

# HEADLINES OF HOPE



APRIL - JUNE 2020 | QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Carlos' Corner: A Letter from Our Executive Director



These last 3 months have been unparalleled, due to COVID-19. Our amazing team responded quickly to meet the needs of our students who have faced many challenges related to the pandemic, such as hunger, anxiety and increased homelessness. HCEF has partnered with schools, shelters and families and other community organizations to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our vulnerable youth and their families.

In response to the crisis, our team created new programs to collaborate with local elementary, middle and high schools to provide technology, virtual coaching, food and other material needs. We have even provided resources to literally keep families and children off the street. We are so grateful for the support of donors and volunteers that empowers us to support our families.

One story that really touched my heart was a 70-year-old grandmother named Ruth who is raising 7 young children. When Brian Knight, Manager of Community Engagement, delivered educational materials and other necessities to her, she was so grateful and joyfully provided him with a homemade Steelers mask. She said that she wanted to give something to everyone who helped her family. This giving spirit is so Pittsburgh and we are glad to have donors like you who have stepped in to help us meet the challenges exacerbated by this new normal. We have been encouraged and amazed by the letters/emails and generosity from each of you...I cannot say thank you enough!

Know that HCEF is more committed to our mission than ever and doing everything we can to empower our children to break the cycle of homelessness through education.

Your support inspires me!

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carlos T. Carter".

Carlos T. Carter  
Executive Director



## Video Launch: Bridge to Hope



On Thursday, June 18 we premiered our new Bridge to Hope video! Check out the recap [here](#).

## Elementary Students Get Enhanced Support & a Personal Touch



During these tough times, it is more important than ever that we provide support for children across the county. Referred to us by guidance counselors, we began tutoring two siblings attending Pittsburgh King. We began by sending this family some of our basic tutoring supplies necessary to complete assignments, including pencils, erasers, calculators, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue. We also provided this family with gift cards, Pittsburgh Public School remote learning packets, and HCEF activity kits. This family asked for check-ins about every other week, so we made sure to provide our full support in tutoring the children.

Working both with the second grader and the fifth grader, we identified areas in which they needed the most help. We helped them through worksheets and problems gradually building their confidence in independent

work. By the end of our sessions, the students felt confident in completing problems successfully on their own!

The family, especially their grandmother, expressed immense gratitude and her happiness to have received all of the supplies and support from us. She provided a mask for Brian providing supplies to her and offered to make more for anyone else who may deliver to her!

## EFSA To Provide Critical Funding

The **Emergency Family Stabilization Act** (S.3923), introduced on June 9<sup>th</sup> by Senators Murkowski (R-AK), Manchin (D-WV) and Sinema (D-AZ), aims to provide emergency relief for families, youth, and children experiencing homelessness in light of the health and economic consequences of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has created economic pitfalls causing new waves of homelessness in families and youth across the country, as well as creating new challenges for families and youth already experiencing homelessness prior to the pandemic. The CARES Act, which aims to provide economic relief during COVID-19, does not provide relief for families and youth experiencing homelessness.

The Emergency Family Stabilization Act (EFSA) aims to provide an emergency funding stream administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to community-based organizations meeting the needs of families and youth experiencing the long-term repercussions of COVID-19. Funding through EFSA can be used for a wide-range of housing, health, education and safety-related activities and programs to benefit homeless families and youth. We encourage you to [use this link](#) to contact your senators and ask them to join as cosponsors of the Emergency Family Stabilization Act, Senate Bill 3923.

## Making the Most of Summer Learning



With time out of school being expanded due to the COVID-19 crisis, many more students are at risk of experiencing “summer learning loss.” Due to a lack of resources, many students are unable to continue learning over the summer, therefore halting their progress and often causing delays in their learning.

For students at three Pittsburgh Public Schools, Miller, King, and Weil, we knew that many would not have the resources necessary to maintain an educational environment. We selected these schools after consultation with education peers and based on highest need. By partnering with guidance counselors at the schools, we identified students who needed our support. We not only provided them with supplies for learning but also helped provide funding for groceries and other essentials to ensure the best possible environments for these students.

We recognize that providing supplies is not enough, so we have continued to provide tutoring to students who might need more help learning during this time. Tutors typically meet with students virtually once a week to work through their assignments and mimic in-person education. It is our goal to create a similar environment to what students may experience in a physical classroom.

Programming during the summer is crucial to maintain the growth achieved during the

school year, so we are aiming to implement projects that encourage summer education. We are providing enrichment supplies to families as well as books to our housing partners with the help of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU). We hope this can culminate in a summer reading party where students can celebrate their academic achievements. In addition to enrichment supplies we have been providing technology to our students and shelter partners in the form of Chromebooks, Kindles and desktop computers. Overall, we want to make sure students experience an educational environment year-round, not just when they are in the classroom.

## We have a busy Summer!



(Photo from 2018 backpack event)

In July, financial awards will be given to students selected, after a competitive process so they can continue their education. Each of our recipients have different, but inspiring stories of overcoming adversity. In August, we distribute 2000 fully equipped backpacks so youth can have the tools they need to start the year on the right foot. Parents can feel a sense of dignity, knowing their child is ready for a great year.

## CARES ACT Makes Donating More Appealing

As you may be aware, the new federal law makes an important change that impacts donors. **You may now deduct up to \$300.00** on your taxes, even if you normally are not able to itemize. This is to encourage donations during the pandemic. As always, check with your tax professional to see if you can benefit from this new law.

## Learning Happens Year-Round: Build the Future Launches



**BUILD THE FUTURE**  
Monthly Giving Circle  
[www.homelessfund.org/donate](http://www.homelessfund.org/donate)

We are all learning each day, right? So are the students we serve. Their needs do not take a break. To address this, we have formally launched our monthly giving circle: Build the Future. It's so easy, you are going to love it. In these times where many of us are curtailing movies, gym dues and eating out, perhaps the easiest way to care for those adversely impacted is to make a consistent commitment. It could be \$10.00, the price of one lunch a week, or it could be more. Simply sign up once and your gift multiplies its impact. Thanks for considering this! It would support year-round learning and life sustaining programs for youth who truly need our help. [Click here to join.](#)

Questions, call us at 412.562.0154

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creating hope through learning

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