

ACHIEVE

WINTER 2023



CHRISTOPHER
LEARN DREAM ACHIEVE **HOUSE**

CHRISTOPHER HOUSE CREATES OPPORTUNITY AND ADVANCES EQUITY FOR SCHOLARS AND FAMILIES THROUGH A CONTINUUM OF PERSONALIZED, HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION WITH IMMERSIVE FAMILY SUPPORTS, STARTING AT BIRTH.

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

To our Christopher House Community:

Across our family of schools, Christopher House celebrated Black History Month this past January-February, and I have been inspired by how much learning is happening within our community.

Christopher House has been reflecting on our role in fostering education and supporting our critical ongoing mission of creating opportunity and advancing equity for our scholars and families. Walking down our hallways across our Campuses, I have been inspired by the student-led decorated doors that showcase scholars' understanding of Black history. Through an ongoing speaker series, an interactive performance by the Muntu Dance Theatre, and a Black History Museum held by our After School scholars, the Christopher House community continues to create brave spaces to honor and celebrate the rich and diverse cultures of our scholars and families.

Our best is an ongoing process – and it is one that honors, reflects, and grows community that embraces our core values. I cannot wait to celebrate the upcoming spring educational milestones across our family of schools. June will bring the graduation of our third class of Eighth graders and another season of Preschoolers transitioning to Kindergarten. Each educational transition builds on moments created within our classrooms and across our community and supports our scholars – and their families – as they take the next steps in their educational journeys. These momentous milestone experiences are not possible without each and every Christopher House community member. Thank you to each of you.

With gratitude,



Libby Shortenhaus

March 2023



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

 **92%**

of caregivers felt that their family's background and identity were valued at Christopher House

465 

families were supported through our 2022 Family-to-Family holiday giving program

97% 

of Christopher House families assessed scored self-sufficient on the family assessment at the end of the year




2022 Report Card

We are humbled to share the impact Christopher House had throughout the 2021-2022 academic year and the growth and achievement of our scholars and families. We are grateful for all those who supported Christopher House in maintaining the health and safety of our community as we completed our first full year of in-person learning.

We believe that a parent is their child's first teacher. It is through the building of trusting relationships between our caregivers and teachers that we are proud to share that **53% of preschoolers transitioned to kindergarten kindergarten-ready, which is a year-over-year 18 percentage point increase in kindergarten readiness and a significant step in reaching readiness levels seen prior to COVID-19.**

Our continuum of education model goes beyond the classroom nourishing relationships. During the past year we have provided food from our three on-site pantries to **1,635 individuals**, and **over 500 families** received emergency financial assistance throughout the pandemic. Then, now, and always, Christopher House strives to meet the needs of the children and families we serve, so together, they may thrive.



100%
of our 8th graders
matriculated
to high school 

89% B+
of our After School students
improved their grades or
maintained a B average

560+ 
hours of counseling have
been provided to Christopher
House children and families



Christopher House Scholar Voices

A Conversation with our Scholars

Christopher House’s continuum of education model includes After School, which works with over 200 students, many are Christopher House Elementary & Middle School scholars and Pre-School graduates. After School offers our scholars a safe space to receive high-quality programming following the academic day from 2:30 to 5:30 PM. During the summer, Christopher House operates After School as a full-day program. It’s a program that is in high demand, as we always have a waiting list.

We joined our After School program at our James & Jean Stewart Campus recently and spoke with two veteran After School participants, Alex and Joaquin,* who are currently 5th graders enrolled at Christopher House.

How long have you been students at Christopher House? What grades are you in now?

ALEX: I started at Christopher House in 1st grade. We’re both in the same 5th grade class now. Our teacher is Ms. Johnson!

JOAQUIN: I started in preschool, and yes, Ms. Johnson is the best! She’s really nice and offers to help us individually whenever we need it. She always tells us if we need anything, to just come up to her desk and ask.

Over the years, has there been a special teacher who impacted your time here at Christopher House?

JOAQUIN: I really loved my teacher in second grade. She was always there to talk with us and give us treats. Talking to her was like talking to a friend.

ALEX: Honestly, all of them! I’ve loved every teacher I’ve had. Everyone is just really kind.

What is a typical day in After School like?

JOAQUIN: First, we do our homework, which is nice because there are teachers there to help us in case we get stuck. Then, we have free choice when we can go to the gym or play on the roof playground if it’s warm enough outside.

ALEX: In the summer, we have full days where we go to the park or on fun fieldtrips! My favorite trip was to the Enchanted Castle. We got to play a bunch of fun arcade games.

JOAQUIN: We’ve also visited places like Shedd Aquarium, the University of Chicago, and the Museum of Science and Industry.

What’s your favorite part of After School?

ALEX: You get to spend more time with friends and play with kids from different classes and grades.

JOAQUIN: Yeah, you get to make a lot of new friends that you may not talk to during the day. I’ve met my best friends here.

*Names have been changed to respect the privacy of our scholars.***

Donors to Christopher House - \$1,000+ (July 1, 2022 – January 31, 2023)

Diana L. Amrein Grandchildren’s Trust	Presbyterian Church of Barrington	Elizabeth and Tarun Chandran	Constellation Energy	Gabrielle Drew	Brittany and Martin Goodlett	Paul Hastings LLP
Anonymous x4	Fatima Beach	Rick and Dee Dee Chesley	A.G. Cox Charity Trust	Egerter Family Foundation	Amy and Bob Greenebaum	Diane Heller
First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights	Stacey and Joe Blasko	Christopher House Auxiliary	Patrick and Anna M. Cudahy Fund	Exelon	Leo S. Guthman Fund	Larry Hochberg
AXA XL	Campos EPC	CIBC Bank USA	Amy Cupples	Robert Fedoris	William and Christine Guthrie	The Horwich Family Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Foundation	Bill Carr	Cisco Systems	D & R Fund	William and December Gladden Family Fund	Harley-Davidson Financial Services	IMC Chicago Charitable Foundation
	Lisa Centone and Joe Curci	Sean and Diana Connolly	Katy Daker	Max Goldenberg Foundation	Lois Hartung	Ingenuity
	Julie Chamberlin		David and Juli Dreifuss			Joseph and Helen Komarek Foundation
			Nikki Drevich			



Staff Spotlight

Meet Shanda Starks-Douglas, School Age Manager

Shanda Starks-Douglas first joined the Christopher House family in 2002 as an Assistant Teacher in an Infant classroom at our Uptown Campus. Over the past 21 years, she has served in multiple capacities in our Early Childhood and Youth Development departments. Shanda strives to create a safe and healthy environment for her scholars.

We sat down with Shanda and asked her about her Christopher House story and her journey with us.

What is your favorite Christopher House memory?

About a year ago, I noticed one student who would come into After School every day clearly upset. I would ask her what was wrong, and she would respond saying she didn't want to talk about it.

I would tell her, *"That's okay, but guess what, when you are ready to talk about it, I'll be here. It doesn't matter if it's today, tomorrow, or a month from now, I'll always be here for you."*

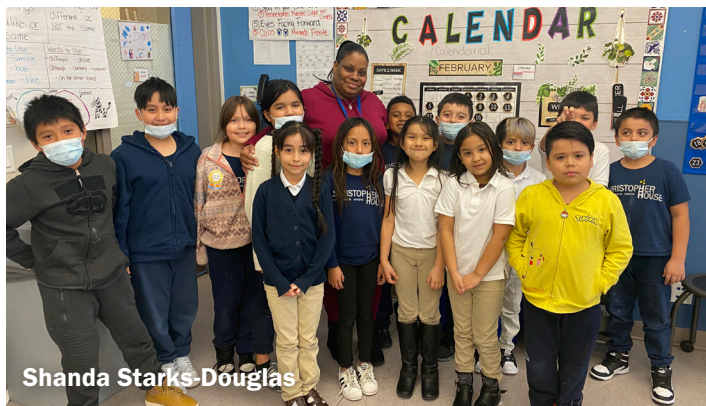
One day, about an hour after arriving, the student came up to my desk and asked if we could talk. She told me she had been struggling with self-confidence and body image and worried she didn't look like her friends. I reassured her that she is seen, she is worthy, and she is beautiful for exactly who she is. To this day, she and I have maintained a safe and trusting relationship.

How is Christopher House unique?

Christopher House is more than a school. Our teachers and staff build real bonds and trusting relationships with not only the students, but the families. We get to know each family personally, and parents feel comfortable telling us what they need and asking us for help. The amazing thing is that we have resources like counselors, the food pantry, and the holiday gift drive to actually meet those needs.

Why do you choose to work at Christopher House, and what impact do you hope to have within our shared community?

Christopher House is the house with a heart. During my journey, Christopher House has supported me in my ongoing education and professional development, supporting me as I continue to expand my skillset to better serve our children and families. **Christopher House is more than a job, it's a community that I am thankful to be a part of each and every day.**



Shanda Starks-Douglas

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| David and Maureen Lai | Anina and Roger McCarron | Presbyterian Women of the Park Ridge Presbyterian Church | The Rosenmayer Family Fund | Katherine Smith Southminster Presbyterian Church | Jackie and Glenn Tilton | The Wax and Skin Lounge |
| Steve and Dodi Larrick | Joyce McGlade | Dani Petrie | Sheila Ruder | Kelsey Stella | The Tollinche Family | Amanda Wolfe |
| Cindy and Tom Lillard | Zach Melone | Elizabeth Press | Susan and Charles Schwartz | Jennifer and Floyd Strimling | Rita Tresnowski | Traci Stanley and Joe Zitomer |
| Lynn and Mike Lullo | Jill Nolte | Gretchen Rakowicz | Martin Senour | The Sujdak Family | Tom and Tina Tromiczak | |
| Steve and Ellen Mardiks | Old National Bank | John Ratnaswamy | Peter and Barbara Sereda | Mark and Terri Sullivan | VNA Foundation | <i>*including in-kind donations</i> |
| Rebecca Marks | Opus Foundation | RBC Capital Markets | Suzanne Smart | Dr. Timothy Sullivan | Jaclyne Wallace | |
| Tessa Maurice | Osilisch Family Trust | David W. Rodin | Holly and Rick Smirl | | Marion Walsh | |
| | Park Ridge Presbyterian Church | | | | | |

Around the House

Our Family of Schools



INFANT & PRESCHOOL

Prepares over 300 children for kindergarten, beginning at 6 weeks old, through full day education that focuses on cognitive development, motor skills, literacy and math skills, and social behaviors.

Early Childhood hosted their first winter in-service training, which included a special speaker opportunity that was opened to all of Christopher House as part of our larger agency-wide education and celebration of Black History Month. Penny Smith, Director of Learning and Impact for the Early Childhood Policy and Leadership Academy at Erikson Institute, spoke about how language impacts perception.



AFTER SCHOOL

Works with 200+ scholars ages six to 14 – including Elementary School scholars and graduates – to explore new opportunities, achieve academic excellence, and develop health behaviors and soft skills needed to be successful in school, home, college, and the workplace.

In preparation for the new year, After School scholars developed personal SMART goals that they will work towards and track with the support of their teachers throughout the year. Our Youth Leadership teens did a Service Learning project that raised funds for PAWS Chicago with a hot chocolate fundraiser.

Christopher House creates opportunity and advances equity for scholars and families through a continuum of personalized, high-quality education with immersive family supports, starting at birth.



ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL

Provides more than 460 scholars in grades K-8 with a personalized education, including a STEAM curriculum, in a college-going culture to ensure every scholar is prepared for the future.

Our Middle School scholars attended our first in-house high school fair in October to meet with representatives from a wide-range of Chicago-based high schools to learn about the application process and how to take the next step in their educational journeys.



PARENT SCHOOL

Supports the caregivers of all scholars by providing the resources and knowledge needed to promote stable and healthy home environments that advance each child's academic, social, and emotional development.

Staff and volunteers gathered to provide extra support to Christopher House families over the holidays. Through our three on-site pantries, we provided Thanksgiving meals to 299 Christopher House families and generous donors helped fulfill holiday wish lists for 465 families through our annual giving program, Family-to-Family.



Hispanic Heritage Month

The Christopher House family comes together annually to recognize, honor, and celebrate Hispanic, Latino/a, and Spanish-speaking cultures during Hispanic Heritage Month, and this year was no exception. Throughout the month, we amplified the voices and experiences of our community through celebratory events and educational classroom exercises. Our staff and scholars delighted in the joys and rich history of Hispanic culture, enjoying classroom concerts, live music, cultural food, and books and text written by Hispanic, Latinx and Latino/a authors.

From September 15 to October 15, 2022, Christopher House honored the Hispanic and Latino/a voices within our community, highlighting the importance and purpose of Hispanic Heritage Month.

“Hispanic Heritage Month means celebrating my culture and sharing that celebration with the entire world! Being Latina in Chicago means incorporating my cultural values and benefits in my day-to-day life. It is important for me to embrace my culture and credit it in my successes because they are the successes of my parents and ancestors too.”

– Nancy Benitez, School Age Teacher

Reflecting on the activities Christopher House held throughout Hispanic Heritage Month, Ricardo Villalobos, Director of Family and Community Engagement, shared, “It was beautiful to see people come together, dance, laugh and just be together.”

In addition to these lively celebrations, Christopher House hosted an interactive cultural round table with special guest speakers, including State Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas, State Representative Eva-Dina Delgado, and Judge Miriam Valkenburg from October 4th-6th. These conversations highlighted the importance of recognizing Hispanic histories, practicing traditions passed from generation to generation, and getting involved with local politics in your area.





Save the Date

32ND ANNUAL BENEFIT - MAY 4, 2023

Christopher House creates opportunity & advances equity to ensure that all children and families can thrive.
Join us to support & celebrate our community.

SPONSORSHIPS & TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE: WWW.CHRISTOPHERHOUSE.ORG/32ND-ANNUAL-BENEFIT/

Join the mission to help families in need thrive.

Learn more at christopherhouse.org