

# ACHIEVE

WINTER 2022



**CHRISTOPHER**  
LEARN DREAM ACHIEVE  
**HOUSE**

Christopher House's two-generation approach is closing the opportunity gap through a continuum of personalized education with immersive family support, starting at birth.

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

To our Christopher House Community,

If I could choose a word that encapsulates 2021, it would be “**resilience.**”

Christopher House is a thriving community despite Covid-19. Our community responded to crisis with resiliency and creativity. We led with best practices, data, and diverse voices to ensure that our family of schools continued to provide high-quality education with immersive family support for every one of our Christopher House scholars and their families. Our commitment to excellence shined bright; our students, families, and teachers adapted to this moment and saw amazing success.

Our first graduating 8th grade class included three Daniel Murphy Scholars and **98% of students were accepted to their top five best-fit high school.** We could not be prouder of our students’ achievements.

So far, the word for 2022 is “**hopeful**” as we turn toward Spring. We welcomed back all our Christopher House scholars to in-person learning at the beginning of this school year and our students are demonstrating incredible growth in their learning. Our kindergarten scholars arrived “kindergarten ready,” our Elementary School students are thriving, our After School students demonstrated incredible growth in perseverance, and our parents confirm that Christopher House continues to create a safe, culturally responsive, and inclusive learning environment for all.

Our success is due to every single person that makes up our Christopher House family. I am humbled to be leading this organization at this pivotal time in our collective history. To each of you, I say a heartfelt thank you.

I am excited to share these milestones and moments of celebration with you. Enjoy reading this newsletter which highlights just some of these incredible achievements of the Christopher House family!

With gratitude and appreciation,



Libby Shortenhaus  
Chief Executive Officer

March 2022



## OUR VALUES

- ★ Commitment to Excellence
- ★ Achievement and Perseverance
- ★ Respect and Compassion
- ★ Equity

## OUR BELIEFS

Children and families thrive when:

- ★ They have access to a high-quality education
- ★ Education begins at birth, with parents as the first teacher, and continues through life
- ★ Parents have high standards and set high expectations for their children and themselves
- ★ Professionally trained teachers use strength-based instruction and know their students as individuals
- ★ Parents support their children financially and emotionally
- ★ Evaluations and program adjustments are data driven
- ★ Education includes developing perseverance and social intelligence
- ★ Parents and teachers work together to continuously improve programs

**100+**  **families received financial assistance**

**Our social work team delivered** **750+**  **counseling sessions to Christopher House parents**

**460**  **families supported during Family to Family holiday program**



## REPORT CARD 2020 - 2021

Christopher House had an incredible school year. We are proud to report successes across our family of schools.

Christopher House again exceeded local and statewide scores in TeachingStrategies GOLD, the premier tool in assessing the whole child from birth through 3rd grade. **95%** of scholars transitioning to kindergarten met or exceeded expectations in literacy, while **90%** of scholars met or exceeded expectations in social-emotional learning and mathematics.

We know that early learning holistically develops a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs, while building

the foundation for their lifelong learning and wellbeing. We also know that the stakes are high: children who receive high-quality early learning experiences are more likely to have higher income as adults, more likely to own a home, and more likely to graduate high school.

The continuum of education model reinforces this commitment to high-quality education and personalized learning. We are also thrilled to share that Christopher House Elementary School continued

to maintain an overall score of "well-organized" on the UChicago Impact 5Essentials Survey. Of note, while leading and learning both remotely and then shifting to a hybrid model, Christopher House received the highest ratings in "Supportive Environments," "Involved Families," and "Ambitious Instruction" for the 2020-21 school year. These areas have been critical to ensuring that our scholars remain engaged and on-track during the pandemic.





# Christopher House Voices

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Three Generations of the Buchholz Family

In December, Christopher House received a touching, handwritten letter from Courtney Minner Johnson. Christopher House has a long and special place in her family's history - her late grandfather was a Christopher House participant in the 1920s! We got in touch with Courtney and are thrilled to share our conversation with her and why Christopher House means so much to her and her family.

Here are some snippets from our conversation with Courtney – and her mother, Jill Minner, aunt, Jane Griffin, and grandmother, Alice Buchholz.

### Why is Christopher House so important to you?

My late grandfather, John Buchholz, called Christopher House his second home as a child. My great-grandma, who was a house cleaner, would take him and his brother to Christopher House to get clothes and also for childcare. Christopher House was a community beacon for my family – as it provided them with a range of services. In addition to the clothes and childcare, my grandfather received additional social services to support him. My grandfather was born with only one arm and only spoke German until he was five years old. For my great-grandma, an immigrant to Chicago who did not speak English as her first language, finding support to raise two boys in the city was critical when working long hours. Christopher House was there for my family to help my great uncle and my grandfather grow personally and professionally. They stayed in the nearby communities and continued to give back to organizations that supported them growing up.

### What about Christopher House, its mission and programs today, is meaningful to you?

For the past seven years for my birthday, I've ask for donations to support Christopher House because it's such an important organization in my family's history in Chicago. I support Christopher House today because it provides the same holistic services that my family was able to receive over 100 years ago! It means so much to me to be able to pay-it-forward and support programming like Family to Family that enables current Christopher House families to receive holiday gifts, like my grandfather did as a kid, too. It makes me proud to know that my support goes to programs like the food pantries and Infant & Pre-School.

### Why do you support Christopher House now?

My family would not be where we are today without the support my grandpa received from Christopher House as a child. Understanding that programs thrive from the support from those in the community is at the foundation of developing children and families for the future. The church that my mother and I grew up in, The Presbyterian Church of Barrington, has made Christopher House a primary mission focus since the 1980s. In the last 40 years, we have seen and supported the wonderful programs for young mothers, children graduating through high school, and the holiday program. Now that I can give back, I do – and I wanted to say thank you for all you do!

## Donors to Christopher House - \$1,000+ July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

A. Montgomery Ward Foundation  
AbbVie  
Adnan and Shaima Assad  
Alan Brody  
Albertsons Companies Foundation  
Ambassador Louis and Marjorie Susman  
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- Women of the First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights
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- Yvonne Lozano

## Corporate Partner Spotlight HOLLAND & KNIGHT

***“It’s hard not to feel good about it.”***

That’s how Tom Woodrow, a partner in the Chicago office of Holland & Knight and one of our board members, qualifies his feelings about the success of Christopher House. Woodrow has been involved with our family of schools for more than 20 years and knows firsthand how far we’ve come.

Tom and his wife, Emily, began working with Christopher House as volunteers because they believed deeply in the power of our mission of closing the opportunity gap for the scholars and families we serve. As part of the United Way Board Development Program, Tom then pursued a seat on our Board of Directors and has been one of our greatest champions ever since. Professionals within Holland & Knight sit on more than 60 boards for nonprofit organizations in the Chicago area – a clear display of the law firm’s culture of philanthropy and an intrinsic desire to offer support in creative and impactful ways to the communities that can benefit most.

Several years ago, there was a growing understanding of the way that a strong mentorship program could help guide some of Christopher House’s scholars who needed a little extra tutoring and direction in their education experiences, and Holland & Knight was a natural fit for this effort. Each year since, the program has connected the firm’s professionals with a group of scholars to provide guidance on new and existing school projects, test preparation and other assignments and activities. The mentorship team and Holland & Knight take pride in seeing how the scholars’ skills and aptitudes develop and improve, as well as how the incredibly dedicated educators in our schools prepare them every step of the way.

*“From day one, we knew that we wanted our scholars to be successful in high school, go to college and earn a degree. That’s how they come back to enrich their communities and lead the next generation of Christopher House scholars,” Tom said. “For us to have a greater chance of that happening, children need support and high-quality education that starts before kindergarten and extends to the beginning of their high school careers. That’s the difference maker.”*

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# Our Family of Schools



## INFANT & PRESCHOOL

Prepares 300+ children, ages six weeks to five years, for kindergarten through full-day education that stimulates cognitive growth and develops emotional intelligence.

As part of our equity work, some of our youngest students explored their identity through literacy and art making. Pairing the books *The Skin You Live In* and *Am I A Color Too* students used mirrors to look at themselves, mixed colors to create a skin tone that best matched themselves, and then used other objects like string and beads, to create their face!



## AFTER SCHOOL

Works with 200+ scholars, ages six – eighteen, to explore new opportunities, achieve academic excellence, and develop healthy behaviors and skills needed to be successful in school, home, college, and the workplace.

Over the summer, After School participants enjoyed field trips to the Botanical Gardens, Brookfield Zoo, and the Shedd Aquarium – just to name a few! This fall, our Youth Leadership (ages 13 – 18) scholar leaders have participated in field trips to the WNDR Museum and CircEsteem and enjoyed some creative self-expression through mural painting and a door decoration in December.

**Christopher House closes the opportunity gap through a continuum of personalized education with immersive family support starting at birth.**



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Provides over 480 scholars K-8th grade with a personalized education in a college-going culture.

Celebrating Black History Month this past February, our Elementary School scholars decorated their classroom doors with messages and themes from Black history that inform and inspire them. Students shared their dreams, messages of inclusivity, and empowerment that depicted who they want to be in the future.



## PARENT SCHOOL

Engages every parent of each school in order to create a stable, healthy home environment that advances their child's academic and social-emotional development.

Our Stewart Campus hosted four vaccination clinics in partnership with local elected officials and the Illinois Department of Public Health open to the entire Belmont Cragin neighborhood. In addition, our Parent School continues to deliver parent workshops virtually, offer food pantry, and additional support services as needed from financial assistance to counseling, to all our families.



## CHRISTOPHER HOUSE IN THE NEWS

### Representative Jan Schakowsky

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky of the 9th district joined us for a press conference at our Uptown campus on July 15, 2021 to encourage families to learn more about the Child Tax Credit. This remarkable legislation will provide up to \$300 per month, per child now through December.

We were so pleased to welcome Representative Schakowsky to speak to the importance of this legislation, which she played a key role in bringing to fruition. In addition to her remarks, our CEO Libby Shortenhaus spoke to the value that this legislation will bring, not only to our families, but to those around the country, effectively cutting childhood poverty in half. Two parents from our campus also spoke, sharing their enriching experiences with Christopher House and how meaningful this credit will be in helping them support their children and invest in their future.

### Governor JB Pritzker

Governor JB Pritzker joined us on September 13, 2021 for a press conference at Christopher House's Stewart Campus to announce the roll-out of nation-leading early childhood education investments to support staff, parents, and providers. We applaud this initiative by the Governor, who has long championed and invested in early childhood education. In fact, more and more, our state and federal leaders are recognizing the impact of early childhood education and supports to young children and their families. Among the many issues and opportunities for change that the pandemic has brought to light, the impact on education and need for family support are among the most critical, and by extension, the need for highly qualified and passionate early childhood educators to guide our young learners and engage with and support their families.



Join the mission to help families in need thrive.



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RSVP & JOIN US: christopherhouse.org/benefit

**MAY 5, 2022 AT 6:00PM**

**Save the Date: Thrive Benefit**  
**We're excited to host our Thrive Benefit**  
**in-person at Morgan Manufacturing on**

