



HOMELESS
CHILDREN'S
EDUCATION
FUND

HEADLINES of HOPE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | 4TH QUARTER | OCTOBER - DECEMBER



KAITLYN NYKWEST ▲

REFLECTIONS

Dear Friends of HCEF,

As each year-end approaches, and a new year begins, we all take time to reflect.

On Carlos' last day in November, the staff and Board reflected on his tenure, and on how HCEF grew with the benefit of his leadership, talent, and service. We are grateful for the growth that Carlos fostered, and for new initiatives HCEF launched to meet new demands in a changing landscape.

We look back on the amazing accomplishments and strengths of the children, teens, and families we have come to know this year. The students and families reflect with us on challenges, successes, and on future goals and plans.

We reflect with you and celebrate with gratitude your gifts as volunteers, advocates and donors. We think about all the ways you have made a difference in the lives of so many students and families.

Now that 2022 is here, we look forward to the exciting changes that await us. The challenges of equitable, accessible education and of housing insecurity remain our focus. We will steward our collective gifts and energies to meet the needs of students. This year, we will welcome a new Executive Director, meet new volunteers and form new partnerships with donors, businesses and community groups. As a strong team, we are ready for a great year! Thanks for being a part of our journey.

With gratitude, Kaitlyn

**KAIT'S
CORNER**

CARLOS'
GOODBYE
LUNCH

HCEF TEAM 2021! ►



The team gathered on a beautiful fall day in Oakland to give Carlos a warm farewell. The sun was shining, the fall flowers were showing off, and there were good vibes all around. It's "see you around" and not goodbye.



REBECCA ENJOYING A HIKE AT YOSEMITE ▲

Rebecca Krawczak is a dedicated member of our Outreach Team. First introduced to HCEF in 2016 through a City Charter High School internship with us, Rebecca worked with Susy Robison. Rebecca jumped right in, doing whatever was needed. Like most people who spend time with Susy, Rebecca drew inspiration from her seemingly inexhaustible energy and compassion. After completing her neuroscience degree at Slippery Rock University, Rebecca again connected with us in 2021 to offer help, even as she started a demanding job as a

A STELLAR VOLUNTEER! MEET REBECCA

researcher at UPMC. She makes her 'why' clear: ***"Education saved my life, and I want to make sure others have the same opportunity."***

Rebecca has added so much to our team through her upbeat attitude and can-do approach. As an example, she solicited 4 themed auction baskets (!) for our Champions for Children auction, helped promote Kickball for a Cause, and offered steady input for all our outreach endeavors. Typical of her consistent effort to raise others up, when I asked her what she would want others to know about volunteering with HCEF, she said, "They should know how awesome you are, Brian, at keeping us engaged and letting everyone know what is going on."

Well, Rebecca, you are awesome too, and we are extremely fortunate to have you on our team.

YOUNG ADULT STORY: MEET AALIYAH!



▲ AALIYAH WORKING TO ENSURE
A BRIGHT FUTURE

"I have overcome so much in high school thanks to HCEF and the Hope Through Learning Award and I'm very thankful!" – Aaliyah (*not her real name)

Aaliyah is 20, and one of our scholarship winners this summer. She had plans after graduation to pursue post-secondary education to become a Registered Nurse, however, she felt with everything going on in her life at the time going to college immediately wasn't her best option.

With the increasing demand for health care providers, Aaliyah decided to take two training courses that would prepare her to become a

Home Health Aide. These courses enabled her to reignite her passion for helping others. It also re-affirmed her desire to continue her education and become a nurse.

She now has secured a financially stable job which has allowed her the opportunity to secure housing and move to a new home. We could not be prouder of what Aaliyah has been able to accomplish. We are currently assisting her to continue her dream and get into a UPMC CNA to RN program.

We wish her the best in her continuing journey to grow and devote a career to helping others.

K-8TH CORNER: MEET WILLA!

Willa (*not her real name) is a shy but enthusiastic 11-year-old girl in 5th grade and new mobile learning student. Willa is currently doubling up, living with four generations of women in one house. From day one, Willa has been open about her feelings regarding school and expressed being bullied by her peers. Her social and emotional skills have continued to progress as she receives support from our HCEF staff team, her tutors and family.

As an enthusiastic reader, Willa has expressed interest in one of her favorite graphic novel book series “Smiles” by Raina Telgemier. To build on this love of reading, we recently started a book club with Willa, and introduced the next book series “Guts,” which also sounds like fun!

We love seeing Willa’s confidence bloom. When we first met, she struggled to share answers, and appeared to be second guessing herself, even when her answer was correct. After a few sessions with positive reinforcement, her confidence has improved, and she more readily offers answers.

Her ability to problem-solve has also improved. Early on, Willa needed support with multiplication facts. We used flash cards and games to focus on improvement, and it worked. She demonstrated this when after initially having a hard time with a game called



▲ A REPRESENTATION OF OUR STUDENTS, LEARNING AND GROWING

“Math 24” she now can master the steps and asks us to play. With each new skill learned and milestone reached, Willa is empowered to take on new challenges.

We love that.

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creating hope through learning

HOLIDAY GENEROSITY

Each holiday season, we are showered with the community’s heartfelt wishes. This year was like most—HCEF welcomed gifts including winter gear from an educator networking group, along with Giving Tuesday and year-end appeal gifts, securities donations, and educational items directly from our Amazon Wish List. **Thank you!**



▲ A FEW OF THE GIFTS RECEIVED FROM OUR GENEROUS DONORS WHO USED OUR AMAZON WISH LIST! ([HTTPS://A.CO/FRX1TRM](https://a.co/frx1trm))

OUTSTANDING PHILANTHROPIST

So proud of **Nancy and Paul Collier** - they were awarded “Outstanding Philanthropist” by the Association of Fundraising Professionals this fall. **Well-deserved!**



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FOURTH
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Things to look forward to: YOU CAN BE A BIG PART OF OUR SPRING 2022



MAY 2022

The **Pittsburgh Marathon** is back! Celebrate health by training now. You'll be all set for May! Run, walk or jog for HCEF and you get a free event registration.

To learn more, call us or email info@homelessfund.org



JUNE 2, 2022

Meet us in the outdoor garden at Phipps Conservatory for the 23rd annual **Champions for Children Dinner & Auction**. Don your best "floral flourish." We will honor **A Plus Schools** for their tireless efforts on behalf of students as our Champion! Sponsorship opportunities are available now!

To register or donate visit <https://bit.ly/RunforHCEF>