



Charleston Collegiate



WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT MY FRIEND Marty Walmsley's two teenage daughters attended Charleston Collegiate on Johns Island, I had to wonder why. By my calculations, it would take close to an hour to drive to the school from her Isle of Palms residence. There has to be something special about a private school tucked in the middle of a rural sea island.

BY BARBARA MILLEN

It turns out there is something special about Charleston Collegiate—headmaster Dr. Bob Shirley. Now 72, he meant to be retired by now but could not resist the chance to steward the inquiring young minds at this country school when the opportunity arose. His employment history includes the Marines and, later, a stint in the banking industry,

but it wasn't until he began teaching that he found his true calling: working with kids. Beginning as an English teacher, it wasn't long before he moved up to headmaster at Heathwood Hall in Columbia. When he "retired" in 2000, he continued consulting, working with Charleston Collegiate on the school's accreditation. When the former headmaster retired, the school's top job was a perfect fit for Shirley. "I couldn't resist the offer," he says. "Even though I enjoyed consulting with the private schools in the area, I just can't imagine being headmaster anywhere but Charleston Collegiate."

Diversity is the key to Charleston Collegiate's suc-

cess. Though private, it is not exclusive: admission isn't based on race or income.

"All races and ethnicities come together here with a sense of community, without religious overtones," says Shirley. "I've always believed in diversity."

As soon as I mention my friend's two daughters—that one was valedictorian two years ago and the second is likely to follow in her footsteps—Shirley says, "Yes, the Walmsley girls. Sydney was just brilliant and Chelsea is very bright as well."

I was impressed that he knew exactly who I was referring to before I mentioned a name, and it reminded me of my conversation with Marty.

"It's a good school," she says. "We liked the fact that it is

non-denominational and it's real small. I knew my kids needed small classes. The school has high standards and offers a lot of individual attention."



"All races and ethnicities come together here with a sense of community..."

— Dr. Bob Shirley, Headmaster

hopes to add a Fine Arts center that would double as an auditorium for Johns Island and the surrounding area.

"I think there's a great future," says Bob Shirley.

I think he's right. 🍷

Cu vocibus postulant quo, sonet eripuit invenire eu sit. Aliquid volutpat usu ei, no vim facilisi inciderint, quod oratio volutpat mei ut. Vitae inciderint ut ius.

See for Yourself

Hacker Burr's enthusiasm is contagious. His main title is director of admissions at Charleston Collegiate, but he wears many hats: assistant teacher, football coach and lacrosse coach. And you can add "cheerleader" to that as he tells you the school has "hired the best faculty in Charleston."

He further explains that the school offers "an engaged, high-expectation environment."

The preferred teaching method is through "in-class discussion," Burr says. "There are no lectures."

But aside from the exemplary staff and instruction, Burr is most excited about the diverse student population.

"We celebrate our differences," he continues, as we pass through the gym where a group of boys are shooting hoops.

It's true. There are students from as far away as Walterboro and the Isle of Palms mingling with those who live in nearby Johns Island neighborhoods. While many come from privileged families, scholarship students have the opportunity to obtain an education they might not otherwise be able to afford. Others are challenged by the English language but quickly learn to speak it as well as their native tongue.

Burr sums it up: "We all care about each other."

There is much more to learn about this innovative school. Call Hacker Burr at (843) 559-5506 or visit www.CharlestonCollegiate.org.

