

Back to School Feature

Misty Tate Takes on Role to Lead Casner Christian Academy



Drew and wife Misty Tate with Casner Christian Academy founder Lucille Casner at the annual Red, White & Blue fundraising event



Misty Tate and daughter Libby, circa 2005, dressed as a dove just as her mom did at the same age



Misty Mullen Tate and Christen Chapman, circa 1976, playing the role of the doves in Casner's Friendly Beasts Christmas program



Marley Obusek and Hayes Hoggland proudly raise the American and Texas flags



Students at the Casner Easter tradition, which adorns the cross with flowers that the children each bring to school, creating a beautiful symbol of hope, renewal, and faith



Current Casner student Annie Reinbach, all smiles and excited for her first day of kindergarten



Former teacher and Misty Tate's mother Carole Mullen, after flag raising in 1999 with former students Cathlyn Jones Davis (now a parent of a CCA student) and Brandon McKee



Former Student Seth DeVries with beloved and long-time Highland Park Baptist 4-year-old teacher Vicki Chapman in 2004

By Anne DeVries

For most people, walking back through the doors of a childhood school stirs nostalgia. For Misty Tate, walking through those doors as the new Headmaster feels like destiny unfolding.

This fall, Tate begins her new role as Director of Casner Christian Academy (CCA), the faith-centered preschool through kindergarten in West Austin where she once sat as a four-year-old singing hymns and saying the Pledge of Allegiance. "Casner has been an integral part of my life since I was four years old, and returning now to serve as Director truly feels like coming home," she said.

CCA's story began in 1965 as Highland Park Baptist Pre-school at Highland Park Baptist Church. Lucille Casner spent more than 45 years there, rising from classroom teacher to music teacher to headmaster before retiring in 2012. Generations of Casner families have experienced her deep faith, love for children, humor, and fierce love of country, values she instilled in every child who passed through her classroom.

Along the way, Casner built traditions that still define the school. Three times each week, one student, with a teacher's help, raises the American flag and leads the Pledge of Allegiance and national anthem; another raises the Texas flag and leads the Texas Pledge and state song, "Texas, Our Texas." Family and friends of that day's flag-raisers are invited to attend. Other beloved traditions include monthly Sing Song performances, Christmas and Spring programs, and Birthday Chapels.

In 2008, the school reorganized as a nonprofit, moved to Hillcrest Baptist Church, and took the name Casner Christian

Academy in her honor. Today it calls Glad Tidings Church, on Northland Drive in Allendale, home. The address has changed, but its guiding verse has not: Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it."

Tate, born in Austin, met Mrs. Casner as a small child at Highland Park Baptist, where she also met Mrs. Pat Felger, the teacher who, she said, "first inspired my lifelong love of children and calling to education." That relationship stretched across decades: Tate had the privilege of teaching Felger's own grandchildren. "Our relationship is a beautiful example of the lasting connections that have always been at the heart of Casner," she said.

After graduating from Baylor University in 1993 with a degree in early childhood education, Tate taught kindergarten in Eanes ISD, then returned to Casner's classrooms for four years, teaching kindergarten and first grade. By then, she and her husband, Drew, had entrusted all three of their children, Drew, Jax, and Libby, to Casner, then known as Highland Park Baptist, for their early education. Sweetly, Libby once played a dove in the school's Christmas program, the same role Tate had performed at that exact age.

In 2013, with all three children enrolled at Hyde Park School, she moved with them to teach second grade, carrying traditions like the Famous American Program into her classroom. She also spent eight years as the school's Middle School Cheer Coach, building confidence, teamwork, school spirit, and leadership.

Family runs deep in Tate's Casner story. Her mother, Carole Mullen, taught the

four-year-old class for 12 years, including Tate's oldest son, Drew. Her husband, Drew Tate, an Austin native and realtor at Tate Property, has served on Casner's Board of Directors for years, playing a hands-on role in securing its future; first finding the school's location at Hillcrest Church, then leading the search that landed Casner in its current space at Glad Tidings Church.

Tate begins the 2026 school year as its 4th Director, following in the footsteps of three impactful women, Lucille Casner, Gail Dabbs and Amy Moore, who each led Casner through different seasons but shared one understanding: that Casner is far more than a building. "I am committed to honoring the strong foundation they have created while continuing to serve the school and community that shaped my life," she said.

What makes Casner special, Tate says, is simple: relationships, faith and country, held together across generations. "It feels like a beautiful pocket in time; almost a step back in time to traditional values of God and country. It is a place that prioritizes loving and nurturing not only the children, but their entire families as well."

CCA's new leader is one of its own, shaped by a faith-centered community and devoted teachers and colleagues who, across generations, have steadfastly upheld the school's core foundations. Misty Tate is well prepared to carry CCA forward, remembering firsthand the impact it had on her life, her children's lives, and the surrounding community she is committed to serving.

Learn more about Casner Christian Academy at casnerchristian.org.



Students at the Casner Christmas Program, a cherished tradition centered on the timeless message of Christ's love and redemption



Isla Hancock, Mills Cole, and Sailor Stuart bring the storybook character Madeline to life in Casner's Spring Program



Three Kings S.J. Brown, Holden McElwrath and Hobbs Williams embrace the power of public speaking building confidence and leadership through the ability to inspire a crowd



Celebrating
a New Chapter at Casner



Congratulations to Misty Tate

Director of Casner Christian Academy,
and to the wonderful teachers and staff
who make Casner such a special place.

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Paragon Prep: Teaching Children to Think in an AI World

By Lindsay Hay, Head of School at Paragon Prep

Ask a child a hard question today, and chances are an answer is only seconds away. Our devices can solve a math problem, summarize a book, write an essay, translate a language, or create an image. Artificial intelligence is already part of our children's world.

As educators, our job isn't to pretend that technology isn't here. Our job is to make sure children can think beyond it; to become masters of technology rather than letting technology master them.

I recently traveled with students to Japan, where we found ourselves genuinely lost beneath

Osaka in a maze of subway tunnels. Without reliable cell service, our technology wasn't much help. Our students had to look around, remember where we'd been, talk to one another, ask questions, and be uncomfortable for a little while.

They had to figure it out. It made me wonder: Are we giving children enough opportunities to not immediately know the answer?

At Paragon Prep, preparing students for an AI-driven future means developing the skills to decide when to use technology, how to question it, and when to trust their own thinking. Students need opportunities to wrestle with difficult problems,

create from a blank page, defend an idea, collaborate, compete, take risks and occasionally fail.

Our motto, Work Hard, Play Hard, Be Kind, may be more relevant than ever. Perseverance, creativity, communication, resilience, empathy, and independence cannot be outsourced to technology.

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Upper School
Friday, Oct. 16, 9 a.m.

Scan to learn
more and RSVP



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Bridging K-K Open House
Tuesday, October 6
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True academic excellence is rooted in educating the whole child. As the world continues to evolve, success will depend on far more than academic achievement. Students will need to communicate effectively, collaborate to solve complex problems, think critically, lead with confidence, and adapt with resilience. At St. Michael's Prep, these essential life skills are intentionally woven into every student's educational journey.

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This reflects the unique advantage of a PreK3-12th grade education: the ability to see childhood not as a series of separate stages, but as one extraordinary, intentionally connected 16-year journey. Faculty and staff build lasting relationships that foster confidence, character, resilience, and a lifelong love of learning.

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2027-2028 APPLICATIONS OPEN **OCTOBER 1ST**

Our Verse of the Year:

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faithful in prayer. - Romans 12:12

