

HOMELESS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

Creating "hope through learning"

Fall 2012 E-Newsletter — Vol. 7 No. 2

AS WINNIE SAYS
"IT'S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS!"



2012 Diocese of Pittsburgh Poster and Essay Contest

The 2012 Poster and Essay Contest coordinated by the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Homeless Children's Education Fund prompted students to write or draw using a quote by Ervin "Magic" Johnson: **"All kids need a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them."**

Each year (2012 being the eighth year of the contest), two winning essays and two winning posters are selected. Winning students receive a \$250 Tuition Assistance Grant from the Diocese's Department of Education.

"People around the world are left without homes or the feeling of peace in their lives. This is little recognized in our home country...The small amount of help we can provide them {homeless} is bringing awareness towards this situation; letting people know about the problem, and ways we can work together to solve it... a little hope is vital to the chance at a new life. To give someone in need of hope is giving them a knowledge that it gets better;..."

—Excerpt by Aubrey O'Leary



This year's winners included:

- 1st Place Essay - Aubrey O'Leary, 8th Grader from Divine Mercy Academy
- 2nd Place Essay - Kristen Deasy, 8th Grader from St. Therese School
- 1st Place Poster - Sophie Spiker, 7th Grader from St. Therese School
- 2nd Place Poster - Alyssa Smith, 8th Grader from St. Philips School

Check out

www.homelessfund.org/focus_eandp.html

to view each of the winning entries and to read more about this annual contest for kids by kids!

Mini-Grants for Educational Enrichment

As long-time friends of HCEF know, August is the time when we award Mini-Grants for Educational Enrichment. The program continues to offer our homeless provider agency partners this opportunity to apply for a mini-grant of up to \$2,000.

HCEF awarded \$29,854 in mini-grants to homeless provider agencies for the 2012-13 school year, including: Alle-Kiski Area HOPE Center, Bridge to Independence, Healthy Start House, HEARTH, Salvation Army Family Caring Center, Sisters Place, Sojourner House, Sojourner House MOMS, Womanspace East, Womanspace, and Women's Center and Shelter.

Additionally, 30% of mini-grant recipients are new HCEF partner agencies: Auberle, East End Cooperative Ministry, Familylinks, Family Promise, Light of Life, and Naomi's Place.



In partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, HCEF awarded \$5,300 in summer field trip grants to 14 agencies in June 2012. HCEF paid 75% of the total grant awards (\$3,984).

- 281 children/youth and 125 parents participated in summer field trips
- The average number of field trips taken by agencies was 1.5

On average,

- 500 children and 150 youth benefit from HCEF Mini-Grants each year.
- 150 children and 70 parents participate in HCEF-funded field trips each year.
- Over 4,000 children and youth have benefited from HCEF Mini-Grants since 2004.

These grants are funded entirely by the financial contributions of individual donors. Not one penny of any individual donation goes to HCEF operations.

Gear for Grades 2012

Monday, August 20 was backpack delivery day. Staff and volunteers from Citizens Bank and HCEF loaded 2,300 backpacks filled with school supplies onto three school buses in front of Citizens Bank in downtown Pittsburgh.

Present to show their support were State Senator Wayne Fontana, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Heidi Navala and

Seth Hufford from the County Controller Chelsa Wagner's office, and members from the HCEF Board of Trustees.

HCEF staff and volunteers then headed out to 22 of our partner housing facilities. Additional agencies throughout the region received backpacks later in the week, bringing the total number of backpacks for children in need to over 4,000.



While giving a backpack to a child may seem a modest gesture, for the child receiving it, that book bag is a proud possession. With it, the child is just another boy or girl going to school, ready to learn. For a struggling parent, there is tremendous relief in knowing that their child will have the required school supplies they might not be able to easily provide.

We applaud the many folks who made donations through Citizens Bank offices and directly to HCEF.

See photos, videos, and more from this year's Gear for Grades event at www.homelessfund.org/gearsforgrades.

Service Access for Youth (SAY) Program Launched for Homeless Youth

Service Access for Youth (SAY) - is an educational pilot program designed to provide homeless youth throughout Allegheny County with a comfortable, judgment-free environment where they are able to receive services such as GED and basic life-skills tutoring, guidance in finding housing and employment resources, and any additional assistance they may require.

SAY hosts a weekly drop-in at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center (GLCC) downtown for unaccompanied youth: young adults those who are living homeless without the support of a parent or guardian.

In addition, SAY distributes personal hygiene items and bus passes (depending on donations), provides pizza and beverages, and allows youth to interact through entertainment such as ping-pong, television, a large collection of board games and cards, and a variety of reading materials. The youth who attend the weekly drop-in typically range in age from 18 to 25 years old.

During the fall of 2012, SAY has been blessed to have medical students from the UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh in attendance to provide the youth with short workshops on health and personal care. We have also inquired into the youths' interest in a vision check, as we have an organization that hopes to provide the youth with an eye assessment.

With each week, the SAY program becomes more and more prepared to handle the individual needs of youth living on the street, and we are open and willing to help anyone who walks through the door.

If you wish to get involved, please contact Susy Robison at srobison@homelessfund.org or at 412-562-0154.

Thank You *Pittsburgh Gives!*

The Pittsburgh Foundation held its 2012 Day of Giving Wednesday, October 3, 2012 and all donations made to the Homeless Children's Education Fund during that 24-hour period received a portion of the match pool.



THANK YOU to each of the 78 donors who graciously gave more than \$9,000 to HCEF during this year's Day of Giving.

Public donations for Allegheny County during the 2012 Day of Giving amounted to \$7,108,133 which, combined with the match pool of \$750,000, created a total of \$7,858,133!

To learn more about the Day of Giving, please visit www.pittsburghgives.org.

November HEN Meeting Focused on Human Trafficking / Collaboration

The November 16, 2012 HEN meeting was attended by more than 70 individuals representing homeless providers, law enforcement, school districts, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and local universities.

Representatives from the FBI and Dr. Liz Miller (local expert) discussed the growing problem of **human trafficking**—both on a national basis and within our own community. Dr. Miller pointed out that children experiencing homelessness—especially unaccompanied youth—are very vulnerable to being trafficked.

Also, Rev. Tim Smith from Center of Life in Hazelwood (www.centeroflife.net) discussed how he started his organization and how, by working with other local groups, they are “taking back” the community from gangs and criminal elements.

If you have any questions or would like to get involved with the HEN, please contact Bill Wolfe at wwolfe@homelessfund.org or at 412-562-0154.

2nd Annual Homeless Children's Awareness Week Recap

The 2nd Annual Homeless Children's Awareness Week (October 14-20, 2012) was an extraordinary success. The week was officially proclaimed by the city of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and the state of Pennsylvania. Many thanks to City

Councilman Bill Peduto, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, and Pa State Senator Wayne Fontana for supporting the week and helping to get it proclaimed.



Additionally, the week of awareness brought in hundreds of community members throughout the state and it created a genuine impact in the future of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

This year's HCAW featured more than eleven events throughout the region and state. Some of the events included: a night of storytelling focused on money, numerous "Stand Up" events, a 5K run / walk, and many others.



Many thanks to all who participated and supported HCAW 2012, including the week's sponsors: Hundred Acres Manor Haunted House, Jennmar, Fragasso Financial Advisors, Trib Total Media, Wyatt, Inc., Road ID, Panera, Vitamin Water/Fuze.

Please **SAVE THE DATE** for the **3rd Annual Homeless Children's Awareness Week**, October 13 - 19, 2013.

To learn more, please visit <http://hcaw2013.tumblr.com>.

Young Brothers Tae Kwon Do

Once again, Young Brothers Tae Kwon Do has raised over \$8,000 for HCEF through their fall tournament, which is the third tournament Young Brothers has dedicated to raising money for HCEF. In total, they have raised more than \$27,000!



We sincerely thank them for their dedication and passion to serving children and youth experiencing homelessness! If you want to learn more about this incredible place or find a location near you, please visit them at www.youngbrotherstkd.com/locations.

Conscious Caring Curriculum Piloted by Duquesne Students

HCEF partnered with Duquesne University service-learning students to bring its "**Conscious Caring**" curriculum into 3rd and 5th grade classes at Manchester Academic Charter School and Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5.

The curriculum was designed by HCEF afterschool instructor Kaitlyn Harris to teach elementary-level students about homelessness while fostering empathy and inspiring community service.



A good portion of the curriculum is based on Ralph da Costa Nunez's children's book entitled *Voyage to Shelter Cove*. Before going into the classrooms, Kaitlyn worked with the Duquesne teachers-in-training, nicknamed the "voyagers," to teach them about homelessness and its effects on children - valuable information they will now carry with them into their careers.

Because the curriculum is adaptable and open to creativity, the students were able to adjust it based on grade level and the time allotted for their lessons.

HCEF is proud to have worked with these "voyagers," who have given great feedback for the pilot version of the curriculum and will no doubt become fantastic teachers and mentors in their future classrooms.



If you are interested in learning more about the "Conscious Caring" curriculum, please contact Susy Robison at srobison@homelessfund.org or by phone at 412-562-0154.

Save-the-Date in March . . .



14th Annual Champions for Children Benefit
March 4, 2013, Rivers Club

2013 Champion for Children Awardees:

The Heinz Endowments and
The Pittsburgh Foundation

Ticket Prices Include:

- VIP Admission
\$300 per person
- General Admission
\$100 per person
- Young Professional Admission
\$50 per person (35 and under)

This year's event will be nothing short of extraordinary, featuring exquisite food, lavish auction items, beautiful music, and some of Pittsburgh finest individuals and supporters.

We hope that you can make it. You definitely don't want to miss it!

For event information or questions, please contact Zach Marsh at 412-562-0154 or at zmarsh@homelessfund.org.

Intern Spotlight

Meet Han

My name is Han Cui. I am currently studying at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work Master's Program. Once I graduate I hope to be a social worker or to be a bilingual reporter. My favorite color is purple.

I most look up to Mike Wallace.



My favorite type of food is hotpot. Overall, I most hope to learn more about how to help the homeless children as a social administrative intern while at HCEF.

Meet Meredith

My name is Meredith Feldman. I am currently in the Applied Developmental Psychology Program at the University of Pittsburgh. Once I graduate, I hope to become an AmeriCorps City Year Team Member in Washington, DC, working with children in afterschool programs. I would say that I am most passionate about dedicating my time to serving others and serving as a mentor, as well as providing hope to children in the educational pursuits.



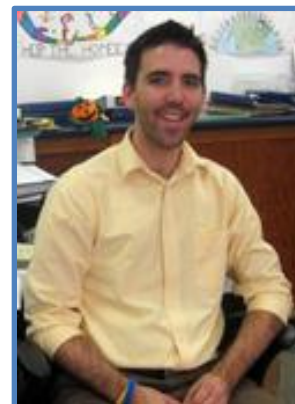
My favorite color is green. I most look up to my mother, as she has shown me love and provided me with a nurturing environment where I was encouraged to pursue my dreams. My favorite food without a doubt is Thai. During my time at the organization, I hope to learn from the experiences of the wonderful people I have met in the Homeless Education Network and experience the benefits of the mentoring and service that I provide throughout the afterschool programs, the Service Access for Youth homeless drop-in, and the other settings in which I work.

Meet Sunny

My name is Sunny Lin. I am a student at Carnegie Mellon University in the Healthcare Policy and Management program. After I finish my degree at CMU, I hope to go into policy work as a government analyst. I'm passionate about pursuing life to the fullest and making sure everyone gets that chance, as well. My favorite color varies depending on my mood. Right now, it's probably grey.

I have a few idols (or heroes), including, of course, my parents who traveled here when they were in their young twenties without any money and without knowing a soul, and established a life here for me. Though, I don't tell them this enough. During my time at HCEF, I hope to learn a bit about what motivates people in this profession, how an NGO can work as a passionate and also a functioning organization, and how community leaders are currently navigating the challenges to eliminating homelessness.

A Fond Farewell from the HCEF Team – We Will Miss You Zach!



Zach Marsh – Effective December 14th, Zach Marsh, Manager of Development and Events assumed the position of Community Relations Manager with *Variety: The Children's Charity*, an organization focused on supporting children with physical disabilities. This is a wonderful opportunity for Zach, but we of course are so sad to lose him. Zach has done a great job for HCEF over the last two years and has used his passion to significantly enhance our events and organization as a whole.

The absence of Zach will be greatly felt at the office, and he is truly a part of HCEF's legacy. If you care to reach out to Zach, please e-mail him at Zachary.o.marsh@gmail.com.

HCEF Needs Afterschool Help!

Want to make a difference for children in 2013? Consider joining our afterschool program team!

HCEF's Building Blocks for Success Afterschool Program, established in 2008, is designed to provide a friendly learning environment for kids at five of our partner shelters and transitional housing centers.

Our dynamic team of instructors and volunteers work every day to help students develop essential skills for school success. Students benefit from the high expectations we set, which include dedicating time every day for homework, taking part in creative literacy-building activities, and being a good role model for their peers.

Any child residing at one of our afterschool sites is welcome to attend the program for the entire duration of their family's stay, which may range from several days to two years depending on the host site. A typical day includes a snack, homework help, and a fun learning activity often led by one of HCEF's enrichment partners – Lab Ratz Science Club, Art Expressions, SLB Radio, The Warhol Museum and others. Our kids seldom get bored...they are too busy learning to build their own working radios, reading aloud to cuddly therapy dogs, and writing their own one-act plays!

As we went back to school this fall, HCEF was excited to introduce a new face to the program, our mobile literacy specialist, Laura Wengerd, an experienced educator and reading expert who serves as our resident "treasure trove" of knowledge about all things literacy-related. As Laura makes her rounds to our program sites, she is able to work with each student individually to craft a customized tutoring plan based around their unique abilities.

We serve 100-150 children and youth each year in our afterschool programs. Are you

great with kids? Do you have a special talent for tutoring? Please consider joining our team as an afterschool volunteer.

Contact Susy Robison at srobison@homelessfund.org to sign up.

We Celebrate Children's Learning and All Who Make it Possible

Heartfelt thanks to all who have made monetary contributions to HCEF, have made donations in honor or memory of loved ones, have sponsored and attended fundraising events on our behalf, and have tutored the children. In all these ways, you have helped make a difference in the lives of children caught up in the uncertainties of homelessness.

<http://homelessfund.org/donate.html>

From our family, to yours we wish you all a blessed holiday season and a happy new year!



**2012 E-Newsletter
(Vol. 7 No. 2) from the**
Homeless Children's Education Fund
2100 Smallman Street, 2nd Fl.
Pittsburgh PA 15222
412-562-0154
www.homelessfund.org

Follow Us & Stay Informed!

