

H C E F

2008 ANNUAL REPORT



HOMELESS
CHILDREN'S
EDUCATION
FUND

HOPE THROUGH LEARNING



MISSION STATEMENT

Serving as a voice for homeless children in Allegheny County and ensuring that they are afforded equal access to the same educational opportunities and experiences as their peers.

History

Founded in 1999 by Dr. Joseph F. Lagana, the Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF) is a non-profit agency dedicated to providing educational opportunities and experiences for children and youth residing in 17 of Allegheny County's homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities. HCEF supplements and complements the work of the public school system with a host of educational tools, programs and trainings to assist homeless youth in achieving school success.

To do this, HCEF has established Learning Centers in nine of its partnering shelters, which provide children with a quiet study space, computers, web-based software, art materials, maps, puzzles and a wide array of educational games. In each of the 17 sites, HCEF has developed an extensive Resource Library with professionally-selected books for children of all ages. All of HCEF's programs align with the Pennsylvania State Education Standards.

Our partnerships have expanded to include the Pittsburgh Public Schools, Clairton School District, Allegheny County Library Association, Citizens Bank, Allegheny County Bureau of Hunger and Housing, Diocese of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, Barnes & Noble and Scholastic, Inc.

Through these partnerships, HCEF uses the wealth of resources in Allegheny County to provide seminars and hands-on workshops for shelter staff, parents and children. The work of HCEF is supported by the generosity of area businesses, foundations, individuals, government administrators, policy makers and community organizations. Together we provide children with the greatest gift of all: *hope through learning.*

Advocacy

Since 1999, HCEF has been a persistent and effective advocate for homeless children and youth. In addition to advocating for the reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, HCEF has also been vital in building community partnerships and raising public awareness of the needs of this vulnerable population.

HCEF created the Homeless Children's Network in 2008, and continues to build a coalition of agencies dedicated to providing resources and opportunities for youth in Allegheny County. Additionally HCEF is conducting a study with Allegheny County's Department of Hunger and Housing and researchers from Duquesne University to evaluate gaps in services, particularly in terms of after-school programming opportunities.

In partnership with Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners (PSVP), HCEF held an educational discussion panel on homelessness in Allegheny County. In addition to educating their members on the plight of the homeless in Allegheny County, HCEF and PSVP participated in Operation Safety Net's annual vigil which commemorates the lives of homeless individuals who have died during the year.



The Allegheny County Department of Human Services' Point-in-Time survey of May 2008 revealed:

- 545 children were residing in emergency shelters or transitional housing on the day of accounting.
- The average age of these children was 8 years.
- Children account for 27% of Allegheny County's homeless population.

The New Face of Homelessness

Today in the United States there are over 1.5 million homeless children and youth. The current economic crisis, home foreclosures and price increases for food, gas and utilities have led to a surge in homelessness never before seen in our country's shelters and schools. Here in Allegheny County children make up the second largest segment of the homeless population, after single men.

As more and more families are losing their homes, school remains a safe haven for homeless children and youth. The stability and familiarity of the classroom provide a sense of normalcy in an otherwise turbulent setting. While federal protections exist to ensure the rights of homeless students to attend school, the fact remains that they are at greater risk than their peers for underachievement, school failure and behavioral problems. Without intervention, many of these children will grow up to face the same daunting challenges as their parents. In order to break the cycles of poverty and homelessness, we need to invest in our children today.

- According to data reviewed by the Pittsburgh Regional Indicators Project, the Pittsburgh region ranks #1 in having the highest rate of child poverty among benchmark cities.
- The demographics of HCEF's K-12 population served in 2008: 60% African American, 29% Caucasian, 10% Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial and 1% Other.
- Pennsylvania ranks 6th nationwide with 17,000 children and youth identified as homeless.
- Research indicates that by the age of 3 trends in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth and style of interaction are well established and clearly suggest widening gaps to come between poor and middle class children.
- Scholars find that the return to society ranges from \$3 to almost \$17 for every dollar invested in early childhood programming among the poor and disadvantaged.
- Those who are from low income backgrounds and participate in well-conceived academic and social programming during early childhood years are significantly less likely to commit crimes and/or be incarcerated as adults.



Programs

Learning Centers and Resource Libraries

In 2008, HCEF celebrated the grand opening of two new Learning Centers at Sojourner House in Garfield and Sojourner House MOMS in East Liberty, thanks to the generous support of Duquesne Light Company. In addition to providing an educational space where children and youth live, HCEF provides them with web-based educational resources, art materials, computers, books, globes, software – and more! Students are now able to complete their school work with all of the necessary resources.

This year HCEF purchased over 450 new books for each of its Learning Centers, with a focus on African American issues, multi-cultural themes, high-interest/low-readability for struggling readers, graphic novels, books on CD with accompanying paperbacks and audio listening stations. As a result, parents, children and shelter staff have discovered new ways to incorporate these materials into shelter-based programs. Through our partnership with Barnes & Noble, community members donated over 5,700 books directly to children residing in shelters.

The HCEF Learning Centers and Resource Libraries reported over 20,000 uses by children, parents and staff system-wide in 2008.

Gear for Grades

In full partnership with Citizens Bank, HCEF celebrated a successful community-wide collection drive of backpacks and school supplies for homeless children. Over 3,000 backpacks filled with supplies were distributed to ensure that children who are homeless have the basic materials needed for success in school.

Building Blocks for Success

In 2008, HCEF conducted a study that found over 75% of all homeless children tested were below level in their reading abilities. In order to combat this deficiency, HCEF has implemented the Building Blocks for Success Literacy Program that includes web-based reading assessment software, mentoring and encouragement from reading tutors and volunteers, progress updates and frequent quizzes, along with incentives and prizes for children who show progress in the program.

Students at Bridge to Independence and Womanspace East have been excelling in HCEF's Building Blocks for Success Literacy Program. Since the start of the 2008-2009 school year, 22 students have participated in the program. Through the use of Star Reading, agency staff are able to assess each student's reading level in 10 minutes. Students are then guided to books that provide opportunities for growth, not frustration. The complementary program Accelerated Reader hosts quizzes on each book and evaluates a student's reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Points are awarded for quizzes passed, and students earn prizes for independent and assisted reading practice. Thus far, Building Blocks students have read 148 books and passed 130 quizzes, with an average score of 79.9% correct!

"The Building Blocks program has not only enabled us to identify struggling readers and then help them find success, but it has also identified students who excel at reading. By implementing this program in my after-school program, reading is now a part of the children's everyday routine and they look forward to it!" —Learning Center Coordinator, Womanspace East.

Mini-Grants for Educational Innovation

Celebrating the 7th year of the Mini-Grant program, HCEF awarded \$27,522.88 in 2008 to our partnering agencies for a variety of creative programming opportunities. Agency staff members “show and tell” their projects from prior grants and assist each other in creating best-practices at their sites. In 2008, mini-grants were awarded for drumming and dance workshops, theatre games, positive parenting and engagement DVDs, arts and crafts, books to enhance independent living skills, and the creation of a listening center allowing children to hear, experience and appreciate a variety of musical genres and audio books.

Additionally \$3,800 in Educational Field Trip Mini-Grants was distributed to give our children a chance to explore the rich resources available in our community. In 2008 HCEF’s kids traveled to Phipps Conservatory, Ohionyle State Park, the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium and the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

In total, the \$31,322.88 disbursed for Mini-Grants and Educational Field Trips in 2008 represents a 14% increase over the amount given in 2007.

Customized Accelerated Program for Education (CAPE)

Again in 2008, CAPE programs were offered as workshops and summer camps at the shelters and focused on topics and activities not found in the course of a normal school day. Through this program, children and families have been able to take part in hands on science workshops with the Lab Ratz Science Club and accelerated art workshops from the Society for Contemporary Craft. The CAPE program is funded by grants from area businesses through the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program.

Homeless Children’s Network

Partnering with Allegheny County’s Department of Human Services and researchers from Duquesne University, HCEF is working to address the gaps in services and communication for homeless children. In addition to building formalized connections between homeless agencies and school officials to further the educational development of the children we serve, HCEF is also looking to make after-school programs more accessible to them. By establishing a formalized network of community agencies, HCEF hopes to bridge the gap between institutions and build inter-agency collaboration.



2009 Program Goals

- Advocate re-authorization of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Expand Building Blocks for Success Literacy Program to three additional sites
- Create and maintain partnerships with community organizations that can be of benefit to homeless children and their parents
- Thoroughly assess each child’s gifts, talents and educational needs upon intake
- Connect homeless students to more after-school tutoring and extracurricular activities
- Encourage and foster open communication between school districts and homeless facilities
- Advocate locally for the rights of homeless students

Where We Serve

HCEF Learning Centers and Resource Libraries have been established in nine of the region's shelters, transitional and bridge housing centers, and a drop-in center for unhoused youths.

In Pittsburgh:

- Open Arms
- Salvation Army Family Crisis Center
- Sojourner House
- Sojourner House MOMS
- Three Rivers Youth - The Hub
- Womanspace East, Inc.
- Woman's Center and Shelter

In Allegheny County:

- Sisters Place, Clairton
- Womanspace, McKeesport

Resource Libraries have also been created in the eight facilities where a Learning Center has not yet been feasible.

In Pittsburgh:

- New Beginnings
- San Kofa House

In Allegheny County:

- Allegheny Valley Association of Churches Interfaith Hospitality Network, Natrona Heights
- Alle-Kiski Hope Center, Tarentum
- Bridge to Independence, Braddock
- Healthy Start House, Duquesne
- Crisis Center North, North Hills
- HEARTH, Perrysville



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To learn more about the Homeless Children's Education Fund, visit www.homelessfund.org or call (412) 562-0154.

To make an online donation click the "donate" link on our website.

"We call our learning center the Happening Place. In the words of an older resident child 'Now I feel like my house is like other kids' houses. I can talk about using a computer at home too. I can even do my reports.'"

– STAFF MEMBER, Sojourner House

Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2008

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$415,900
Prepaid Expenses	5,473
Contributions & Other Receivables	50,817
<hr/> Total Current Assets	<hr/> 472,190
Investments	737,426
Property and Equipment	29,848
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(22,293)
Net Property and Equipment	7,555
<hr/> Total Assets	<hr/> \$1,217,171

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$1,762
Deferred Revenue	7,400
Accrued Liabilities	2,488
<hr/> Total Current Liabilities	<hr/> 11,650

Net Assets

Unrestricted	
Undesignated	
Operating	539,545
Fixed Assets	7,555
Designated	432,938
Temporarily Restricted	225,483
<hr/> Total Net Assets	<hr/> 1,205,521
<hr/> Total Liabilities & Net Assets	<hr/> \$1,217,171

Statement of Activities

As of December 31, 2008

Change in Net Assets

Revenues

Contributions	\$219,375
Grants from Corporations & Foundations	281,068
Special Events—Tickets & Sponsorships	115,633
Interest Income	32,407
Unrealized Gains	(82,139)
Other	314
<hr/> Total Revenues & Gains	<hr/> 566,658

Expenses

Programs	306,840
Fundraising	19,143
Administrative	90,627
<hr/> Total Expenses	<hr/> 416,610

Change in Net Assets	150,048
Net Assets (January 1, 2007)	1,055,473

<hr/> Net Assets (Dec. 31, 2008)	<hr/> \$1,205,521
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This financial statement is based on an independent audit performed by the certified public accounting firm of Schneider Downs. Contact 412-562-0154 to obtain a free copy of the 2008 auditor's report. HCEF is a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Donations can be made online at www.homelessfund.org and through United Way Contributor's Choice #963315. The official registration and financial information of the Homeless Children's Education Fund may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free within Pennsylvania at 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



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