender, learning styles, medical conditions, nationality, physical attributes, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and more. They emphasize that everyone should feel welcome, accepted, and included.

"When people hear diversity, they think of color. It's about much more than that," Adama Washington says. "We want to bring together a lot of different people at Ravenscroft, and once they get here, we want to make sure they all feel like they are part of the community."

Ken Crosby believes all Ravenscroft students will be successful and notes that a focus on diversity and community will further contribute to that success.

"It's about exposing kids to things they wouldn't be exposed to otherwise, different cultures and backgrounds," Ken Crosby says. "It helps to erase stereotypes and allow everyone to get along properly. The world is changing. There are a lot of diverse

people in the world. It helps to have knowledge and background about different cultures and practices."

Just as diversity and inclusion programming will benefit students beyond their time at Ravenscroft, the Crosbys and Washingtons recognize the long-term value of their decision to invest in a shared passion.

"We wanted this to be forever standing at Ravenscroft," Adama Washington says. "We know that after our students graduate, this will still be here." *R*



Tijuana Crosby and Adama Washington