



HOMELESS  
CHILDREN'S  
EDUCATION  
FUND

# HEADLINES of HOPE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | 3RD QUARTER | JULY - SEPTEMBER



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I cannot believe that I have been serving this great organization for four years now! It has been the toughest job I've ever had, yet the best and most rewarding one.

When I think of the last three months and pandemic-related challenges, I liken HCEF to the Energizer Bunny! We are still going and serving. Nothing can outlast our passion and commitment to young people experiencing homelessness in Southwestern, PA. With the support of our board, faithful donors, volunteers and our committed team, we continue to serve.

This summer, HCEF provided \$2,500 scholarship awards to 9 youth entering college. Their stories were inspiring and reminded me why we do what we do. For the 15th year, we dispersed nearly 2,000 backpacks with school supplies. Our summer program went virtual, and was able to still engage youth and reduce summer "learning slide."

None of this is possible without your support. The challenges are great for our youth and will only increase with growing evictions and job losses associated with COVID-19. HCEF will do what it takes to support our youth!

*Carlos T. Carter*

Carlos T. Carter  
Executive Director

# 9 TEENS OVERCOME HOMELESSNESS and Receive \$2,500 Post-Secondary Award



What a joy to provide \$2,500 to nine deserving students, to aid them in their collegiate journey, with Phipps Conservatory as our beautiful backdrop. This was the most awards ever given (\$22,500), due to the outpouring of qualified young people who applied. Each Hope Through Learning Awardee applied to this program, and supplied reference letters, transcripts and an essay about how lack of stable housing impacted their lives. A committee of board and staff got to know them via a Zoom interview, and they were impressed with what they heard. Even in applying for the award, these young people had the chance to learn and practice valuable life skills.

What's next for this group? Their dreams include creative writing, business, physical and respiratory therapy and more. The colleges they selected include Pitt, Virginia Tech, Allegheny Community and Clarion University.

**WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE  
WHAT THEY ACCOMPLISH!**



## PLAY & LEARN with Mr. Dave

Our summer, like yours, has been unique. We have done our best to figure out how the love of learning and the respect for creative play can be shared with the youth we serve. One of our instructors, Dave, led classes via Zoom with our housing partners. He got kids laughing, creating and using their imagination.

He has been using clay "creature making" as a medium for building English Language Arts skills for years. The class he offers is designed to feel like you are watching a show named "Clay Creature Capers." Dave explains that this combines hands on making with story-telling.

Since the kids all have access to clay, it's a great way to involve them in something both fun and educational. Dave gives them prompts—and they respond by creating characters, stories, dialogues, sentences, parts of speech, and incorporate most any subject into their adventure. Dave reports that he and the students "made some pretty zany clay creatures and gave each other a lot of laughs." Play is essential to all of us, at any age, and Dave's ability to actively engage kids during a very unusual summer, is filling a need, advancing learning and adding some fun to everyone's day!



## SUPPORTER PROFILE



### SHELLY BROWN HCEF Board Member

**"It's hard to be awesome  
when you don't know when  
you'll eat next or where  
you will sleep at night."**

Shelly brings her unique perspective to the HCEF governing body. She grew up in the Clairton area, with strong role models of people pulling together to build a safety net, including her mom, who was a founder of group that provided a range of community services to neighbors when the recession of the '80's hit.

Currently an academic counselor at The Penn State University of Greater Allegheny, Shelly previously served as a Pittsburgh police officer in community policing and later in sexual assault/family crisis work. When describing why our mission resonates, Shelly stated that "Children are the most vulnerable in any family crisis—domestic violence, homelessness, or a job loss. And the most impacted. The educational impact is often the first thing you notice." She relates that it is her honor to be part of the HCEF mission.

As a student teacher in college, Shelly had a wonderful mentor—an elementary school teacher who knew to have "extras" in her Hill District classroom – things like snacks, mittens and more, so that basic needs could be met. When it came to academics, she set a high bar, and expected excellence. Shelly sees this premise alive and well in the work of HCEF.

## K-8 PROGRAMS EXPAND: Welcome to Alizé Strickland



### WE'RE HAPPY TO SHARE THIS WONDERFUL NEWS!

Alizé Strickland joined our team as an intern in August 2019. One year later, she officially joined our staff, after graduating from Carlow University with a degree in social work. Her drive and passion is working with children and her interest in the homeless population began with a community outreach project her junior year in college. She was drawn to the needs of

the families, and wanted to be a part of a team providing solutions. The project was in a Pittsburgh neighborhood. Alizé and her team members gave out care packages to people who were sleeping outside, and these moments were bittersweet. Seeing people living in such harsh conditions left a deep impression.

In her new role, as Family Engagement Coordinator, she will be a bridge between the elementary and middle schools and our agency. She screens and triages referrals, and devises a game plan of how we can help. Some families need technology, some need supplies, and others need general coaching and support. This program is new and evolving and Alizé's role will grow and change as we adapt to the needs of the families and the rapidly changing circumstances of our world.

Alizé shares this quote as one that resonates most with her:

**"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others"** –Mahatma Gandhi

Shelly shared her thoughts about expanding awareness of what it means to be homeless, so that the general public can understand the needs more fully. "The public may need to re-calibrate their notion of what homelessness is. Losing a job can make all the difference. We need to expand the face of homelessness to include elderly, people with disabilities, and those with mental illness." When asked what she dreams of for an HCEF future, she said that the long term dream would be that we are no longer needed. In the meantime, however, her vision is that HCEF has a presence in every school district in the region, with a focus on the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

## A YOUNG MAN IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Tommy is a young man we have worked with for several years. He first connected to HCEF through a local domestic violence shelter in 2008 when he was just 7. In 2017, Tommy and his mom were once again experiencing homelessness. We were alerted and began working with him. His situation had complications that went beyond housing, including family violence and mental health issues. Eventually Tommy was kicked out of his home by his mother, and she filed a Protection From Abuse order.

As is the case with many students we get to know, Tommy persisted, in school, in his job search, and in finding a new place to live. That's quite a burden for such a young man. At one point, his mother asked him to come back home...only to have the police waiting for him and arrest him. HCEF was able to provide him with an attorney who is a pro bono volunteer, so that he could have representation. His resilience and willingness to accept support made the difference. Even with all the challenges, Tommy persevered and completed high school in 2019 and is now working with us to be fully prepared to attend community college in the spring of 2021.

## BACKPACKS GIVE JOY & INSPIRE LEARNING

We learned long ago that a backpack is not just a material item. It is a gateway to self-confidence and an important beginning to the new school year. "It's my favorite color!" exclaimed a student who was one of over 1900 to get a fully equipped backpack for the new school year. Thanks to our donors, volunteers and many partners needed to make this all come together. Many families were touched by this generosity.



## SAVE THE DATE!

A NIGHT IN NOLA | Wednesday, October 21 | 7-8:30pm

A VIRTUAL EVENING OF JAZZ, LIBATIONS & AUCTION ITEMS.

Celebrate our mission and the students we serve by attending this virtual event from the comfort of your home or deck. We will have a wonderful singer, Ms. Lyndsey Smith and a dazzling auction. You may customize your food and drink order (& pick it up) at the Warren (downtown Pittsburgh). Go to our website and social for details! Tickets to attend the online event are just \$20.



HOMELESS  
CHILDREN'S  
EDUCATION  
FUND

3rd | JULY  
QUARTER | AUGUST  
SEPTEMBER

# HEADLINES of HOPE



KAITLIN HENS-GRECO  
SOCIAL WORKER, BRASHEAR HIGH SCHOOL

## Champions Video Reveal Party!

In June, we safely gathered in our zoom block party, and revealed our video, Bridge to Hope. Check it out on our website or on our You Tube channel. We were so pleased to feature Veronica, Kait, Kyle, Kaitlyn and Carlos. They describe our mission and impact from their unique perspectives.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK! <https://homelessfund.org/about-us/>