

Major profit being made from schools outsourcing of services

By Mark Fausz

GCA Services took over janitorial services at 36 Chesterfield Public Schools (CCPS) at the beginning of this school year and their performance has not gone well. As reported in states around the country, even in the Richmond Times-Dispatch in March it was reported (L.C. Bird High School) that the company has had some disturbing complaints.

While L.C. Bird's complaints ranged from leaving keys in doors after school and doing a lousy job, the principal at L.C. Bird complained in March that the company was not doing its job.

Once again the Times-Dispatch reported: "The restrooms are becoming a health hazard. There is 'gunk' (for lack of a better word) on the fixtures, in the sinks and toilets, and on the floors," according to a written review of the service at her school by L.C. Bird Principal Laura Herbert. "There are not enough custodians during the day to keep up with the normal wear and tear on the building in addition to any unforeseen issues that arise."

New information has come from Democracy Tree, a watchdog website, who investigated the public services company GCA Services in states across the country.

"CGA placed two custodians with drug and sex offense criminal records in schools. One of the custodians, in Tennessee, was charged with the rape of a 16-year-old student in a closet on school property during school hours. It was later discovered the employee had a criminal record for aggravated battery, assault and

theft of property. Another, in Texas, was a registered sex offender who was found in a school locker room dead, with his pants down and a bag over his head. A GCA official said about the incidents, 'You have to understand, we hire a lot of people. I think a couple of incidents with 20,000 employees is a pretty good batting record.'"

Meanwhile the CEO of The Blackstone Group, the parent company of CGA Services as well as ABS, Acme Building Maintenance, Dependable Building Maintenance, National Building Maintenance, SBM Maintenance, Southern Building Services, Sunstates and TGH, according to Democracy Tree. "The private custodial contractor, hauled-in a 2014 profit of \$4.3 billion — up 24 percent from the previous year. Their CEO, Stephen Schwarzman, netted a cool \$656 million, earning him the rank of 39th on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. (Two months hence, Schwarzman has moved to the 36th position.) Another top executive with the firm, Jon Gray, raked-in \$205 million.

Chesterfield has outsourced the custodial services of 36 schools for a savings of \$1 million and plans to outsource 28 more schools next year for a total savings of \$3.5 million. Custodians that lost their job or were placed in other CCPS positions are now making a much lower wage than before the outsourcing

The question remains, will CCPS reconsider its outsourcing commitment next year?

Leaf burning for Chesterfield residents continues until April 15

The burning of leaves is allowed in designated areas of the county April 15 from 4 p.m. until midnight, Monday-Thursday

It is permitted to burn leaves on your property if you are in an area where it is allowed. A map of designated leaf-burning areas is available online at <http://www.chesterfield.gov/PublicSafety/Fire/default.asp> (select Open Burning/Leaf Burning).

The burning of limbs, tree trunks, logs or stumps is considered property maintenance or land clearing and is not allowed under the conditions of leaf burning. The burning of tree and garden trimmings requires a 30-day permit and is not allowed under the conditions

of leaf burning. Campfires and warming fires are allowed if the fuel is clean wood, with no trash, construction debris, oil, tires, etc.

The following applies to all open burning in Chesterfield County: A competent person shall attend fires at all times until they are extinguished and no longer smoldering. The attendee shall provide adequate fire-extinguishing equipment to control and/or extinguish the fire should it start to spread or get out of control. Failure to comply constitutes a violation of the law.

For more information, or to inquire about a burning permit, contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 748-1426 or firemarshal@chesterfield.gov

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