When you are a student at Detroit Country Day School, you can’t help but to think of the headmaster as the leader of a great school, with many enormous responsibilities and commitments, and almost unreachable to someone like me. However, sitting down and interviewing Mr. Shilling one afternoon, gave me a different perspective of our headmaster. He is a kind and caring man who seems very proud of his family and grandchildren. Most of all, he is very proud of DCDS students, staff and alumni. I hope you enjoy this article and see what I saw for yourselves!

Here is the interview with Mr. Shilling:

What are you most proud of in the students?

I am most proud in the students for their thoughtfulness to each other, the way they represent their school and their family, the kindness that they share with others both within the school and outside of the school, and just generally, I couldn’t be happier to be associated with what outstanding young people including all of our students and alumni as well.

What do you envision us to be in 2013?

I am going to use the word hope. Hope really defines what we all seek. We all know the reality of the way things are now, and our students are wonderful. I hope that they continue to be wonderful, kind, and caring, both to each other and beyond our immediate community and certainly to their siblings and to their families, their parents and their teachers.

Can you please share with one of your most memorable holiday experience?

It’s, collectively, seeing both my own immediate family. We are very, very blessed to have seven grandchildren. And so, just being together with my family, because we range from as young as 4 months old to my mother- in-law, who is in her late 80s, and two great-aunts, who are in their 80s, and seeing the family in that range, seeing four generations collectively. That’s what I remember most about the holidays. And as a larger Country Day community, I love the holidays-because the alumni, my former students, come back and they share their experiences with me, and for me, that’s my larger family-- my more extended family of Country Day. And one more memory, when I was six years old (and yes, it is actually possible that I was once six years old), I was sleeping in my room and the night before Christmas, there wasn’t a desk in my bedroom, and when I woke up (and I had an upstairs bedroom), my father and my next door neighbor had brought in an old oak desk and it became my student desk as I was a child growing up. Now, that desk is with my grandson who is seven now.

What is your wish for the holidays for the middle school students?

These are the gifts that I wish to every middle school student and actually every student in Country Day:

A sound mind in a strong body, a loving heart and a virtuous soul, a rich imagination and creativity, a close family and a handful of lifelong friends, a few memorable achievements, a treasury of stories, a few dreams they can achieve, and a few more they can pass on to others.

So nothing tangible--all intangible, something that would be very meaningful for a better life.

Lastly, every parent and every teacher view you, your classmates, and the students here at Country Day as the next generation of citizen leaders. To all of us, you are unquestionably--whether it’s the holiday season or any other time during the year-- you are our most precious gift, and we all feel very blessed as teachers, staff, and parents.

After the interview, I left Mr. Shilling’s office very proud and grateful to be part of DCDS— not only for having such great role models in our school— but also for all the support we get from our families, teachers, friends and most of all from our headmaster.

I hope you enjoyed this edition and Happy Holidays. See you in 2013! Ariana Tagavi