

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **Courier-Post**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Camden group gets benefactor for Ghana trip

By JASON LAUGHLIN
Courier-Post Staff

CAMDEN

Students at Creative Arts High School who plan to travel to Ghana in the spring got a \$20,000 boost Monday from an area businessman.

Frank Messina, co-owner of All Risk Property Damage Experts in Somerdale, donated the money to help pay for about 20 choir and dance students to take a one-week trip in February to the West African nation for workshops and performances.

The Camden students will be able to exchange ideas with students from Africa at the a Pan-African Arts Festival.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Nyemah Gillespie, 17, a Creative Arts student and dancer who performed alongside the school's concert choir Monday.

During the ceremony, students at the high school danced and sang music ranging from African melodies to an interpretation of "Ave Maria."

"Our students can compete with anyone and be the best and come out on top," said Fred Reiss, an assistant superintendent at the school.

The school's choir has twice won the Gold Cup in the Verona Italy Festival.

The Creative Arts High School draws its 240 students from across the city. It offers classes in vocal and instrumental music, dance, art, drama and creative writing.

The money from All-Risk Property Damage was the first donated to the Camden Board of Education Foundation, a nonprofit set up by Superintendent Annette Knox to allow private organizations to offer funds to Camden schools.

Messina, a former Camden student, is a member of the foundation's board. His company handles repair and recovery of property damage caused by fires, floods and natural disasters.

"Camden students deserve the same opportunities as their fellow students in the suburbs," Messina said in a statement. "Through the foundation, we can begin to level the playing field for the Camden child, and make some of their dreams a reality."

Reach Jason Laughlin at (856) 486-2476 or jlaughlin@courierpostonline.com

Published: December 20, 2005 3:00AM