



HOMELESS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

Volunteer Newsletter

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Autumn 2011

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Homeless Children's Awareness Week

Proclaimed by the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, HCEF hosted the first Homeless Children's Awareness Week (HCAW) October 15 to 22.

It began on a Saturday morning with a 5K run/walk titled "Stand Up and Run for Homeless Children" at Frick Park. [More on page 2.] That night, HCEF hosted a screening of *Writing on the Wall: Remembering the Berlin Wall* at CAPA High School. The film was followed by a discussion with panelists Debbie Maier Jacknin, founder of the Pittsburgh Holocaust Project, and Duquesne University's Drs. Ronald Arnett and Erik Garrett of the Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies.

Storytellers gathered at the Cabaret Monday night to share their tales related to "An Education: True Stories of Unusual Lessons Learned." Eight presenters told their tales under this theme. [More on page 3.]

Despite the cold, volunteers came out on October 20 to stand on the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial lawn for a 15-minute art installation. This "purposeful gathering" preceded a celebration in the museum hall. [See article below.]

HCEF and Dr. Shellie Hipsky hosted "An Extraordinary Evening" on October 22, a Latin-themed event featuring Sheldon



Proclamation of HCAW by Allegheny County.

Ingram of Channel 4 Action News as Master of Ceremonies and motivational speaker Roy Juarez, Jr. of the "Homeless by Choice" tour.

The week's success was only possible through the many volunteers who donated their time and money to the cause: raising awareness of the countless children experiencing homelessness.



A Purposeful Gathering

An estimated 80 volunteers braved the unfavorable weather on Thursday, October 20 with a common cause in mind: drawing

attention to the 1,700 children reported to have accessed homeless services on any given day in Allegheny County in the 2010-11 school year.

was 15 minutes of silence and reflection, both for the volunteers and the onlookers, who stopped briefly to take photos and investigate. At 5:15, they chanted "listen" briefly before erupting into applause and filing into the warmth of Soldiers and Sailors Hall. [Continued on page 4.]

At 5PM, they spread out along the lawn of Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, holding portraits of children over their faces. It



Warmly-dressed volunteers stand silent for HCEF's purposeful gathering.

Stand Up and Run



Participants in Saturday's 5K event at Frick Park.

*"Home is walking through the front door, the smell of a home-cooked meal wafting in the air and our family dogs greeting me at the door."
- Josh Verbano*



Close to 50 participants came out to show their support for HCEF with a 5K run/walk titled "Stand Up and Run for Homeless Children" at Frick Park.

"In all honestly I would have been happy with one, let alone 50 people," said Josh Verbano, who led the planning and preparation for the event. "The goal for the race was not a fundraiser, but to raise awareness, [and] having less people there helped to get HCEF's message

across."

All participants received a "Stand Up and Run" t-shirt and other goodies. David Galati and Adrien Taren received 1st place men's and woman's trophies for conquering the challenging course ahead of the others.

The favorable weather conditions offered the runners and walkers a perfect chance to enjoy the beginning of autumn; it even helped to bring in a few last-minute registrations. However, the location, while beautiful, could have been better. When choosing to organize a future 5K, "I might consider a more

spectator-friendly location," Josh said. "Most of the race was in the woods, and if you were watching a loved one run, you could only see them at the start or finish. I would definitely consider a more open area, even a road race."

Nevertheless, those in Frick Park's woods seemed to enjoy themselves, even at the slight misdirection that led some off course. The path's diversity and scenery helped make the event more memorable. But, as Josh expressed, "Every moment of the race was memorable, and I will cherish that whole day as a great memory."

Featured Volunteer: Josh Verbano

Though only involved with HCEF since the beginning of summer, Josh, who found out about the organization through staff member Zach Marsh, was quickly inspired by the mission. "HCEF is such a selfless organization," he said, "it was very easy to be drawn in."

Josh greatly contributed to the organization and to the success of HCAW's "Stand Up and Run" 5K event. When asked about the work involved, he said, "The better question is what didn't go into planning the 5K event. While

planning the event, I found that there is a lot more to get done than I thought, and there are always little things that pop up at the worst of times." The experience also functioned as an opportunity for growth: "I learned a lot about organizing a 5K, and gathered new insight in how to manage such a project in a limited amount of time."

Hopefully, Josh will be able to take this learning experience with him when planning similar events, perhaps even another HCEF awareness-raiser. He

has expressed interest in further volunteer work with Homeless Children's Education Fund. "My hope for the future of HCEF is to grow and help as many children as it can," he said. And it's the efforts of Josh and other HCEF volunteers that will make that possible.



Featured Volunteer: Trent Wolfred

Trent, who's been volunteering with HCEF for about two and a half years, first became involved after a friend recruited him to help out

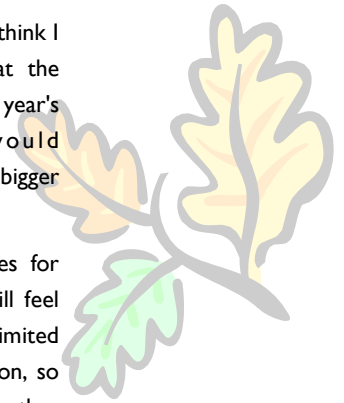
with a Champions for Children event. In addition to organizing two storytelling events, he is a member of the Volunteer Committee,

helped form the Speakers Bureau, and has volunteered at the last three Champs galas.

His involvement with this year's storytelling event included seeking out the storytellers, venue, and music; and designing promotional materials. "I was able to draw on my experiences organizing a similar event last year," Trent said, "so that made much of the work a bit easier." However, Trent also expressed disappointment in the turnout for the event: "In retrospect, I should have done loads more to promote the event and been more active in urging

others to spread the word. I think I was too quick to trust that the success of the previous year's storytelling event would automatically bring an even bigger audience this year."

When asked about his hopes for HCEF's future, he said, "I still feel like I have reasonably limited involvement in the organization, so I mostly leave that up to other folks to decide. HCEF has strong leadership and a great trajectory. Within that picture, I'm most happy working on small projects that play to my skills and are personally rewarding."



"Home happens when you don't notice it; it's the experience of not feeling otherness."
- Trent Wolfred

Stories of Unusual Lessons

Inspired by storytelling series like The Moth in New York City, "An Education: True Stories of Unusual Lessons Learned" on October 17 invited local storytellers to the Cabaret to share their experiences. This has become an annual event for HCEF, led by Trent Wolfred.

"When I first had the idea to do an event like this in Pittsburgh a few years ago," Trent said, "there wasn't anything of this kind happening in the area. It's now exciting to see that (aside from my annual event) we have two groups hosting regular storytelling events in the city—a Pittsburgh chapter of The Moth and a homegrown group called For Real, For Real."

Trent was also the event's MC,

while Elliott Sussman was the DJ, playing songs with a story between performances. After sharing his own story, Trent introduced the night's speakers: Laura Greenwalt, Ryan Firkel, Mei Tsui, Derek Minto, Susy Robison, Kate Hagerty, and Shellie Hipsky.

Shellie concluded the night by sharing a story about the payoff of teaching a mentally disabled peer to talk, the moment she decided she wanted to be involved in education. "It was in that moment that I knew you can never, ever give up on a child," she said, "and that's why I'm such a believer in what the Homeless Children's Education Fund does."

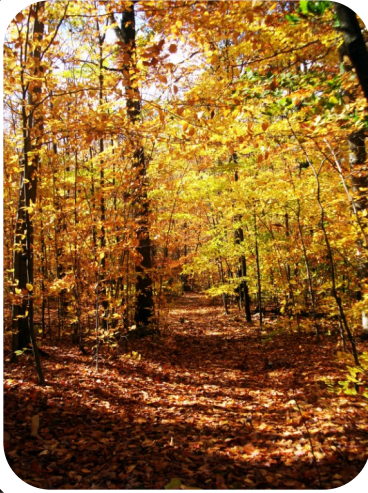
After all the planning, preparation,

and promotion, the event helped HCEF reach some new faces through its entertainment. "I was pretty wowed by the stories that were told this year," Trent responded. "I can't thank the storytellers enough. They all delivered in ways that completely surprised me."



Monday night's cast of storytellers.

Internship Spotlight



“Home is Sunday morning cinnamon buns, more books than shelves, pajamas all day, and a hug every time you enter a room.”

—Anna Campbell



I just feel incredibly blessed and grateful for the opportunities I have had in regards to my education. My family strongly values education and this allowed me to go straight from high school to college and then continue with a graduate program. I know that is not the norm for many students in the United States, and in my short time at HCEF I've really had the chance to reflect on just how lucky I am.

—Anna Campbell (Anna is working towards a masters in social work, with a concentration on children and families, at the University of Pittsburgh.)

The atmosphere in the office is also helpful. With the start of classes, I have been stressed and

felt crazy 95% of the time. However, my time at HCEF has probably been the most calming and relaxing. It is not hard to focus only on the tasks at hand and let the rest of my worries fall away—which is not the case in most of the other settings I am in.

—Delaina Johnson (Delaina is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh, with a major in Applied Developmental Psychology.)

HCEF is helping me day by day. It gives me business, organization, and corporation experience along with discussions, which could help me for job interviews.

—Shawn Wilson (Shawn is a student at City Charter High School, who has been completing an internship with

HCEF this semester.)

When I decided to enter the Change a Heart program, I wanted to stop thinking about what I'd like to do for myself, but focus instead on what I can do for others. That said, I know I am the type of person who prefers to help others from behind the scenes. Even if I'm not directly interacting with those whom I'm serving, if I keep the purpose and impact of my work in mind, I won't be discouraged or dissatisfied with the outcome.

—Krystle Morrison (Krystle graduated from Elmira College with a BA in English Literature, and is working full-time at HCEF through Change a Heart, an AmeriCorps-affiliated service program.)

A Purposeful Gathering (cont.)

It was the fourth time HCEF held this art installation, but the first time a celebration followed the event. Volunteers came into the hall of Soldiers and Sailors, welcomed by Lightning Box, a local band of young yet talented musicians. Inspirational speaker Roy Juarez, Jr., the keynote speaker of Homeless Children's Awareness Week, shared his story during the celebration. Roy is currently on his “My

Bag, My Home: Homeless by Choice” tour, traveling the country wherever he's called and “couch-surfing” along the way. Homeless with his younger siblings at age 14, Roy carries an incredible story that he hopes will inspire 100,000 youths nationwide “to dream, not give up on life, and understand the value of a higher education.”

The celebration concluded with refreshments in the form

of more music from Lightning Box and Franktuary hotdogs. The hope is that, next time, number on the banner will be smaller.



Roy Juarez, Jr. with Lightning Box.

Speaker's Bureau

On February 28, 2011, HCEF's Speakers Bureau held its first meeting, where they received the necessary training to become representatives of the organization. From then till now, they have had monthly meetings, each leaving them further informed and better prepared.

Empowered with the knowledge of the issues surrounding Allegheny County's children and youth experiencing homelessness, as well

as HCEF's mission, the Speakers Bureau is a group of individuals who have volunteered to educate the community. The members want to share their passion for HCEF and the children they serve by speaking wherever they are invited.

If you would like to invite a Speaker's Bureau volunteer to speak at your meeting or event, please complete the request form found on HCEF's homepage: homelessfund.org.



Tales from Bridge to Independence

Yesterday was my second afternoon at BTI. Unlike last week, we only had three children. Stacy got the two with homework settled while I tried to somewhat contain the youngest guy, a kindergartner. . . . Somehow Stacy convinced him to pick out a book for me to read with him. I thought to myself that there was no way he would sit through the Curious George book. Before I knew it, he and the two older kids (2nd and 4th grade) were crowded around my chair, guessing what was going to happen next and squealing with laughter as that pesky monkey managed to wreak havoc in a chocolate factory. It was just a small piece of the afternoon, but I've found myself smiling all day long as I picture the scene. I'm glad my little guy was able to prove me wrong and with any luck we will have more afternoons spent giggling over a crazy monkey.

– Anna

Monday was a breakthrough day for me at BTI. I finally felt like I belonged. I finally got that feeling that I want to do anything I can for these kids, I want them to have the world. When the children came in after school, a little four-year-old came running up to me with her hands clasped hiding a little treasure. She tells me she has a present for me and I return with a "For me?" She insists it's for me and it's a large black rock. Once I promised to keep it forever, she was pleased and left me with my rock. . . . After teaching all the children how to play Mancala, it was time to go. As I was leaving, the girls came up to me, begging me to come tomorrow. When I told them I had school, they insisted I come the day after or the day after that. I'm sure their sudden interest in me has led to my sense of belonging. It's funny how such small children can affect you so much.

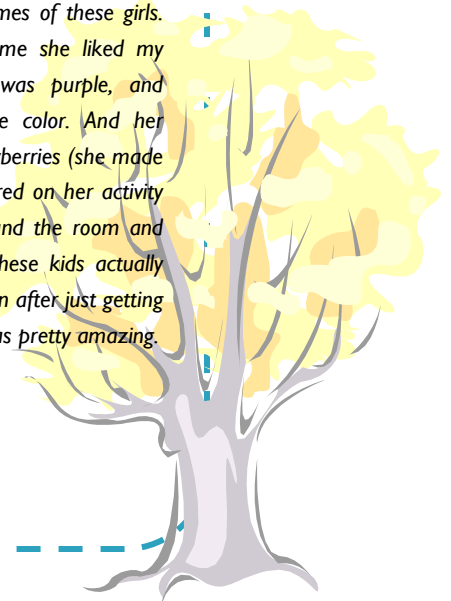
– Delaina

I particularly enjoyed spending time at Bridge to Independence Monday afternoon. I've never been one to willingly interact with young children; I think it's something I'll grow more comfortable with through experience. All the same, I felt inspired just being there and talking with two little kindergarten girls. I'm usually not good with names or ages (I might even forget them within a few minutes), but I remember the names of these girls. One of them told me she liked my watch because it was purple, and purple's her favorite color. (And her favorite fruit is strawberries (she made sure to color them red on her activity page). To look around the room and see how many of these kids actually wanted to learn, even after just getting out of school—it was pretty amazing.

– Krystle

"Home is made of 90-pound lapdogs, candlelit board games, and half-melted French vanilla ice cream with Hershey's syrup drizzled on top."

– Krystle Morrison



Providing hope through learning for a better future ...



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The Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit with a mission "to provide advocacy, community engagement, and direct service programs that support the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County."

www.homelessfund.org

Home is ...

- "Home is where one starts from."
- T. S. Eliot
- "Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to, in the strongest conjuration." - Charles Dickens
- "Where thou art, that is home."
- Emily Dickinson
- "One's home is like a delicious piece of pie you order in a restaurant on a country road one cozy evening—the best piece of pie you have ever eaten in your life—and can never find again."
- Lemony Snicket
- "Home is a place not only of strong affections, but of entire unreserve; it is life's undress rehearsal, its backroom, its dressing room." - Harriet Beecher Stowe
- "Home is not where you live but where they understand you."
- Christian Morgenstern
- "Home is where there's one to love us." - Charles Swain
- "Home is a shelter from storms—all sorts of storms." - William J. Bennett
- "Home is the one place in all this world where hearts are sure of each other. It is the place where we tear off that mask of guarded and suspicious coldness which the world forces us to wear in self-defense, and where we pour out the unreserved communications of full and confiding hearts. It is the spot where expressions of tenderness gush out without any sensation of awkwardness and without any dread of ridicule."
- Frederick W. Robertson
- "Where we love is home—home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts." - Oliver Wendell Holmes
- "Home ought to be our clearinghouse, the place from which we go forth lessoned and disciplined, and ready for life."
- Kathleen Norris
- "My home is not a place, it is people." - Lois McMaster Bujold