



Homeless Children's Education Fund

Volunteer Newsletter

Champions for Children Fundraiser 2011

On March 7th, the Homeless Children's Education Fund held their 12th Annual Champions for Children benefit at the Rivers Club. The fundraiser was a major success, bringing in more than \$130,000 for the organization and brought in over 300 attendees. Between the silent auction, Chinese auction and complimentary dinner, there was plenty to do at the event. Before the event kicked off HCEF honored Myra Powell, who had announced her retirement from the board of trustees in 2010, to thank her for her time with the organization. Af-

ter Myra was presented with the plaque, the guests were free to converse while volunteers managed the auction tables and greeted any newcomers. Guests could bid on various prizes at the silent auction, and had the chance to win a variety of different prizes at the Chinese auction. Guests were also treated to dinner accompanied by a live band. Once dinner was over, winners were announced from both the silent and Chinese auctions, and they were able to claim their prizes. Silent auction prizes included a hockey stick signed by

Mario Lemieux, footballs signed by individual Steelers players and even one signed by the whole team! Robert Fragasso was the Chairman of the event and Ralph and Ruth Anne Papa as Honorary Co-Chairs. Brett & Sarah Keisel were the 2011 Champions for Children Honorees, and the Linda Dickerson Award this year went to Joann Coganovich of Sojourner House and Sojourner House MOMS. The evening was overall a great success, and we hope to see everyone again next year on Monday, March 5, 2012!

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Jeremy Novak

Writer & Editor

Featured Volunteer

Patty Ahlbrandt is a retiree who discovered the Homeless Children's Education Fund when she stumbled upon a letter from the organization. She first inquired about HCEF when looking for a tutoring opportunity. Soon after, she called and after hearing the goals of the organization, she was roped in. Patty has since been helping to establish the Speaker's

Bureau and is hoping to work with HCEF on integrating music education into the shelter programs. She has also mentored two interns since starting with HCEF. Patty previously worked as a consultant for numerous nonprofit organizations, which she enjoyed because she was able to spend a lot of time writing and being outside. Patty had this to say about

HCEF, "I think this is a really wonderful organization. I'm impressed with their mission and the professionalism of the staff, and wish them well going forward."



Patty Ahlbrandt



Speaker's Bureau 2/28

The first meeting of the Homeless Children's Education Fund Speaker's Bureau was held on Monday, February 28th. The meeting, led by Executive Director Bill Wolfe was intended to inform the future representatives of HCEF on the history of the organization. Over the course of two hours future speakers were educated on the McKinney-Vento Act, from its namesake to the reasons it was created. Bill went into detail on the act and its purpose, while reminding the attendees that the act is up for reauthorization in 2011. Bill went on to dis-

cuss the state of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County, informing everyone that there was a 39% increase in the population of these children from 2009 to 2010. After this information, the group was given information about HCEF's history. Once they were caught up to date, Bill went into the specifics of the organization, with a large focus on the learning centers and mini-grant programs. The group was told the mini-grant program allocates \$35,000 a year to various partner shelters, and that the program is already

funded for the next 10 years! The meeting was great for informing everyone about HCEF. It also laid the foundation for what will soon be known as the HCEF Speaker's Bureau, so that these trained individuals will be able to go out and inform the community of the issues children and youth experiencing homelessness face, as well as the efforts HCEF is making to ensure that these children are given the education that is entitled to them.

HCEF Speaker's Bureau



Trent Wolfred, Wil Barber,
Scotti Mulert, Larry Story,
Bethany Hallam

Learning Centers

On March 21st, HCEF Manager of Education Laura Bailey spoke to the Speaker's Bureau about learning centers; talking about what they are and their purpose. HCEF partners with shelters across Allegheny County to provide spaces where children can go within those shelters to work and to learn. These spaces are meant to help close educational gaps that children and youth experiencing homelessness may

face. The first learning center was built 12 years ago, and 11 have been built since 1999. Over 10,000 books have been distributed to learning centers throughout that time, too. The learning center educational programs take place after the children have come home from school, never interfering with school activities. Computers are also kept up to date in each learning center in order for children to stay

current with technology and have more opportunities available to them. Many of the learning centers take children on field trips and do other activities with them; occasionally bringing in guests to teach them fun, unconventional lessons. These spaces are meant for children to learn and to provide them with the opportunity to do homework, or to learn new skills through activities they enjoy.

Outreach Team

The March Outreach team meeting was held at The Library in South Side on the 15th. All of the topics from the last meeting were discussed, and Outreach Team members gave updates on the progress of the programs and events. The biggest update came from Nick Vargas, who updated the group on the music program. The goal of the music program is to introduce the children to music by taking them to the

African American Music Institute. It is open to any child or mother at Sojourner House MOMs who are interested. Duquesne student, Tim Rothhaar informed the group that on March 30th, from 3:00 to 4:30 PM, Duquesne University would be the location of the 2011 Purposeful Gathering and Volunteers are welcome to come help raise awareness. The volunteers will be placing custom pens in the ground, leading to the Dukes

for Homeless Kids Facebook page. The event will mainly increase awareness among Duquesne students and anyone else passing by that day. Finally, the group also announced that the date for the Mélange Bistro dinner is May 17 from 5-8PM. The entry fee for the event is \$20 in advance, or \$30 at the door. The meeting ended on that note and the team planned the date and time of their next gathering.

Speaker's Bureau 3/14

The second meeting of the Homeless Children's Education Fund Speaker's Bureau was led by an outside speaker, Dave Stewart. Dave has spent his whole life dealing with the problem of homelessness and he spoke of his experiences with homelessness dating back to his college days. The meeting was intended to give the speakers more insight into the minds of individuals experiencing homelessness. Dave started his talk with the quote, "Children grow up to become the love that they've known." After giving background information on his involvement with individuals experiencing homelessness, Dave showed the group bags which had been left behind at shelters containing items that gave

insight into the lives of their owners. The bags contained many personal hygiene items, books, notes with religious quotes on them, clothing, etc. After showing the bags Dave talked about denial, particularly how every person experiences it at one point or another. He explained how when dealing with individuals experiencing homelessness, it's important to treat them as a friend. Once a friendship is formed, only then should anyone try talking them into changing. The speakers took notes and were encouraged to think about what Dave was saying and try to relate to it. By relating to the plight of individuals experiencing homelessness, the speakers would have an entirely new view on

the situations they'll be speaking about. This will allow the speeches to be more emotionally impactful and have a lasting impression in the public's mind. When Dave's talk was done, the speakers were encouraged to ask questions or to discuss any concerns they may have had. One member brought up a recent 60 Minutes segment about homelessness, which led to the speakers discussing how homelessness is not a minority issue. It can affect anyone, regardless of race, nationality, or any other qualities. The speakers acknowledged this fact, and agreed that this issue is much broader in scale than just Allegheny County and surrounding areas.

New Music Program!

The Homeless Children's Education Fund (HCEF) and the Pittsburgh Gateways have joined together to create DreamMakers an American Music Mentoring Program for the children in the HCEF partnering agencies. This new program was designed to provide the children with the experience to learn about the culture of American music and how to express themselves through music. The DreamMakers beginning program also provides an opportunity to develop confidence in playing or even begin to learn how to play a musical instrument. While the Americans Music program allows the children to have fun and be encouraged, it will also enhance their social, educational, and cognitive abilities through their self-expression. The Pittsburg Gateways work with the finest professional musicians across American music genres in the Pittsburgh region.

These musicians are there to help educate and mentor the children. On Tuesday, May 17th at 5:00pm to 8:00pm the HCEF and DreamMakers will be hosting an evening of jazz. Great jazz legends such as Dr. Nelson Harrison on horns, Mark Strickland on guitar, Dave Pellow on bass and a special vocalist Jessica Lee will guest perform at this benefit event for the Americans Music Crossroads program. Tickets can be purchased for \$20.00 in advanced or \$30.00 at the door.

Call Zach Marsh at HCEF (412)-562-0154 ext.200 before May 13th to ensure a ticket.



Homeless Education Network - The HEN connects and advocates with interested parties, facilitates discussions among partners, serves as a catalyst for action, creates effective models, brokers resources and provides a forum for community discussions to ensure that children and youth who are experiencing homelessness are enrolled, attending and succeeding in school as mandated by the McKinney - Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The McKinney-Vento Act - The McKinney-Vento Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) was created to help remove barriers for a child's education that may be caused by homelessness and to give he/she a brighter future. It provides transportation for children experiencing homelessness so that they may attend school. In early 2011 this legislation is up for re-approval and, along with homeless providers and school districts across the country, the Homeless Children's Education Fund asks for your support. If you are interested in helping and are willing to contact your legislators, please let us know by sending an email to Susy at srobison@homelessfund.org.

Our Mission

Ensuring that homeless children have equal access to the same educational opportunities and experiences as their peers.



HOMELESS
CHILDREN'S
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Hope Through Learning