



**HOMELESS
CHILDREN'S
EDUCATION
FUND**

HEADLINES of HOPE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | 4TH QUARTER | OCTOBER - DECEMBER



GRATEFUL!

This year has been unparalleled...I cannot think of another year that compares. When I reflect on the 4th quarter...the first word that comes to mind is "gratitude"!

Gratitude is nothing new for me...I grew up in a single-parent home and there were times when money and food were scarce. Through these experiences...I have learned early on the power of gratitude. I specifically remember one Christmas when money was tight, and I received a baseball game from the Salvation Army...I was elated. I am no different from the families we serve who have learned to be grateful for everything. COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges faced by our families. However, I am encouraged by their resilience and commitment to education and a better life for their children.

I personally am grateful for our board and team and faithful supporters like you who allow us to provide resources to empower our children to leverage education to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness! Wishing you the best in 2021,

Carlos T. Carter

Carlos T. Carter
Executive Director

**CARLOS'
CORNER**

2021 HOLDS PROMISE

As we start a new year, much promise awaits us. We are hopeful that we will start to see things return to "normal" gradually and we will re-group. Safety and community responsibility remain our guiding principles. In October, while we gathered in "NOLA" from the comfort of our homes, we still were able to have an event to celebrate the mission and meet new people. HCEF has used these unprecedented times to serve families in new ways.

One way was to launch services to three new elementary schools: Weil, Miller and King. We are in talks with new high schools to expand our DBT STEPS A (to improve mental health outcomes) and we are committed to improving our ability to evaluate all that we do with logic models, data and stakeholder input. We are moving forward in ways that make an impact, and deepen our relationships. **Let's make it a great year!**



LOCAL TEENS HAVE A NEW ADVOCATE: Meet Patience Baker

The teens we serve are getting to know our newest staff member, Patience Baker. Patience hails from Columbus Georgia. A job brought her family to southwest Pennsylvania

a few years ago. Prior to accepting her new position, Patience worked at the Frank Sarris Public Library while coaching a local basketball team.

Patience has a natural affinity for bringing out the best in others. She is guided by strong values and the belief that "by building trust and open communication with teens" you can have a huge impact. Patience applied for this role after meeting a young man experiencing homelessness through her work at the library. Through this experience, she says she realized how

complex the challenges are facing youth, and it inspired her to learn more. When she saw the ad for this position, she said that it seemed "right". At HCEF and in the Teen Outreach Program, Patience has found a niche place to make an impact.

Patience works alongside Chris McAneny, our Teen Outreach Program Manager, in public schools in Pittsburgh, Woodland Hills and Steel Valley. She also manages our post-secondary scholarship program-the Hope Through Learning Award. We hope you get to meet Patience soon, to see why we are so thrilled to call her a colleague.



SUPPORTER PROFILE



HARRY J. SOOSE, JR. HCEF Board Chair

Harry has been an important part of HCEF for over a decade. He began as a volunteer on committees, after learning about the mission from a business colleague, who was on the HCEF Board.

He was astounded to learn of the number of children experiencing homelessness in all local school districts. As Harry became involved in HCEF, he gradually ramped up involvement, eventually joining the Board of Trustees, where he served as Treasurer and later as Board Chair. His employer supported his involvement with sponsorships and annual donations.

He can remember being told that teachers often have a clue that housing is unstable when they notice a child coming to school not wearing socks. It struck him that the children do not want anyone to know. This makes it

even more difficult to reach them and provide assistance. Raised in Shaler, Harry's father, grandfather and uncles worked in the steel industry. He says it was characterized by three things: overtime, strikes and layoffs. In essence, it was unpredictable. As a teen, his dad said he could get you a job in the steel mill. His mother, however gave different advice: go to college. He took his mother's advice, and worked his way through school, with part time jobs and loans.

When asked to reflect on the biggest accomplishment during his tenure as Board Chair, Harry cited the founder transition to an organization that can stand on its own two feet, financially strong, and able to continue the original vision with new leadership and highly educated,

K-8th GRADE PROGRAM NEWS: SOCIAL MEDIA PUT TO GOOD USE

Our students are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. To address this, we have given incentives to youth for consistent participation, encouraged housing providers to modify their mini grant applications and also offered unique enrichment programs. Art Expressions, is a great example of an enrichment provider who has adapted. They provide weekly lessons including self-portraits ala Picasso, and exposure to the distinctive styles of Jackson Pollock, Keith Haring and Vincent Van Gogh.

Alizé, Family Engagement Coordinator, has been developing closer relationships with families and addressing their needs even after they've departed from the shelters. Families are going through difficult times, with phone shut offs, technology snafus, and health complications. *It's hard to motivate people to do something virtual after a full day of virtual learning.*



As we confront the new realities, we are seeing that families are sometimes easier to contact via their social media handles, as these are more stable accounts. A Denver University study sheds light on this (<https://bit.ly/3qFBLJ9>). To enhance information flow and communication, we are launching a Hope Through Learning Instagram and Facebook

account in 2021. Stay tuned for details, as we continue to adapt to meet the students' needs.

professional staff. The real life stories and challenges for children experiencing homelessness are heartbreaking. However, the many children that HCEF has been able to help have shown dramatic strength and educational success, graduating high school, trade schools and college.

When Harry was asked to describe his dream for the future, Harry related that "the concept of lack of equity in education troubles me greatly. My dream is that the funding inequities that exists today – particularly in Pennsylvania—get fixed. It's simply unfair. Education can help change our attitudes. We need to think broader beyond our own neighborhoods. Reflecting on his tenure, Harry relays that Carlos's leadership has made a dramatic impact and that he helped HCEF "grow up." The board members have likewise been impressive, bringing

considerable time, talent and resources. In closing, Harry shared that "serving on the Homeless Children's Education Fund Board has made me a better person and I encourage people to get involved and serve on small local not-for-profit organizations with missions they embrace." HCEF has been blessed to work with Harry. We value his friendship, his leadership and his willingness to serve his community.



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EDUCATION FUND**

SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, APRIL 22, 2021

Champions for
CHILDREN

We will have a wonderful virtual Champions for Children this year, and renew our commitment to the mission of helping youth. Stay tuned for more details in the coming days! For information on how to help, contact us. We need auction gifts, sponsorships, and more.



NOLA WAS A HIT!

Each fall, we do an event with the help of the Outreach Team. This fall was no exception. A huge thanks to our sponsors and steering committee, including Chairs Jackie Yakish, Bethany Barefoot and Zach Woods. We had an evening of inspiration and entertainment. This event raised \$17,000 for our mission.

HOMELESS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND
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INSPIRATION = ACTION:

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

1. LEARN about the issues & get to know what's happening in local school districts
2. PLAN an awareness or fundraising event – call us at 412.562.0154
3. VOLUNTEER to tutor, mentor or drop off supplies. Contact us at info@homelessfund.org



4. GIVE a tangible gift that goes to families through our Gift Registry or Amazon link (amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2ZRIN23UMFOPR/ref=hz_ls_biz_ex)
5. DONATE Become a monthly donor (<https://homelessfund.org/donate>)
6. CALL HCEF for more ideas – we'd love to hear yours as well! 412.562.0154