

HOMELESS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND
THE CARDELLO BUILDING
1501 REEDSDALE STREET, SUITE 200
PITTSBURGH, PA 15233

2025



HEADLINES of HOPE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SECOND QUARTER 2025

AJ'S Communiqué

Friends, we are growing — and we must.

In 2022, we were a team of eight. By the end of this year, we'll be 16 strong. Why? Because the need in our community continues to grow. Nearly 3,500 youth in Allegheny County are experiencing homelessness. That's not a number we can ignore and it's certainly not a number we can serve without expanding our reach, our team and our impact.

As the sole nonprofit supporting this population, we served 1,100 students last year. By 2027, we'll reach 1,500 — a 36% increase. To meet this growing need, we've introduced our Continuum of Programming, an interconnected and comprehensive model that supports students from pre-K through secondary education. It's more than programming; it's a promise that we will walk with these students every step of the way.

Thanks to transformative support from partners such as **Dollar Bank**, **Partner4Work** and the **Allegheny County Department of Human Services**, as well as game-changing investments like the **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency** grant, the largest in our 26-year history, we've increased our budget from \$1.1 million in 2022 to \$2.6 million in 2025. And we're not stopping there! We aim to become a \$4 million organization by 2027, fully equipped to meet the moment and our mission.



▲ LONGTIME SUPPORTER REPRESENTATIVE AERON ABNEY AWARDED THE PCCD VIP GRANT TO HCEF

But we can't do this alone.

We need you — your belief, your partnership, your voice. This work is not for the faint of heart, but it is for the hopeful. Together, we can create a future where every child, regardless of their housing situation, is seen, heard and given the opportunity for a quality education, allowing them to succeed.

Let's grow together.

AJ Jefferson
President and Chief Executive Officer



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SECOND
QUARTER
2025

EMERGENCY FUND APPEAL

Federally funded services across the country are still facing an urgent crisis. We need your help to raise \$50,000 in support of vulnerable families in Allegheny County.

Cuts to federal funding have stripped thousands of children and families of basic necessities like food, shelter, healthcare and education. At the Homeless Children's Education Fund, we are urgently working to meet rising needs, but our emergency resources

are running desperately low. Many will go without the critical support they rely on without immediate intervention.

HCEF currently supports more than 1,100 students across Allegheny County, where nearly 3,500 children and youth experience homelessness. As demand increases, we are expanding our reach to serve 50% more students this year. To do so, we must raise \$50,000 to deliver food,

medical assistance, transportation and educational services to the children who need them most.

Every donation helps keep a child safe, healthy and supported academically. Please consider giving today to help those families in need.

EMERGENCY
FUND APPEAL



Every dollar makes a difference ...

UPCOMING DATES

JULY 24, 2025
Hope Through Learning Awards

AUGUST 14, 2025
End-of-Summer Bash and Backpack Kick-off

AUGUST 2025
Annual Backpack Distribution

OCTOBER 2025
Homeless Children's Awareness Month

www.homelessfund.org

creating equity through education



HCEF is excited to announce that we're relocating from One Hope Square in the Hill District to our new home on the North Side:

The Cardello Building
1501 Reedsdale Street, Suite 200
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

This move marks an exciting new chapter for HCEF, reflecting both our growth and our deepening commitment to supporting children and youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey. We look forward to welcoming you to our new space!



EVENT HIGHLIGHT – POLICY BREAKFAST



The voices of youth experiencing homelessness rang out loud and clear at this year's Youth Homelessness Policy Breakfast. The event brought together more than 200 elected officials, community leaders, advocates and educators to listen, learn and commit to action. At the heart of the event were powerful stories shared by youth with lived experience navigating the challenges of homelessness and educational systems that weren't built with them in mind.

The program also featured remarks from key public officials who champion sustainable jobs and

equitable education, including **U.S. Congresswoman Summer Lee, Pennsylvania Senator Devlin Robinson, Pennsylvania Representatives Lindsay Powell and Ismail Smith-Wade-El, Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato and Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey.** Their collective call was clear: we must work across systems – education, housing, healthcare, and workforce development – to create equitable opportunities for youth to thrive.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our event sponsors: **Duolingo, Grossman Yanak and Ford, Hundred Acres Manor, Partner4Work and Vibrant Pittsburgh.**

Together, our region can build solutions that break down barriers and unlock the potential of every student. The message was clear. They're not asking for pity – they're calling for partnership.

IF YOU MISSED THIS CRITICAL CONVERSATION, SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH!



MEET TRE'VON



Tre'von Johnson's journey is one of resilience and determination. A recipient of the Hope Through Learning Awards and former Slippery Rock University (SRU) student, Tre'von faced financial challenges that forced him to pause his college education. At HCEF's Pathways to Empowerment event, he was inspired by AJ's story about team member Terrel Williams and the impact of the Teen Outreach Program (TOP). That moment led to a turning point. Terrel invited Tre'von to lunch, and, together, they created a plan to get him back on track.

He enrolled in Catalyst Connection, a workforce development initiative led by Nathan Broadus, which connects young adults with high-demand, high-paying careers in advanced manufacturing.

Tre'von recently completed a mechatronics certification and is now working in manufacturing as he pays the remaining balance to re-enroll in SRU's STEM program. With the continued support of the TOP team, Tre'von is determined to finish what he started.

... he was inspired by AJ's story about team member Terrel Williams and the impact of the Teen Outreach Program (TOP).

MOBILE LEARNING FAMILY HIGHLIGHT



From a Parent's Perspective....

Our journey with HCEF began when I asked for extra support for my daughter after seeing her struggle at school. She's always been bright, but large classrooms didn't give her the one-on-one attention she needed. When we found HCEF's Mobile Learning program, it was like a breath of fresh air.

Life threw us some tough challenges, and we had to step back for a while. But reconnecting with HCEF recently has been a blessing. The care, patience and encouragement from Ms. Alizé and the team have not only

boosted my daughter's confidence in school but also made me feel less alone as a parent.

There were times I felt embarrassed to ask for help, but HCEF showed me it was okay. Their support goes beyond tutoring — it's about building trust, offering resources and being there when it matters most.

To other families who may be going through hard times, don't be afraid to reach out for help. Programs like Mobile Learning can make all the difference. I truly don't know where we'd be without the HCEF team.

ALIZÉ'S ACHIEVEMENT



▲ L-R KRISTIN RISI, RHONDA FISCHER, ALIZÉ STRICKLAND, LARA WASHINGTON, EVAN FRAZIER

When I first heard about The Advanced Leadership Institute's (TALI) Emerging Leaders Program, I knew it was something I wanted to be part of. TALI's focus on uplifting and preparing Black leaders and their allies for success resonated with me.

Going through the program this year was truly a transformational experience. Every workshop challenged me to grow. I learned to think bigger, not just about my role at work, but about the impact I want to have on the community. The best part was building real connections with other rising Black leaders who shared their stories, struggles and successes. Those honest conversations reminded me that leadership isn't just about titles — it's about

showing up, learning and lifting others as you climb.

As HCEF's first-ever Family Engagement Coordinator, I see the importance of this role every day. Whether it's helping to create our Mobile Learning program, supporting families one-on-one or helping design new middle school initiatives, the leadership skills I gained from TALI have made me a better person professionally and personally. I'm proud to be a TALI Alum and even prouder to bring what I've learned back to the families and students I serve. It's an experience I will never forget.

WAY TO GO, ALIZÉ!

The HCEF team is so proud of you!

IN-KIND GIFT SPOTLIGHT THE HEYWARD HOUSE



Through HCEF's valued partnership with The Heyward House, Sarris Candies generously donated 150 Easter baskets to families experiencing homelessness. These cheerful, treat-filled baskets brought smiles and a sense of normalcy to students, reminding them they are seen, valued and celebrated.

With the help of Winnie's Wagon, our classroom on wheels through the Mobile Learning Program, staff members delivered the baskets to students in our shelter program.

Thank you to The Heyward House and Sarris Candies for making Easter brighter for many families.

KDKA-TV COVERAGE



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creating equity through education

BOARD RETREAT REFLECTIONS

Our Board of Trustees gathered for the first Board Retreat in nearly a decade, and what a meaningful, energizing experience it was! We kicked off with insights from **Jim McQuade**, CEO of Dollar Bank. We then participated in the United Way Poverty Spiral Simulator, a powerful and eye-opening reminder of how quickly lives can shift due to crisis. It sparked vulnerable conversations, fresh empathy, and renewed commitment to the students and families we serve. In our Fund Development session, we explored the power of storytelling, learning how sharing our “why” helps build bridges to new supporters and partners.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- **Jim McQuade** and **Jason Jones** of Dollar Bank for your powerful words and ongoing support
- **Joe Stromei** of Dollar Bank and HCEF Board Member for providing such a welcoming space and delicious breakfast
- **Jo Clark**, our Board Chair, for leading with vision and heart to bring us all together

We left inspired, aligned,
and ready to act. Our work
is urgent. Our commitment is
strong. And together,
we move forward.



CELEBRATING EARLY EXCELLENCE



The Homeless Education Network (HEN) is a coalition of schools, community organizations, out-of-school time programs and government agencies united by a shared commitment to eliminating youth homelessness in the Greater Pittsburgh region. Each year, HCEF awards the HEN Collaborative Impact Grant to an agency developing or expanding an educational project that meets the needs of students experiencing homelessness, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act.

*This year, we were honored to present the HEN Collaborative Impact Grant of \$15,000 to the **Early Excellence Project**, allowing the Margaret Washington Literacy Center Program to continue serving young learners through literacy-focused, high-impact tutoring.*

CONGRATULATIONS
Early Excellence Project!

In 2022, we were a team of eight full-time staff, four instructors and 43 volunteers. By the end of this year, we'll have 16 full-time staff, 10 instructors and 75 volunteers.



Renna Brown
Education Support
Coordinator (STEAM)



Demetrius Moye
Workforce Development
Coordinator



Collyn O'Donnell
Controller



Aaleah Oliver
Administrative Coordinator



Olivia Rowland
Volunteer Specialist



Veronica Shannon
Family Engagement
Coordinator



NEW HCEF STAFF MEMBERS

www.homelessfund.org