

A C H I E V E

Helping Families Thrive.

Christopher House provides a family of schools to help low-income, at-risk children and their families succeed in school, work, and life.

We partner with families to provide a continuum of education for students from birth through high school as well as educational programs that help parents create stable, self-sufficient families.

A Letter from Our CEO

Like most Americans of my generation, I grew up with the idea that with hard work and determination I could achieve any goal I set for myself. This included being the first in my family to graduate from a four-year college.

This is the American Dream. The idea that prosperity, success, and upward social mobility can be achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers. It is one of the beliefs that defines our culture.

The reality today is that the American Dream is quickly becoming a thing of the past.

According to research published by Robert Putnam, political scientist and Malkin Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, in his recent book, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, it has all but died for children born into poverty.

Over the last 30 years, an opportunity gap has grown and is doing some of the most critical damage in the first five years of a low-income child's life.

- As early as 18 months, children in poverty lag behind in their ability to develop cognitive and behavioral skills.
- By age two, low-income children are behind in necessary listening and counting skills.
- By age five, a child in poverty has heard on average 30 million fewer words than their middle and upper class peers.

As these children get older these setbacks continue to build, and it gets increasingly harder for them to catch up. Christopher House engages families at the earliest stages of their child's development into an environment of learning and support to change the trajectory of the child's life. Providing resources, stability, and community is key.

Your support of Christopher House is an investment in a more vibrant Chicago, and in the belief that success should be available to all our children. You help to close the opportunity gap for Chicago families and keep the American Dream alive.

Sincerely,

Lori Ann Baas



INFANT & PRE-SCHOOL

Offering full-day early childhood classes that serve children from six weeks to five years old. Using the Reggio Emilia approach, our schools advance literacy, motor skills, and social and cognitive development.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Providing education and wraparound support services for kindergarten through the eighth grade, the school fosters lifelong learners with high standards, perseverance, and a commitment to excellence. The school uses rigorous curricula to develop critical thinkers who will succeed in high school, college, and life.

AFTER SCHOOL

Pushing not only for academic achievement, but for self-confidence and positive decision making skills, After School develops social and emotional skills for K-12 through tutoring, college and career preparation, and enrichment activities.

PARENT SCHOOL

Offering counseling, health assessments, literacy and English skills, and parent workshops, the Parent School provides parents with the resources and skills to be their child's first teacher and to provide a stable, nurturing home.

Supporter Spotlight



Just one of the many families to receive gifts from the Family-to-Family program which Holly has been a part of for several years!

Holly Smirl is a vital donor and volunteer to Christopher House. The former teacher and mother of three sat down with us to talk about how she got involved with Christopher House and why she spends so much of her time helping others.

Christopher House: What was it that brought you to Christopher House?

Holly Smirl: "I first heard about Christopher House five years ago through someone at our church. She asked me if I would take over the Family-to-Family program where members of our church give Christopher House families gifts at Christmas time. I had a newborn baby and two other kids and thought, 'NO WAY!'"

CH: What made you change your mind?

HS: "Well, then I visited Christopher House, read more about it, and met some of the people. After that, I could not say 'no.' I was so impressed with what I saw on my tour. There was so much learning taking place, and such love, happiness, and peacefulness showering the kids. I was deeply moved.

Also, when I learned that all the parents involved in Christopher House are either employed or in school, I was sold."

CH: Over the years your connection to Christopher House has become a family commitment. Your husband has joined the board, and your children volunteer with you.

HS: "I feel really grateful that I have healthy kids, a good school to send them to, and a safe place to live. To me there is no better way to show appreciation for these things than to be thankful and to give back. I want the kids and the families of Christopher House to know that people care about them. And although times are tough for them right now, there are people that want to help ease their burdens - at least a bit."

CH: Well we certainly appreciate it!

HS: "Christopher House is so amazing to me because it is truly helping people become self-sufficient. Christopher House gives parents the peace of mind that their children are loved and safe while they are doing what they need to do to better their lives and take care of their families.

DREAM

25th Annual Benefit

This year at our 25th Annual Benefit, Christopher House will honor Norcon, Inc. and the Quintana family.

Norcon, Inc. was heroic in its construction of our Belmont Cragin facility - finishing on time and under budget. Norcon, Inc. joins past honorees JoAnne Cicchelli, ComEd, and Diana Rauner, among many others, for its exemplary work and commitment to building a thriving community.



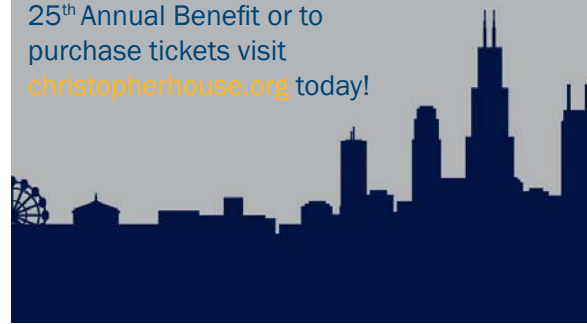
The Quintana family, our 2015 Family Honoree.

The Quintana Family, nominated by multiple Christopher House teachers and support staff, exemplifies the power of a family working together to achieve results and reach their goals.



2014 Honoree JoAnne Cicchelli and husband William Singer.

For more information on the 25th Annual Benefit or to purchase tickets visit christopherhouse.org today!





Play with a Purpose

Master Teacher Emily Anderson's pre-school classroom for four and five year olds at our Uptown center is a buzz with activity. Her room is beautifully organized into learning centers. These hands-on learning areas are stocked with materials that invite exploration, spark imagination, and prompt collaboration.

In the block area, boys are building a tower and discussing how tall it is in relation to each other. In an area for make-believe, girls are pretending to have a restaurant and are figuring out who should be the waiter, the chef, and the customer. Another group is drawing pictures of dinosaurs, while others are looking at books.

With small groups of children busy in each area, Ms. Anderson moves fluidly through the room from group to group, observing and commenting. She is

talking with the children about their work; helping to resolve conflicts; posing thought-provoking questions; and guiding children to self-manage.

Under Ms. Anderson's guidance, and within the nurturing environment, the kids are playing to learn. As children play, they develop vital cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills. They make discoveries, build knowledge, experiment with literacy and math, and learn to self-regulate and interact with others in socially appropriate ways.¹

Purposeful play has long-lasting benefits, especially for children born into low-income families and who often lag behind in nearly every cognitive, behavioral, emotional and health measure. Through this type of high-quality early childhood education, children not only become kindergarten ready, but they develop a foundation of perseverance and social intelligence that they will need throughout their lives.

“The investments we make today in disadvantaged young children promote social mobility, create opportunity and foster a vibrant, healthy and inclusive society and economy.”

Professor James Heckman, White House Summit on Early Education. December 2014.

Why We Need Early Childhood Education

On average, low-income children lag behind on almost every cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and health measure.

Improving Children's Life Chances: Estimates from the Social Genome Model. Brookings Institution.

30 Million

Poor children hear as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers by the time they are five. *

18 months+

Low-income children begin to fall behind in vocabulary development and other skills critical for school success by 18 months. *

2 years old

Poor children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy by age two. *

22 Letters

By age five, a typical middle-class child recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, a child from a low-income family recognizes nine. *

3 years old

A child's vocabulary as early as age three can predict third grade reading achievement. *



*School Readiness. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. 2015. <http://gradelevelreading.net/>

A Focus on the Whole Family



At Christopher House, we believe that a parent is a child's first teacher, and we partner with our parents to ensure they have the tools to be successful. For many of our Christopher House families — where we are working to break a cycle of poverty — by providing new parenting skills and supports, we create a stable home life, which is crucial to success.

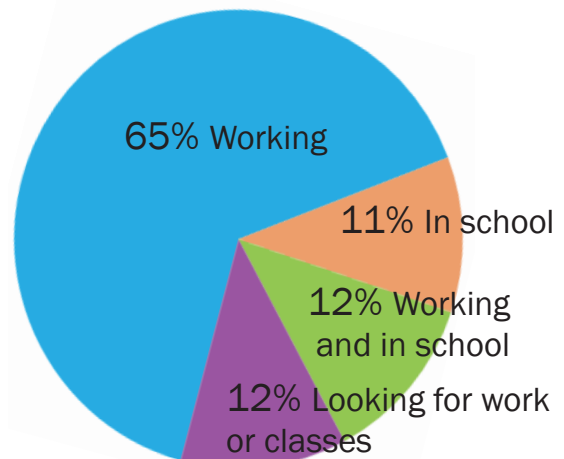
Multiple times a year, each family sits down with a parent advocate to spend an hour discussing what's going on in their family and reflecting on everything from parenting, to their housing and job security, to budgeting, and health and nutrition. It is in these assessments that staff are able to determine if a family is in a state of crisis, or at risk of crisis. It is a time when families set goals for themselves and then map out measurable steps to achieve these goals.

Once a plan is in place, Christopher House works to help the family reach their goal. Gloria Kuechenberg, Director of Family Support Services, says, "We are able to measure their progress and we track it as the year progresses. In fact, 82% of parents achieved the goals they set in 2014."

These conversations not only impact the individuals in the family, but also identify larger themes that are used to create parent workshops and inform classroom teachers on issues affecting their scholars.

As Gloria sums up, "We start with the family, because that's where stability starts. Setting small action steps to reach big goals keeps these families on track for success at home and in school."

Our Parents



"We start with the family, because that's where stability starts. Setting small action steps to reach big goals keeps these families on track for success at home and in school."

- Gloria Kuechenberg, Director of Family Support Services

Building Literacy Beyond Books



74 percent of eighth graders from poor households who were involved in the arts from kindergarten through elementary school showed higher scores in science and reading.*

Walking in the elementary school art studies classroom is quite a treat. It's a colorful room with instruments, musical writings, and signs with phrases like *"What's the big idea?"* Students sit together on the colorful rug with xylophones arranged in the center, but the kids' eyes are on the board.

Mrs. Tate, the Music and Arts Integration Specialist, is going over the beat they will try out in a few minutes, and has placed little hearts to show each "beat" of the rhythm. She calls up a student – game show style – to come to the board and add the bars to the written music. The class is happy to hum along to help the young scholar complete the musical sentence.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, lower-income students have higher academic results, college aspirations, and civic participation when they are engaged in the arts for long periods of time. In fact, 74 percent of eighth graders from poor households who were involved in the arts from kindergarten through elementary school showed higher scores in science and reading.*

Christopher House's arts program is certified by CPS as Category 1; meaning the school is excelling in the arts to meet all goals and priorities of the CPS Arts Education Plan.

In addition to concerts and performing, the arts curriculum at Christopher House is integrated into the grade-level curriculum. In all arts learning - whether integrated into the classroom or in the arts studio - scholars invest in the artistic process, activate their imaginations, and make artistic choices that are meaningful to them and can be explained to others.

According to first grader Akira Butler, "Arts in my school is important to me because, when we do the ice cream dance I feel really happy. If our school did not have arts I wouldn't be able to be creative."

That's exactly why Mrs. Tate is so committed to Christopher House's arts program, "We want everyone to find their artistic voice and feel free to share it with others."

*The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies. James S. Catterall. National Endowment for the Arts. 2012.