

INSIDE THE HOUSE



Kids in Christopher House's Environmental Club touring Angelic Organics Learning Center.



CHRISTOPHER HOUSE

FALL 2009

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Christopher House Initiates Groundbreaking Collaborative to Improve Human Services and Early Childhood Education through Data Sharing

Christopher House is proud to be spearheading a groundbreaking, collaborative effort with four other Chicago social service organizations. The project will create research-based benchmark measures for collecting data that the agencies can share and use for improving the quality of early childhood education, after-school and youth programming.

The benchmarking project is generously funded by a grant from The Chicago Community Trust. Other participating human services agencies include Albany Park Community Center, Erie Neighborhood House, the Chinese American Service League and Chicago Commons.

“It’s unique and exciting that our five agencies have so willingly and openly shared data and information,” said Traci Stanley, Director of Operations and Quality Assurance at Christopher House. “Historically, agencies have held their cards pretty close when it comes to evaluation. The ultimate goal of the project is for all of us to use this information to improve the quality of services to low-income children and families.”

“The Trust believes that transparency and accountability are essential to strengthening the provision of human services in Illinois,” said Jim Lewis, Senior Program Officer at The Chicago Community Trust. “Projects such as this show promise for finding new ways to

communicate outcomes and for agencies to use data to learn from one another so as to improve their work.” Using a shared database, created by Social Solutions Performance Management Software, Christopher House and the partner agencies will be able to easily share methods and results. Also collaborating on the project to help identify common outcomes and goals is The Center for What Works.

As Christopher House and our partner agencies track results, the shared database will help to identify the most successful methods that lead to the greatest impact on children and families.

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A Message FROM OUR CEO

Every government dollar invested in early childhood education saves up to \$17 of long-term costs in education and crime. At Christopher House, we believe when every dollar matters, the state should invest those dollars where they matter most.

—*The Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Illinois Study, 2005.*

Investing State and Private Dollars Where They Matter Most

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As children headed back to school in September, many parents were confronted with reductions in services as a result of Illinois' State budget crisis. As you may know, the final Illinois budget allocations for the first half of the fiscal year were made in July. Additional budget cuts have been deferred for further consideration when the Governor and legislature resume budget negotiations in January.

While the cuts to education and human service funding were not as bad as first anticipated, many agencies were cut by 50% or more. Christopher House, like many other agencies, was faced with the difficult decisions.

One of those decisions was to close our smallest family resource center. Fortunately, we were able to minimize the impact on families as much as possible by transitioning the 23 children and their families to our other locations so services were not interrupted. We temporarily had to suspend some of our literacy and teen parent services while funding was in question, but have plans to reinstate our full services in the coming weeks.

Despite these challenges, Christopher House continues to fulfill its mission of providing high quality, critically needed early childhood development, school-age programming and comprehensive supportive services to families that build stability and self-sufficiency.

We continue to advocate strongly for the restoration of dollars to programs that help families be self-reliant and successful. The state should invest dollars where they matter most. Every day, in our work for children and families, we make a positive return on government and private dollars.

Now more than ever, we rely on you—our board members, volunteers and donors. You have come to us with exceptional generosity—of time, talent and treasure. In these difficult times, so many of you have stepped up and gone to extraordinary lengths to help our families in need. Thank you for your generosity!

Sincerely,

Lori Ann Baas
Chief Executive Officer
Christopher House



Collaborative (cont.)

“The only way to truly innovate and advance best practices in human services is to be in continual dialogue with other organizations pursuing the same mission,” said Dan Valliere, Executive Director of participating partner Chicago Commons. “The benchmarking project is leading us all to achieve higher levels of quality.”

Christopher House is already seen as a leader both locally and nationally for its focus on tracking and reporting measurable outcomes. We have implemented state-of-the-art evaluation and data collection methods in the social service field and are continuously improving our programs and assessing the needs of families.

“The project represents one of the first of its kind in the nonprofit sector: a transparent approach to achieve comparative outcomes and actually learn from the data that emerges across agencies,” says Debra Natenshon, CEO, The Center for What Works. “It is clear that the five agencies are dedicated to its success, making it truly a model project.”

“In my experience working with hundreds of funders and thousands of organizations across the country, I have not seen a project designed and funded from its inception to benchmarks outcomes of local non-profits for the purpose of developing best practices,” said Steve Butz, Founder and President of Social Solutions.

In November, Debra Natenshon, CEO for the Center for What Works; James Lewis, Senior Program Officer for The Chicago Community Trust; and Traci Stanley, Christopher House Director of Operations and Quality Assurance, will lead a panel discussion about this collaboration at a national conference for human service agencies in Baltimore.

“The Trust believes that transparency and accountability are essential to strengthening the provision of human services in Illinois. Projects such as this show promise for finding new ways to communicate outcomes and for agencies to use data to learn from one another so as to improve their work.”

—JIM LEWIS,
SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER,
THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY
TRUST





CHRISTOPHER HOUSE

Law Firm Paul Hastings, Janofsky and Walker Support Christopher House on Many Levels

In the short time since opening their Chicago office, the law firm of Paul Hastings, Janofsky and Walker has become one of Christopher House's strongest supporters.

Not only do they provide pro bono legal services and corporate sponsorship of our events, but their employees currently serve on our Board of Directors and our Associates Board, volunteer their time at events, donate in-kind to our Family-to-Family holiday programs and organize fundraisers on our behalf.

For this reason, Christopher House nominated Paul Hastings for Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth's Law Firm of the Year Award. And, we're very proud to say that out of the many qualified candidates, Paul Hastings was chosen as the winner. Each year, this award recognizes one outstanding law firm for their contributions to youth programs, specifically in the field of tutoring and mentoring.

This summer, Christopher House hosted a group of Summer Associates from Paul Hastings at a field day event at Chase Park to celebrate a great school year and kick-off a successful summer. The energetic group of associates helped make it a memorable event for nearly 140 school-aged children.

This is just one of the examples of the law firm's dedication to helping Christopher House build thriving families. We are grateful for their ongoing support and hope you join us in congratulating them on receiving this honor.

If you are interested in helping your company get involved with Christopher House, please contact our Resource Development Department at 773-472-1083.



From left to right, **Jim Morsch**, partner at Butler Rubin and chair of the Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth Board; **Joseph Q. McCoy**, partner at Perkins Coie and chair of the My Hero Awards Luncheon; **Jenna White-Beasley**, Christopher House Director of Development and Communications; **Gregory Spitzer**, partner at Paul Hastings and Christopher House Board Member; and **Genita Robinson**, Executive Director, Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth. Photo courtesy of Bill Richert.

2nd Annual Sabor de Salsa Event Raises \$1,500 for Adult Literacy Programs

On June 5th, the Christopher House community celebrated its 2nd annual Sabor de Salsa event. The evening, which combined salsa dancing, authentic Latin American food and exciting prizes, raised money for our Adult Literacy programs. Over 100 people attended and raised more than \$1,500 to support programming, including GED, ESL and computer skills classes.

Volunteers helped teach mini-salsa lessons and by the end of the night, guests had "mastered" the art of salsa and were dancing the night away. Many thanks to all who attended and supported this successful event.



HEROES

IN MEMORY OF CLIFFORD JOHNSON

A LONG-TIME CHRISTOPHER HOUSE SUPPORTER

Christopher House relies strongly on the support of dedicated volunteers and supporters, whose generous dedication helps make many of our programs and services possible. Clifford Johnson and his wife Mitzi have been involved with Christopher House for more than four decades.

“My involvement in Christopher House has been a personal expression of putting my faith into action and allows me to play a part in teaching life skills that not only empower the individual, but serve to strengthen the entire community,” says Mitzi.

In July of 2009, Clifford passed away. In lieu of flowers, Mitzi asked that donations be sent to Christopher House, in recognition of Cliff’s life-long dedication to charity.

Cliff and Mitzi were founding members of the Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights. Their congregation has also generously supported Christopher House’s work over the years. Mitzi is a long-time member of Christopher House’s Auxiliary Board, and served as its President from 1989-1991 and 1999-2000.

For many years, Mitzi has spearheaded Christopher House’s Holiday Program, created Thanksgiving food baskets, planned and executed the baby shower and luncheon event, worked in the Thrift Shop, collected clothing and household goods for “Seconds to Go” events and helped with a Christopher House summer camp in South Haven, Michigan.

“Cliff and Mitzi have always been very compassionate and warm people,” said Joan Landwehr, Christopher House staff member and volunteer for more than 50 years. “Their consistency over the years – the way

they got their church involved, their wonderful participation in all events as volunteers and as participants. They had open arms to Christopher House’s children.”

Auxiliary Board President Joyce McGlade, agrees. “Mitzi has been a faithful volunteer and liaison between the church and always willing to help and bring whatever was needed-- always vital to the Auxiliary.”

Christopher House is grateful for Cliff and Mitzi’s long-time generosity and involvement, and thankful to all their friends who have helped Christopher House celebrate Cliff’s life. He will be deeply missed.

For more information about how you can get involved with Christopher House, please contact our Resource Development Department at 773-472-1083.



If I can stop one Heart from breaking
I shall not live in vain.
If I can ease one Life the Aching
Or cool one Pain
Or help one fainting Robin
Unto his Nest again
I shall not live in Vain.
- Emily Dickinson

Each year, Christopher House receives the generous support of nearly 700 volunteers to help build thriving families. Many of our programs and our successes would not be possible without the help of these individuals.
THANK YOU!



Christopher House participant Nicolas Hernandez shows off a \$5,000 Walgreen’s donation to Christopher House for our commitment to the environment and environmental education on August 19th.

Early Childhood Development Kids Graduate to Kindergarten



This year, 84 percent of 5-year-olds enrolled in Christopher House's early childhood development program are socially, emotionally and cognitively ready to enter kindergarten, based on the results of the Creative Curriculum Assessment, an assessment used by Head Start, CPS and many other agencies.

Ramero (pictured at left) has big plans for his future: "I am going to kindergarten in one week! I will play with my friends and get smarter. I'm excited to learn how to spell. My brother can spell, and I think he learned that in school."

FAMILIES LEARN ABOUT HEALTHY CHOICES AT ANNUAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR

In June, Christopher House hosted its annual Health and Wellness Fair, which brought families together to learn how to make healthier choices and lead more active lifestyles. Families had the opportunity to participate in activity stations that gave them valuable knowledge and skills needed to make nutritious choices and improve the health of their children.

Activities included "how to read labels", focusing on understanding calories and nutritional content of commonly purchased items, and "make your own smoothie," which gave parents hands-on experience preparing healthy alternatives for their children to enjoy. Families were also given the chance to shop for fresh produce and enjoy a healthy meal together. Mayor Daley's Bicycle Ambassadors also made an appearance to emphasize the importance of exercise in leading a healthy lifestyle.



One of the most popular activities was the milk mustache booth, where children and their families were taught about the importance of calcium in building strong bones.

SAVE THE DATE

for these upcoming EVENTS!

20TH ANNUAL GALA

Saturday, May 8, 2010

Help Christopher House celebrate 100-plus years of service to Chicago's children and their families at their 20th Annual Gala on Saturday, May 8, 2010. For the latest details, please visit www.christopherhouse.org.



2009 Howard Blake Walker Award Recipients Nelson Ogbuagu and the Ogbuagu family were honored at last year's "Moving Families Forward" gala.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES

At our Greenview location: Saturday, December 12, 2009

11:30 am - 1 pm OR 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

At our Greenview, Logan Square, Uptown, or Rogers Park locations: Saturday, December 19, 2009

9:30 am - 11:30 am; 11:30 am - 1:30 pm; OR 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Christopher House needs a large number of volunteers for the Food Walk and Family to Family Holiday program. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer for either event or as a donor for the Family to Family holiday program, please email Yasmeen Nanlawala at ynanlawala@christopherhouse.org. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided to all volunteers.

ANNUAL FOOD WALK

Each fall, Christopher House mobilizes volunteers to help provide families with food to support them in the holiday season. In 2008, we supported more than 350 families by giving them a special meal. Volunteers will help reach out to the community surrounding our Greenview Family Resource Center. Activities will include stuffing mailings, distributing fliers throughout the neighborhood, collecting donations door-to-door and organizing and packing food for our families. This is a great volunteer opportunity for families, large groups and individuals with weekend availability. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided to all volunteers.

Saturday, November 21: Food Walk

Volunteers will collect food throughout the Greenview neighborhood. Those who have a car or are willing to drive a car for this activity would be helpful as well. Food collection will tentatively occur between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Sunday, November 22: Food Walk Organization

Volunteers are needed to organize food donations at the Greenview site. This activity will take place from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Tuesday, November 24: Food Delivery

Volunteers are needed to help load and unload food donations and deliver them to different Christopher House sites. Volunteer opportunities are available from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

FAMILY-TO-FAMILY HOLIDAY PROGRAM

Each holiday season, generous donors are matched with families to provide gifts and essentials to meet the families' individual needs and ensure it is a special time of year for children and their parents. Donors receive a wish list and a picture of the family and go shopping on behalf of Christopher House. Those gifts are then brought to our family resource centers and volunteers help distribute directly to families. Volunteers are needed at our larger sites to help families navigate this process. It's a great opportunity for families, as well as anyone else interested in giving time during the holiday season. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided to all volunteers.

Have questions or want more information about any of the above events?

Please visit www.christopherhouse.org or please call us at (773) 472-1083.



The College and Career Prep Program got ready for the school year on their fall retreat. Students worked on goal-setting, team-building and took on a high ropes course to learn how to work together to reach great heights!

facebook

Calling all volunteers, donors, alumni, staff and friends! Become a fan of Christopher House and keep updated on what is happening at the House!

This Holiday Season Experience the Personal Rewards of Making a Difference

VOLUNTEER FOR THE CHRISTOPHER HOUSE
ANNUAL FOOD WALK

or

OUR FAMILY-TO-FAMILY HOLIDAY PROGRAM
Volunteers needed in November and December.
Choose how you wish to participate:

- Food Collecting
- Donate Gifts for Families
- Packing Food and Gifts
- Delivering Food and Gifts

Call 773-472-1083 to volunteer

Printing of this newsletter was generously donated by Berlin Industries Inc.

Check out Christopher House's new
video at www.christopherhouse.org

CHRISTOPHER
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HELPING FAMILIES THRIVE
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