



*“It’s very common to hear Partners say that they benefit from the relationship as much as the student.”*

*– ERNESTINE L. SANDERS, CORNERSTONE PRESIDENT AND CEO*

## Partners Learn from Each Other

The Cornerstone Partner Program is at the heart of the culture of the school: a giving of one’s self to allow another to have a more abundant life – the lesson of the carpenter from Nazareth.

Partners play a personal role in the education of each Cornerstone child. They come from all walks of life and from all over metro Detroit. In most cases – but not always – one Partner is paired with a student for one school year or longer.

The seeds for the Partner Program go back to the fall of 1991. At the time, Cornerstone’s board of directors was exploring ways to create a school culture around the teachings of Jesus while developing a sustainable financial model consistent with those teachings.

One Saturday in October, Cornerstone’s Co-Founder and long-serving Chairman, Clark Durant, was having lunch at a Hyatt hotel in Arlington, Virginia with his friend Doug Coe. Durant had visited Coe monthly for about a year discussing the teachings and life of Jesus.

Over cheeseburgers, Durant told Coe about the challenge of creating a business model for the sustainability of the new schools. “The children cannot pay the cost of an excellent education at Cornerstone,” Durant said. “How do we fund the school when so much of our revenue depends on the charitable hearts of friends and strangers?”



Coe thought about it a moment. “What is the singular attribute that reflects Jesus’ relationship with any person in the world?” he asked.

Durant took a bite out of a French fry. He suggested many attributes.

“In the end, it’s love,” Coe said, “but a profoundly different love than generally understood. It is a love reflected by the example of Jesus, who countless times gave himself so others might have a more abundant life – whether they agreed with him or believed in him or not.”

“So, make it possible for this love – even if just in a small way – to be experienced at Cornerstone in relationships with the children, and you can expect people to want to give money, too, because that is a part of who we are.”

Durant couldn’t sit still. He knew immediately that Coe had uncovered an answer to Cornerstone’s funding dilemma – and he had found it in the life of Jesus. “I still refer to that conversation as an Emmaus Road experience,” Durant says. “This love is at the core of our culture.”