

ACHIEVE

SUMMER 2026



CHRISTOPHER HOUSE
LEARN DREAM ACHIEVE

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Celebrate momentous
scholar milestones

Learn about cultural and
family-focused events

Relive the 2026
Annual Benefit

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

As we close another remarkable fiscal year at Christopher House, I am filled with gratitude as I reflect on the many moments that reinforced the importance of our mission. This year was marked by meaningful milestones and continued progress, beginning with the celebration of our 120th anniversary—a testament to more than a century of expanding opportunity through education and partnering with children and families to build brighter futures. As we honored our rich history, we also reaffirmed our commitment to creating lasting impact for generations to come.

This year also brought meaningful progress toward our strategic vision. Christopher House Elementary School received a four-year charter renewal, recognizing the strength of our educational model and the meaningful outcomes we achieve for children and families every day. Guided by our commitment to investing in equity, we expanded access to exceptional early learning by partnering with Concordia Place and growing our Head Start program, bringing our proven model to more children and families and helping ensure more children begin school kindergarten ready. We also continued investing in those who make our mission possible. Through our third and fourth Child Development Associate cohorts, we maintained a remarkable 95% graduation rate, preparing current and future early childhood educators to deliver exceptional learning experiences and strengthen our community for years to come.

These accomplishments are reminders that no achievement happens in isolation. Every success is made possible by the unwavering support of families, the dedication of educators and staff, and the generosity of partners and supporters who believe in our mission. It is this collective effort that inspired our theme for the year ahead: Together, We Thrive.

As we enter FY27, we are proud to recommit to the strategic plan we launched in FY24, renewing our focus on highest student achievement, becoming the best place to work, and investing in equity. This year, we are also embracing a fourth strategic pillar: community impact. For more than 120 years, Christopher House has been rooted in the belief that lasting change happens when we work alongside families and communities. As we continue to strengthen partnerships, expand opportunities, and share our expertise beyond our walls, we are deepening that commitment and extending our impact across Chicago.

“Together, We Thrive” reflects the heart of Christopher House. Every member of our community—our scholars, parents, caregivers, teachers, staff, volunteers, alumni, and supporters—brings unique strengths, perspectives, and talents that make us stronger. When we learn from, support, and celebrate one another, we create opportunities that no one of us could achieve alone.

Thank you for being an essential part of this community. Because of your partnership, our scholars are reaching new milestones, our families are building brighter futures, and Christopher House continues to grow as a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

Warmest Regards,



Julie Dakers, CEO

Julie Dakers

OUR MISSION

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.

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

Celebrating Milestones, Embracing New Beginnings

This spring, Christopher House celebrated two milestones that mark important transitions in a scholar’s educational journey. Our kindergarten scholars proudly held a celebratory graduation, recognizing the successful completion of their first year of elementary school, while our 8th grade scholars crossed the stage ready to begin high school and the next chapter of their academic careers.

These celebrations honored more than the end of a school year—they recognized the confidence, resilience, and growth our scholars have demonstrated every step of the way. **We are proud to share that 100% of Christopher House’s 8th grade scholars graduated, with 93% enrolling in one of their top three best-fit high schools**, reflecting both their hard work and the support of the families, educators, and community who have helped them succeed.

In her valedictory address, 8th grade graduate Emily Cruz reflected on the friendships and community that shaped her class: *“Throughout*

these experiences I have learned the importance of bonding with classmates and peers. Creating a bond is what allowed us to create a family, feel comfortable enough to open up, and lean on each other whenever we needed help.” She reminded her classmates that every achievement was possible because of the people who supported them along the way.

Principal Stephanie Glover-Douglas captured the spirit of the celebrations: *“Graduation is a celebration of every challenge our scholars have overcome, every goal they’ve achieved, and every opportunity that lies ahead. Seeing our kindergarten and 8th grade scholars reach this milestone—and do so with such remarkable academic success—fills us with pride and confidence in all they will accomplish next. We can’t wait to see the impact they will make as they continue their educational journey.”*

Whether celebrating a successful first year of elementary school or preparing to enter high school, these scholars remind us that every milestone is both an achievement worth celebrating and the beginning of something new.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE Christopher House Class of 2026!



Celebrating our Planet, Together

Christopher House Elementary scholars proudly celebrated Earth Day by turning our campus into a colorful display of environmental stewardship. After creating handmade signs with messages about protecting the planet, scholars marched through the school in a spirited Earth Day parade, sharing their enthusiasm for caring for the environment.

Parents, teachers, staff, and fellow scholars lined the parade route to cheer them on, making the celebration a true community event. The parade not only highlighted the importance of environmental responsibility but also gave scholars an opportunity to raise their voices for a healthier, greener future.

By combining creativity, learning, and community, our Earth Day celebration reminded us that even small actions can make a big difference—and that when we come together, we can help create a brighter future for everyone.

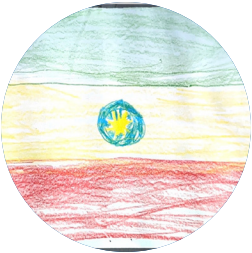


Our Community, Our Cultures

This summer, Christopher House Uptown came alive with music, food, and joyful celebration during our annual Cultural Event. Families proudly shared the traditions that make our community so vibrant, arriving dressed in cultural attire that reflected their heritage and identities.

Parent volunteers generously prepared and shared traditional dishes, including Ethiopian Chicken Sambussa and Nigerian Jollof Rice, inviting families to experience flavors from around the world. Throughout the event, children danced to music from a live DJ, enjoyed face painting and balloon animals, and celebrated alongside classmates, families, and staff.

More than a festive gathering, the Cultural Event was a celebration of the rich diversity that strengthens Christopher House every day. By honoring each family's unique culture and creating opportunities to learn from one another, we continue to build a welcoming community where every child and family feels seen, valued, and proud of who they are.



After School in Action: the History of Us

Earlier this year, Christopher House After School scholars explored identity, culture, and belonging through a special project called *"The History of Us."* Created by After School educators Mr. Brandon and Ms. Nancy, the two-week project invited younger scholars to share family stories, traditions, recipes, and meaningful memories while learning about the significance of names, culture, and cultural artifacts.

Inspired by Mr. Brandon and Ms. Nancy's own childhood experiences of feeling different, they helped create a safe space where scholars could celebrate what makes them unique while learning to appreciate the experiences of others. The project's message was simple but powerful: **our differences are beautiful.**

Reflecting on the experience, Ms. Nancy shared:

"It may not seem like it, but our youth are painfully aware of the oppression happening in our country... By having these hard conversations with them, we show them not only to be brave and take their power back, but also how to find the beauty of life in even the darkest moments. As Dumbledore says, 'Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.'"

Projects like *The History of Us* help foster a community where every scholar feels seen, valued, and empowered to embrace their identity while celebrating the identities of others.

Meet our New Chief Human Resources Officer!

Christopher House is excited to welcome Brenda Horton as our new Chief Human Resources Officer.

With more than 25 years of experience in human resources leadership across education, healthcare, energy, and telecommunications, Brenda brings a wealth of expertise in organizational development, leadership coaching, talent strategy, and employee engagement. Throughout her career, she has been passionate about building strong workplace cultures where employees feel supported, empowered, and equipped to thrive.

Brenda's commitment to developing people and strengthening organizations aligns closely with Christopher House's mission to create lasting opportunities for children and families. As we continue to invest in our staff and community, we are thrilled to welcome her leadership and look forward to the impact she will make across our organization.

"I am honored and excited to join the Christopher House family and contribute to an organization whose mission creates lasting impact for children, families, and communities. I look forward to partnering with our talented staff and leaders to build on our strong culture, invest in our people, and foster an inclusive, high-performing environment where every employee can thrive in service of our mission."



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Once Upon a Book Fair:

Opening New Chapters for Every Scholar

This spring, Christopher House scholars celebrated the joy of reading during our “Once Upon a Book Fair” Scholastic Book Fair. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we raised \$1,580 to support our Book Fair Fund, ensuring that every scholar had the opportunity to choose and take home a book—regardless of their family’s ability to purchase one.

For the past three years, donors have helped us build this dedicated fund to remove financial barriers and create an equitable experience for all scholars. During the book fair, if a scholar does not have funds available at checkout, their book is covered through Christopher House’s designated Book Fair Fund, allowing every child to participate fully. It’s a simple but meaningful way to live out one of Christopher House’s core values: **equity**.

Access to books that reflect children’s interests and spark their curiosity is essential for building strong literacy skills and fostering a lifelong love of reading. Scholastic Book Fairs create an exciting opportunity for children to choose books of their own, helping them see reading as both empowering and enjoyable.

Thank you to the generous donors who contributed to this year’s Book Fair Fund. Because of your support, every scholar can write their own story—one page and one book at a time.



Together, We’re Writing Brighter Futures

Supporters helped raise over \$550,000 for Christopher House

Nearly 300 friends, partners, and supporters gathered for Christopher House’s 2026 Annual Benefit, “Once Upon a Time: The Power of One Story, the Strength of Many.” Together, we celebrated the stories that shape our community and raised more than \$550,000 to help children and families build brighter futures.

At Christopher House, every child, family, teacher, volunteer, and donor has a story. Together, those stories create a powerful narrative of resilience, opportunity, and success. This year’s Benefit celebrated the journeys that connect us and the collective impact we make by investing in children and families.

One of the evening’s highlights was hearing from eighth-grade scholar Natasha, who reflected on her nine-year journey at Christopher House—from starting kindergarten to preparing to enter the International Baccalaureate program at Prosser High School.

Thank you

to our generous sponsors for making this year’s Annual Benefit possible.

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“Christopher House helped me find my voice and made me feel like what I say actually matters. As I’m moving on, I’ll be headed to Prosser to study in the IB program. I know it will be a big change, but I feel confident because Christopher House has prepared me for what comes next.”

We were also honored to welcome Congresswoman Delia Ramirez, who shared her family’s connection to Christopher House through her younger sister, a Christopher House alumna. Her remarks underscored the lasting impact Christopher House has on children, families, and communities across Chicago.

The evening also featured a special tribute to former Board President Dee Dee Chesley, honoring her more than 15 years of exceptional leadership and service. Dee Dee’s dedication has helped strengthen Christopher House and expand opportunities for thousands of children and families.

Every story shared throughout the evening reaffirmed the power of community and the difference we can make together. We are deeply grateful to everyone who attended, donated, volunteered, and supported our mission. Your generosity is helping write the next chapter for Christopher House children and families.





www.christopherhouse.org

2026 Family-to-Family Holiday Giving Program!

Stay tuned...
for the

5235 W BELDEN AVE
CHICAGO, IL 60639

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