

# Cristo Rey students do stand up as others step up for school

Streams of people filed past students James Townes, Myesha Green and Gary Spratley in the lobby of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School March 21. Their eyes widened as the crowd grew to more than 300.

"I didn't know all these people were going to be here," Myesha said. "I'm just thinking don't mess up because my friends are here. That would be bad."

The sophomores were determined not to get rattled, even though their one-act monologues were sandwiched between two nationally known stand-up comedians in a fundraising event called Stand Up for Students.

In many ways, performing on the same stage as headliner and Calvert Hall graduate Mike Storck and host Erin Jackson was the epitome of Cristo Rey's model, which immerses students in the workforce one day a week. The school is in its second year of operation in Baltimore City and is part of a national network of Cristo Rey institutions.

"I feel a little nervous, but I've performed in front of more people than this," James said with confidence. "I can't believe I'm on the same stage with these people."

A little more than an hour later, James was prowling the stage of the school's gymnasium, performing an act about a frustrated teenager who is missing his family and the comfort of his own bed while away at camp.

The crowd, members of which paid \$75 per ticket and also participated in raffles, roared at James' routine. They doubled over in laughter just minutes before as Gary played a smooth operator trying to woo Myesha on a park bench.

Myesha also performed a one-woman routine where she tried to convince her family she possessed magical powers.

It was a night that caused Jesuit Father John Swope, president of Cristo Rey, to

smile and beam with pride.

“The three of them, they’re really terrific people,” Father Swope said. “They all have their own personal stories and a beautiful talent.”

Students took part in almost every aspect of the night, serving as greeters and hosts, checking coats while helping guests to their seats.

Bill Baird, a parishioner of Cathedral of Mary our Queen in Homeland with his wife, Joanna, helps financially sponsor students at Cristo Rey. He said the Stand Up for Students event showcased how Cristo Rey was molding citizens.

“Here, they have the opportunity to be in the workforce, to learn how to deal with people and communication skills,” Mr. Baird said. “Seeing these young people tonight and their maturity and self-confidence, their demeanor has changed dramatically from just two years ago. It’s real. It’s very real.”

The night of comedy raised enough to fund two full scholarships at \$25,000.

Gary, who has interest in drama, said he wanted to make the best of his opportunity.

“I’m blessed,” Gary said. “To come to a school like this and be in something with people of certain standards ... I’m just blessed.”

James echoed the sentiment.

“I think the school really cares a lot about us,” James said. “I’m really thankful and grateful they did this for us.”