



# STORIES — OF — IMPACT

FROM THE SOCIAL  
INNOVATION FUND

Scaling What Works

A LEARNING INITIATIVE OF



Grantmakers for Effective Organizations is a community of more than 440 grantmakers who are challenging the status quo in their field to help grantees achieve more. Understanding that grantmakers are successful only to the extent that their grantees achieve meaningful results, GEO promotes strategies and practices that contribute to grantee success. More information about GEO and resources for grantmakers are available at [www.geofunders.org](http://www.geofunders.org).

Launched in 2010, *Scaling What Works* is a multiyear learning initiative of GEO to expand the number of grantmakers and public sector funders who are working together to broaden the impact of high-performing nonprofits. Through the initiative, GEO offers training, networking opportunities and a host of tools and resources to better equip grantmakers to help the nonprofit organizations they support to plan, adapt and grow their impact in creating sustainable benefits for people, their communities and our planet. For more about *Scaling What Works*, visit [www.scalingwhatworks.org](http://www.scalingwhatworks.org).

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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he **Social Innovation Fund** is an initiative of the federal government's **Corporation for National and Community Service** intended to improve the lives of people in low-income communities. It does so by mobilizing public and private resources to grow promising and innovative community-based solutions that have evidence of compelling impact in three areas of priority need: economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development.

The Social Innovation Fund promotes an approach to giving that includes many of the fundamentals that members of the GEO community helped pioneer and have long advocated for, and the fund is aligned with GEO's own mission to promote grantmaking strategies and practices that contribute to grantee success.

**GEO**, through the *Scaling What Works* initiative, and the Corporation for National and Community Service collected stories that showcase the work of Social Innovation Fund grantees in their communities.



These stories feature individuals and families who have benefited from the programs and services of nonprofits receiving support through the Social Innovation Fund and its private philanthropic partners, and they show the ways in which these high-performing organizations are growing their impact within communities across the nation. For more information about the nonprofits and grantmakers involved in the Social Innovation Fund, visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund>.





# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY GROUP

## Introduction

The funders and selected nonprofits in the Economic Opportunity group are working to grow and spread results-oriented approaches to job training, financial education, housing assistance and other services. These programs help beneficiaries adapt to a changing workforce and gain new and needed skills to succeed, build their financial knowledge, obtain financial stability, achieve homeownership and put at-risk youth back on track for college and careers.





## National Fund for Workforce Solutions at Jobs for the Future and the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council

Region's job-seekers receive life-changing career opportunities

**F**or many families along the Gulf Coast, working in the seafood industry has been a way of life for generations. In recent years, environmental disasters and major weather events have made it difficult for these families to continue to carve out a stable and sustainable living. The Social Innovation Fund is making a difference for people like Christopher “Chris” Dishon, 21, of Bayou La Batre, Ala., a former football player and seafood industry employee. Chris received life-changing skill and career development through the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC) and has successfully transitioned to a promising career with advancement opportunities in the Gulf Coast region's thriving maritime-shipbuilding industry.

After graduating from high school in 2010, Chris was offered a scholarship to play football for Northland Minnesota Junior College, and then to play defensive end for the University of Minnesota's football team. Circumstances made it necessary to forego these educational opportunities in order to help support his family.

Chris had just completed high school when the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico occurred on April 20, 2010. He hailed from a long line of family working in

“I wanted to learn a trade that would lead to a good paying and permanent job. I grew up in a fishing family and lived the ups and downs of the industry and the impact that Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill had on families like mine.”

—CHRIS DISHON





the seafood industry and helped his grandparents in their fishing net shop, fabricating and repairing nets for local fisherman. His family's business declined after the devastation from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and it was forced to close permanently following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Without any skills or training outside of the seafood industry, Chris realized he needed retraining. His search led him to the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC), a nonprofit organization established in 2008 and one of 10 regional councils recognized by the Alabama Governor's Office of Workforce Development to provide a direct link to the workforce needs of business and industry at the local level. With a 45-member council representing business and industry and covering an eight-county region, SAWDC has a mission to create a comprehensive, integrated workforce development system to turn out a skilled, diverse, motivated, adaptable workforce that better meets the needs of employers and leads to a better quality of life for its citizens.

"The SAWDC program has been shown to develop both the skills and the preparation for work, through such skills as job searching and interviewing, while stressing the need for a good work ethic, which is so important to the shipbuilding industry."

—TRAVIS SHORT,  
PRESIDENT OF HORIZON  
SHIPBUILDING

SAWDC is one of 30 regional collaborative sites supported by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, a national partnership of communities, employers, workers and philanthropists that is transforming how low-wage workers acquire the education, training and credentials to obtain access to family-supporting careers. Through its innovative model of employer engagement, the National Fund is developing sector-specific workforce strategies to create talent supply chains that close skills gaps and strengthen local economies. The Social Innovation Fund is one of 13 national investors of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, which today has enabled the National Fund to leverage \$192 million in matching funds locally from 476 funders.

Locally, the Social Innovation Fund supports SAWDC's case management work to ensure that individuals receiving training and credentialing are successfully transitioned into gainful employment. Since becoming a National Fund for Workforce Solutions site in 2011, SAWDC has successfully managed the transition of 351 workers and job seekers into family-supporting work in the maritime industry.

Along the Gulf Coast, there is a huge demand for skilled workers in the maritime industry, one of four key industry clusters of SAWDC that drive the region's economy. SAWDC's impressive array of industry partners includes nine maritime employers throughout the Gulf Coast who view SAWDC as a key source for developing strategic partnerships that result in a talented, engaged and career-focused workforce.

Says Chris, "I wanted to learn a trade that would lead to a good-paying and permanent job. I grew up in a fishing family and lived the ups and downs of the industry, and the impact that Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill had on families like mine. Our only income was from fishing and shrimping, and I needed something more stable."

Chris came to the SAWDC without any skills or training. Over the course of five months, he received a variety of services: case management, job skills assessment and occupational skills training in welding, which was funded by the Community Foundation of South





Alabama's Fund for Gulf Communities, a program of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, which was established to assist communities in coastal Alabama struggling to recover from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. He received a Silver Certificate from the ACT Work Keys assessment, which measures real-world skills employers believe are critical to job success. After completing a 12-week welding training course, Chris began work at Horizon Shipbuilding.

Located in Bayou La Batre, Ala., about 30 miles from the port of Mobile, Ala., Horizon Shipbuilding designs, constructs and repairs ships, boats and barges, servicing the offshore oil, cruise and diving industries, tug and barge operators, and U.S. and foreign governments. A leading employer in southwest Alabama, Horizon Shipbuilding employs about 365 full-time permanent employees and has grown from 183 employees in 2011.

According to Travis Short, president of Horizon Shipbuilding, "Skilled and motivated employees are a must for any successful company. The SAWDC program has been shown to develop both the skills and the preparation for work, through such skills as job searching and interviewing, while stressing the need for a good work ethic, which is so important to the shipbuilding industry."

According to Short, who is also a SAWDC council member and chairman of the Maritime Cluster, "Chris is a dedicated, dependable, able and motivated member of the Horizon Shipbuilding team. He can be counted on to do his best and serve as a good example to others hoping to develop into our best employees. We are proud that Chris has been with us for two years, and he has shown us the ability and dedication to his work, which is so important."

Today, Chris is skilled in both aluminum and steel welding, and since starting work at Horizon, he has received two pay increases. He hopes to continue his studies to learn more about the welding trade, passing on his skills and knowledge to help others.

"I am so grateful for the welding training and coaching that I received from SAWDC," says Chris. "This experience has been life changing. I was able to purchase a new automobile and automobile insurance. I now have health insurance through my employer and at the end of the week I have spending money. Now that I'm employed, I can help my family by paying my parents rent and contributing to other household expenses. It's a good feeling."





## Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Financial Opportunity Center at John H. Boner Center

Single mother receives job training and obtains stable employment



**N**ashira Johnson arrived in Indianapolis with little more than the clothes on her back and two children by her side. “I left a bad situation in Erie (Pa.),” she said. “I had some family here in Indianapolis, but they really weren’t much help. My kids and I were homeless for a while.”

Today, Nashira is living in her own apartment, gainfully employed and motivated to succeed — thanks in part to the help she received through the Financial Opportunity Center at the John H. Boner Center, a neighborhood-based, one-stop resource center supported by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to help low-income, working families gain financial stability. The Financial Opportunity Center links families with employment opportunities, income and job supports, financial counseling and other services designed to help them gain the confidence they need to achieve a better quality of life.

Economically disadvantaged individuals living in the Near Eastside of Indianapolis face complex employment, education and personal financial management challenges. Currently, 17 percent of adults are unemployed, and the median household income



is only \$29,000 per year. Within the past three years, these challenges have become increasingly more widespread due to the economic downturn.

The Boner Center, where Nashira received assistance, provides employment and career services, financial coaching, adult continuing education, job training and income supports to a diverse neighborhood population in the Near Eastside of Indianapolis. The network of Financial Opportunity Centers provides individualized, one-on-one coaching to set, refine and achieve realistic financial goals for clients. The centers focus on developing long-term relationships with clients through a comprehensive approach of connecting each service to the others as part of a client's overall program for financial success.

The centers were launched by the LISC in 2004. LISC provides significant technical assistance and professional development opportunities, manages the local network of sites, assists with Efforts to Outcomes client data tracking systems and provides significant financial support through the national Social Innovation Fund. LISC received \$8.4 million from the federal Social Innovation Fund to set up Financial Opportunity Centers through an additional 46 community-based organizations. As a result, LISC has been able to expand its network to six new cities and reach an additional 15,000 individuals and families in the first year of this funding alone.

Nashira worked with the center to get food service training through Second Helpings' intensive job-training program and found a good job at the Julian Center, an organization combating domestic violence in Indianapolis. As she began to get on her feet and continued to advance, the center helped Nashira find an apartment, paid her first month's rent and helped her navigate the bus system so she had dependable transportation. Nashira has larger goals, too. "I'm saving up to buy a house," she said. "I'm looking to make a career for myself. It's hard, but I'm willing to work hard."

## Expanding Financial Opportunity Centers Across the Country

Learning how to make and save money, reduce debt and build assets are essential skills to move out of poverty and into financial sustainability. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation is using funds from the federal Social Innovation Fund to open more Financial Opportunity Centers, which offer coaching for low- to moderate-income families on how to boost earnings, reduce expenses and make better financial decisions. The ultimate goal is to build sustainable communities that are less reliant on publicly funded services.

These centers operate in the following states:

- California
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Ohio
- Rhode Island
- Texas







## NYC Center for Economic Opportunity/Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and BronxWorks

### Jobs-Plus Helps Families Gain Employment and Build Their Savings

After years of financial struggle, Ruth's story finally took a turn for the better when someone from BronxWorks left a pamphlet for a program called Jobs-Plus on her doorstep.

**A**cross the United States, public housing provides affordable homes for 1.2 million low-income households. For families and individuals who are unable to afford market-price housing (often due to significant barriers to employment), public housing offers a basic level of economic security. However, many public housing developments remain communities of concentrated intergenerational poverty and double-digit unemployment rates, and residents are too often socially and economically isolated from broader opportunities. This isolation can create a cycle in which residents may end up unable to find work. Ruth, a 37-year-old single mother of three living in the South Bronx, wanted to be a success story and not a statistic.

Ruth became a parent at a young age and made the tough decision to withdraw from school to begin working to support her new family. Facing low pay, high rent and poor living conditions, she and her children eventually moved into public housing, where they have lived for 12 years.

After years of financial struggle, Ruth's story finally took a turn for the better when someone from BronxWorks, a nonprofit that seeks to help families and individuals





improve their economic and social well-being, left a pamphlet for a program called Jobs-Plus on her doorstep.

Jobs-Plus, supported by the Social Innovation Fund through the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, is a proven initiative that locates employment services on-site at public housing developments exclusively to support residents. Jobs-Plus provides tools, including job training, education and job search support, to help its clients increase economic empowerment. Partner Public Housing Authorities also offer special benefits to eligible Jobs-Plus participants so that they do not see an immediate increase in rent when they begin working. In addition, Jobs-Plus includes a "community support for work" component that focuses on building social networks and connections that enhance economic security for everyone in the developments.

Jobs-Plus was originally created as a pilot program in 1998 by MDRC, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and a coalition of private funders. During its pilot phase it was adopted in six cities across the country (Baltimore, Chattanooga, Dayton, Los Angeles, St. Paul and Seattle) and demonstrated significant progress toward improving financial stability in public housing communities. The communities where the programs had fully implemented the Jobs-Plus model experienced an upturn in earnings, with incomes increasing by more than \$1,300 per year per resident on average over a seven-year period, including a final three years in which the program was no longer operating.<sup>1</sup>

But despite this strong evidence that the program was effective, Washington declined to commit federal funding. Inspired by this program that had a compelling body of evidence but lacked the funding to continue, the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) decided to replicate Jobs-Plus at a public housing development in East Harlem. When the Social Innovation Fund became a reality, CEO included Jobs-Plus in its Social Innovation Fund portfolio and replicated it in other areas. Through a competitive selection process, CEO selected a nonprofit provider to serve a new cluster of public housing developments in the Bronx and the San Antonio Housing Authority to serve two developments in San Antonio, Texas. The selected New York City nonprofit provider was BronxWorks, the organization that left that first pamphlet about the Jobs-Plus program on Ruth's doorstep.

Ruth was excited about Jobs-Plus from the beginning, particularly after staff helped connect her with three job referrals soon after she joined the program. With support from Jobs-Plus staff, Ruth developed a plan toward long-term self-sufficiency and returned to work as a home health aide with a new sense of purpose. Jobs-Plus includes one-on-one financial counseling as a service, and Ruth cites her new savings account and the financial stability it has helped her achieve as a key difference between her time of employment before Jobs-Plus and her employment now. Now, her wages

With support from Jobs-Plus staff, Ruth developed a plan toward long-term self-sufficiency and returned to work as a home health aide with a new sense of purpose.

<sup>1</sup> James Riccio, "Sustained Earnings Gains for Residents in a Public Housing Jobs Program: Seven-Year Findings from the Jobs-Plus Demonstration," MDRC, 2010.



In less than seven months, Ruth removed about \$1,800 in debt, saved about \$1,500 and increased her credit score nearly 100 points through a credit-building loan.

are being saved and she is building up her financial strength. In less than seven months, Ruth removed about \$1,800 in debt, saved about \$1,500 and increased her credit score nearly 100 points through a credit-building loan. Rather than feeling stuck, Ruth is working to leverage her stronger credit into purchasing an apartment and sees homeownership as a real possibility for her family. She has also enrolled in a GED program and has the further goal of attending community college and starting a career as a medical assistant.

Community outreach and support are core components of the Jobs-Plus model, and Ruth cites it as the reason Jobs-Plus is making a difference for her and her neighbors. Jobs-Plus staffers constantly knock on doors in Ruth's home development and are always in touch with participants. Whether on the street or in the office, every interaction is considered an opportunity to share information and seek input. Ruth describes Jobs-Plus's community outreach as "very fundamental ... it's not just about one time you come in." Consistent, community-based engagement is critical to the success of the Jobs-Plus model, and Ruth now encourages other community members to join the program.

Ruth is also spreading her newfound knowledge to her children, teaching them lessons about savings, budgeting and credit. Her oldest daughter, now 18, has also enrolled in Jobs-Plus while working toward her high school diploma with the hope of starting college in the spring. With the help of Jobs-Plus, she too is poised and ready to build a career that keeps her on the track to success.



The success of the Jobs-Plus program and its replication through the Social Innovation Fund has fostered a renewed interest in Jobs-Plus at the federal level. HUD representatives have visited Social Innovation Fund Jobs-Plus sites and are interested in adaptations of the model. Particularly, they have asked how nonprofits or housing authorities themselves administer the program, and about costs and other supports needed to successfully scale up the program.

Additionally, President Obama included funding for the program in his FY13 and FY14 HUD budget requests. In FY14, budget-writing committees in both the House and the Senate have supported federal funding for Jobs-Plus. Although the federal funding picture remains uncertain, the inclusion of Jobs-Plus in budget proposals from both parties and the active engagement of HUD demonstrate real momentum toward federal adoption.

At the same time, cities are leveraging the Social Innovation Fund's successes to expand Jobs-Plus locally. San Antonio is replicating Jobs-Plus in a different public housing development through a Choice Neighborhoods grant. This spring, New York City opened seven new Jobs-Plus sites to serve more than 20,000 additional public housing residents like Ruth, helping them achieve sustainable employment and financial stability.



## Expanding Effective Antipoverty Programs Across the U.S.

Five antipoverty programs that have proved effective in New York City are now being replicated in eight cities across the U.S. with support from the Social Innovation Fund. These programs were originally developed and tested by the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), the city's award-winning antipoverty center, and will further the education, employment and asset development of low-income adults and families, combating poverty across a diverse cross-section of America. The programs serve more than 8,300 low-income residents in Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; Newark, N.J.; New York; San Antonio, Texas; Tulsa, Okla.; and Youngstown, Ohio.

The Social Innovation Fund programs being replicated by CEO include:

- Family Rewards
- Jobs-Plus
- Project Rise
- SaveUSA
- WorkAdvance







## NCB Capital Impact and Champlain Housing Trust

### Shared Equity Program Helps More Families Achieve Homeownership

Jodi heard about CHT from a friend just after she discovered that she and her husband would be unable to purchase a home.

**J**odi and her husband took all of the right steps to become homeowners. Living on dual incomes, they saved money, paid off their student loans and budgeted carefully. In 2000, they were ready to buy a home in Burlington, Vt., and applied for a mortgage. But after going through the application process, they were surprised to discover that their incomes were not high enough to afford a loan for a home in their community. “We felt pushed out of the market,” Jodi remembers. “It felt pretty hopeless.”

But thanks to Champlain Housing Trust (CHT), an innovative homeownership program receiving support as a Social Innovation Fund subgrantee, Jodi and her husband were able to purchase a home through a shared equity program. The program allows income-eligible buyers to purchase a home with the help of a “down payment” offered by a public funding source through CHT. The owners then pay the mortgage on the home and build equity just as a homebuyer on the open market would do. When they are ready to move, the owners recoup whatever they paid down





on their mortgage and the full market value of any improvements, but only 25 percent of the market appreciation. The original public grant plus the remaining appreciation keeps the home's price lower than it would be had it been sold on the market, allowing another income-eligible family to afford the home in their turn. In fact, CHT's program has demonstrated that their homes become *more* affordable over time.

NCB Capital Impact, a nonprofit organization that works to improve access to high-quality health care, housing and education, seeks to put homeownership within reach of more Americans through its Cornerstone Partnership peer network, which supports innovative homeownership programs like CHT's across the country. These programs preserve the affordability of homes for low- to modest-income homebuyers and offer life-altering asset-building opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

In 2011, with support from the Social Innovation Fund and the Ford Foundation, Cornerstone established the Cornerstone Homeownership Innovation Program (CHIP), which offers capacity-building grants and technical assistance to homeownership programs serving communities across the country. CHT applied for and received one of 10 competitively awarded CHIP grants.

CHT serves a three-county territory of northwest Vermont, covering a third of the state's population. Chris Donnelly, director of community relations at CHT, explained that when the organization was founded in 1984, a critical low-income neighborhood in Burlington was gentrifying and residents could no longer afford to live there. CHT engaged in community organizing to secure public funds to buy property in those areas. Donnelly explained, "We hold the property in trust, and we commit to keeping the apartments as well as the homes and condos that we have affordable forever, which as we like to say here, is a long time." Since the 1980s, CHT has continued to expand its service territory to ensure that more homes remain affordable for community members.

CHT provides more than just monetary assistance. They also run a NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center, which offers courses in the community where lawyers, bankers and home inspectors are on hand to teach potential homebuyers everything they need to know about purchasing a home, from maintenance costs to credit ratings and mortgage rates. Donnelly recalled a remarkable determination from many participants to reach their goal of homeownership. "People will sell their car and walk to work. They budget; they clean up their credit. The power of knowledge gives people a way to achieve their dreams — it really motivates them."

Jodi heard about CHT from a friend just after she discovered that she and her husband would be unable to purchase a home. They attended the NeighborWorks HomeOwnership course and applied for down payment assistance. With this extra

"It is amazing to know that this house will always be a house that helps people change their lives."

—JODI

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Axel-Lute, "Homeownership Today and Tomorrow: Building Assets While Preserving Affordability," National Housing Institute, 2010. Available at <http://affordableownership.org/publications/homeownership-today-and-tomorrow-building-assets-while-preserving-affordability>.



piece of help, they were able to find a home in their price range on the market. CHT then brought the property into their portfolio of homes held in trust, ensuring that it would remain affordable for future buyers.

Jodi remembers that aside from being a good place to live, the home also helped them build their savings. “We were paying \$1,100 per month to rent a house, and our mortgage was less than \$700 per month with tax. We saved the rest, and it helped us save up for a down payment on our next house.” Their savings, combined with the equity gained from the sale of the house when they were ready to move, allowed Jodi and her husband to purchase a home on the market several years later.

Over the two-year period as a CHIP grantee, with financial support from the Social Innovation Fund, the Ford Foundation and CHT’s matching funds raised through fees, CHT will add 42 homes to its 500-unit spread. It will also develop a set of best practices and tools that will be used to standardize and streamline the operations of six smaller Community Land Trusts operating throughout the state, helping to provide more families with the option of homeownership.

Jodi and her husband stayed in their first home with CHT for several years before they were ready to sell the house and buy on the market. Jodi recalls the closing distinctly. “We sold the house to a woman in her forties, a first-time homeowner also working her way out of poverty. And when I passed the keys across the table to her, it was a beautiful moment because you could see that she was so moved. It is amazing to know that this house will always be a house that helps people change their lives.”

## Expanding Homeownership Programs Across the Country

CHIP grants allow local homeownership organizations to innovate and improve their operations and business plans in accordance with the Cornerstone Partnership stewardship principles. Grantees use their funds to provide increased stability, access to neighborhoods of opportunity and family wealth building for their clients. In addition to CHT, CHIP grantees include:

- City First Enterprises, Inc. in Washington, D.C.
- Community Asset Preservation Corporation in Newark, N.J.
- Hello Housing in San Francisco, Calif.
- HomeBase in Austin, Texas
- Homestead Community Land Trust in Seattle, Wash.
- The Housing Fund in Nashville, Tenn.
- Housing Partnership, Inc. in Riviera Beach, Fla.
- Long Island Housing Partnership in Hauppauge, N.Y.
- Mountainlands Community Housing Trust in Park City, Utah





## REDF and Taller San Jose

### Social Enterprise Nonprofit Helps Young Adults Gain Job Skills and Sustainable Employment

**M**anny knew it was time to make a change in his life the night he was pulled over for driving drunk on his way home from work. At the time he was a temporary worker at a warehouse in Lake Forest, Calif., earning \$8 per hour and struggling to make ends meet. He had heard about a job-training program through an organization called Taller San Jose from a friend who was enrolled in their medical training program. But, he says, “It wasn’t until I got in trouble that I decided it was a good place for me.” The loss of his car and the realization that his current job was not sustainable in the long run were the incentives he needed to finally give the program at Taller San Jose a try.

Taller San Jose is a nonprofit organization that specializes in helping at-risk youth like Manny prepare for and achieve gainful and sustainable employment. Christa Sheehan, director of evaluation and advancement at Taller San Jose, explained that Taller focuses on young people between the ages of 18 and 28 who are “completely disconnected from the workforce and educational opportunities. They don’t know how to go about getting a job that is going to pay them a living wage. Taller’s mission is to connect those young people to pathways that will lead them to economic self-sufficiency.”

Taller San Jose is located in Orange County, a region best known for its wealth as featured on popular television. But the county seat where Manny is from, Santa Ana, is a different world. In 2000, the city was ranked by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of

“Taller focuses on young people between the ages of 18 and 28 who are completely disconnected from the workforce and educational opportunities.”

—CHRISTA SHEEHAN,  
DIRECTOR OF  
EVALUATION AND  
ADVANCEMENT AT  
TALLER SAN JOSE



“People don’t learn how to work by sitting in a classroom. We figured out early on that to teach people how to work, you have to simulate the workforce.”

—CHRISTA SHEEHAN,  
DIRECTOR OF EVALUATION  
AND ADVANCEMENT AT  
TALLER SAN JOSE

Government as having the highest level of hardship out of all the cities of its size in the United States. The institute made this assessment based on high unemployment rates, low educational attainment and income per person, and the large extent of overcrowded housing.<sup>3</sup> Young people in this environment struggle to find employment that will provide a living wage. Those with low levels of education, a criminal record or gang involvement, or who are pregnant or parenting, struggle even more.

Taller San Jose targets these youth, who are on the cusp of adulthood, and delivers a highly focused program that helps them overcome their obstacles. The program encompasses 16 to 20 weeks of hard skills training in construction, health care careers and business administration and 24 months of both life skills — such as case management and ongoing personal development — and employability skills — including job preparation, placement and retention, and links to postsecondary training.

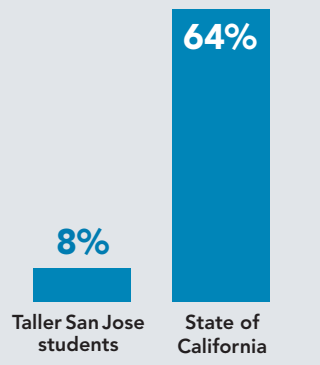
Taller San Jose understands that “people don’t learn how to work by sitting in a classroom.” Sheehan explained, “We figured out early on that to teach people how to work, you have to simulate the workforce.”

Taller San Jose matches each student with a case manager, who helps him or her identify barriers to employment and create a plan to overcome them. This may mean working toward a GED, getting a driver’s license or obtaining health benefits or child care so that the student can go to work consistently. The case manager maintains a relationship with that student over the next two years to ensure that he or she maintains employment and thrives in the workplace.

Training candidates must meet rigorous standards for program eligibility. They participate in an interview process and must pass a drug screen, comply with uniform standards, attend daily program trainings on time and possess right-to-work documents. Taller San Jose pays its youth a \$100 weekly stipend during their 16-week training academy. Graduates experience improved workforce preparedness, increased life stability and, ultimately, economic stability.

Together, these program components produce excellent results. Taller San Jose places 70 percent of its graduates into employment at \$11 per hour or more at the end of their training — and 80 percent of those placed retain that employment for 12 months or more. Only 8 percent of Taller’s students who have a criminal record reoffend, which is especially impressive considering that the rate of recidivism for California as a state sits at 64 percent over a three-year period.<sup>4</sup>

### Recidivism Rates (over a three-year period)<sup>4</sup>



3 “Divided They Fall: Hardship in America’s Cities and Suburbs,” Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, 2007. Available at [http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/cities\\_and\\_neighborhoods/2007-11-divided\\_they\\_fall\\_hardship\\_in\\_america\\_s\\_cities\\_and\\_suburbs.pdf](http://www.rockinst.org/pdf/cities_and_neighborhoods/2007-11-divided_they_fall_hardship_in_america_s_cities_and_suburbs.pdf).

4 “Outcome Evaluation Report, October 2012,” California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2012. Available at [www.cdcr.ca.gov/adult\\_research\\_branch/Research\\_Documents/ARB\\_FY\\_0708\\_Recidivism\\_Report\\_10.23.12.pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/adult_research_branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0708_Recidivism_Report_10.23.12.pdf).





In 2010, Taller San Jose launched Hope Builders, Inc., a social enterprise and general contracting company that extends the agency's mission by hiring the program's graduates to complete remodeling and rehabilitation work throughout Southern California. A social enterprise is a business that seeks to create a "double bottom line," meaning it both provides needed proceeds for the nonprofit organization that is running it and generates a social good to their intended beneficiaries. In this case, Hope Builders creates jobs for youth who have significant obstacles to employment, gives them an opportunity to refine their skill set by working side by side with master tradesmen and aims to fast-track them to living-wage employment in the construction industry.

Manny benefited from both Taller San Jose and Hope Builders. In 2008, he enrolled in Taller's construction training program, where he learned the fundamentals of the building trades, such as electrical, plumbing, framing and drywall installation, and spent three hours a day improving his math skills. After graduating from Taller's job-training program, Manny was hired by Hope Builders and gained hands-on job experience in a variety of construction projects while working alongside professionals in the industry. Because of his hard work and reliability while employed by Hope Builders, Manny was recommended for a job at Portrait Homes, where he now works full time at a salary of \$30 per hour.

Hope Builders, Inc. is a fairly new venture for Taller San Jose, and finding the balance between running a company that is profitable while still keeping the focus on employing young people in need of experience has a unique set of challenges. In 2012, Taller San Jose was awarded a grant from the Social Innovation Fund and REDF to create a strategic business plan that will balance the dual goals of serving Taller's youth and being a profitable and sustainable social enterprise. Last year, Hope Builders employed 12 young people and has set a three- to five-year goal of employing 40 young people in need of mentoring and skill building as well as a paycheck. The continued work of Taller San Jose and Hope Builders will allow other at-risk young people to overcome the hurdles they face and obtain the skills and confidence they need to find fulfilling and sustainable employment.

## Expanding Employment Opportunities in California

REDF provides funding and hands-on business assistance to California nonprofit social enterprises, nonprofit-operated businesses selling in-demand goods and services while intentionally employing people who would otherwise face bleak prospects of finding employment.

With a \$6 million Social Innovation Fund grant, REDF now supports a new portfolio of California organizations that have an exceptional track record of delivering real, effective solutions for workforce development.

In addition to Taller San Jose, social enterprise organizations receiving support from REDF and the Social Innovation Fund throughout the state of California include:

- Buckelew Programs
- Center for Employment Opportunities
- Chrysalis
- The Coalition for Responsible Community Development
- Community Housing Partnership
- Community Resource Center
- Goodwill of Silicon Valley
- Urban Strategies
- Weingart Center Association





# HEALTHY FUTURES GROUP

## Introduction

The grantmakers and nonprofits in the Healthy Futures group are reducing barriers to critical preventive and treatment health care, growing community-driven initiatives to combat obesity and tobacco use and strengthening local health systems. Their work is bringing much-needed medical services to rural communities, providing affordable health care to the uninsured and teaching young people the skills that will help them live healthier lives.

**The John A. Hartford Foundation** was selected by the Corporation for National and Community Service as a Social Innovation Fund intermediary with the Healthy Futures group in 2012. The foundation will expand an evidence-based program for treating depression in rural communities in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Washington and Wyoming. Effective treatment using this program is shown to improve depression symptoms, social and work-related functioning and economic outcomes. The foundation is currently in the process of selecting and launching its subgrantees, and will have stories of impact to share as it continues to grow its program within these communities over the next several years.





# AIDS United and Medical AIDS Outreach

## Rural Alabamians Gain Access to HIV Treatment

**A**ccessing quality medical care in rural Alabama is not easy. For people who live far from the larger cities like Montgomery or Birmingham, public transportation is often nonexistent. The high levels of poverty in rural areas across the state means that most people have no disposable income to spend on medical care, no health insurance and no car. Getting primary care treatment in these areas is a challenge — receiving care for a condition like HIV is even more difficult.

Medical AIDS Outreach (MAO) is a nonprofit organization located in Montgomery, Ala., that works to bring quality HIV treatment to patients living in 26 counties in Alabama. “When people talk about HIV in this country, they talk about it like it’s under control,” explained Dr. Laurie Dill, medical director of MAO. “And that’s not accurate for us because high rates of HIV clearly track with poor and vulnerable populations. Our patients are about 70 percent African-American, 30 percent female, and many of them live in what are literally the poorest counties in the United States that have over four times the HIV infection rates of the rest of the U.S.”

MAO’s home-base primary care clinic is in Montgomery, and in the past practitioners would travel to clinics located in rural areas to see patients about once a week. This involved loading a doctor, a nurse and paper copies of patient medical records into a van and driving for over an hour to the rural clinic. There, they would see patients for the afternoon before loading everything back into the van and driving back to Montgomery. This was a perfectly inefficient use of a physician’s time, since instead of

“When people talk about HIV in this country, they talk about it like it’s under control, and that’s not accurate for us because high rates of HIV clearly track with poor and vulnerable populations.”

—DR. LAURIE DILL,  
MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF  
MAO



seeing patients the doctor would be sitting in a van or helping unload boxes. But there wasn't another option if they wanted to reach this population in need of treatment.

AIDS United, a national organization working on issues of health for people living with HIV, has focused heavily on the issue of access to HIV care. In 2009 the organization launched its Access to Care (A2C) program with the goal of connecting economically and socially marginalized people living with HIV to high-quality medical treatment. In 2010, AIDS United received a grant from the Social Innovation Fund to expand A2C to 13 community organizations working in 13 U.S. cities. MAO was one of those 13 sites, and the organization received a grant that allowed it to change the way it brings HIV treatment to patients.

With funding from AIDS United and the Social Innovation Fund, MAO purchased telemedicine equipment that allows physicians to work from their hub site in Montgomery and at the same time hold clinic hours during the week in rural areas like Selma. The physicians are able to interact with patients at the rural clinics through the use of a high-definition camera and screen, which transmit interactive, real-time video between the patient and the physician, and a Bluetooth stethoscope that a nurse can use to provide real-time heart and lung sounds to the physician at the hub site. This means that a physician can be at the clinic in Montgomery and see patients in the morning, and then go into the telemedicine room in Montgomery and “see” a patient in Selma, and then step back into the office and see other patients in Montgomery, all without the lost time of travel.

The telemedicine equipment has also opened the door for patients in rural areas to have access to a pharmacist who is specially trained in HIV medications and interactions. The pharmacist is located in Auburn, about an hour east of Montgomery. Formerly, she was simply too far away to work with patients at the Selma location. But now, she is able to use the telemedicine equipment located in Montgomery and hold office hours for the patients in Selma to review their medications and provide adherence training — an extremely important component for treating HIV.

Dill believes that telemedicine equipment has the potential to do more than just maximize a physician's time. She also sees it as a way to help overcome the issues of stigma around HIV that are very prevalent in many areas of Alabama in which MAO works, which can make it even more difficult to effectively treat patients. Dill recalls patients whose families would drop them off blocks away from the HIV clinic for fear of catching the virus, and patients who refused to be hospitalized because they were afraid they would be fired if their employer found out that they were HIV positive. Some patients have been kicked out of their homes after their relatives discovered their status, or have families who will no longer touch them for fear of contracting HIV. The heavy stigma associated with HIV means that patients don't want to ask their friends to drive them to the clinic for their appointments or to pick up their medication, or that they will not seek treatment at all for fear of being ostracized. Dill hopes to use the telemedicine

Dill recalls patients whose families would drop them off blocks away from the HIV clinic for fear of catching the virus, and patients who refused to be hospitalized because they were afraid they would be fired if their employer found out that they were HIV positive.





equipment to provide other kinds of specialty care, such as mental health care, as well as other specialists that are in short supply in these areas. By bundling different types of medical care together and providing them at a telemedicine treatment area, patients can go to the clinics and still maintain privacy around their HIV status because the clinic will not be solely for HIV treatment, but for a variety of medical care.

The new technology has not come without its challenges. MAO had to transfer all of its paper copies of patient medical records into Web-based electronic medical records, a time-consuming and expensive process, particularly for a nonprofit. MAO has also

## Expanding HIV Care to Underserved Areas Across the U.S.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 1 million people in the United States are living with HIV. According to AIDS United, roughly two-thirds of them (640,000) are not receiving appropriate care due to issues such as HIV-denial, stigma, poverty and limited access to services.

To improve health care for these individuals, AIDS United is using a \$2.2 million annual grant from the Social Innovation Fund to expand its Access to Care (A2C) initiative. Launched on World AIDS Day 2009, A2C is designed to connect economically and socially marginalized individuals living with HIV to quality health care and related services. The goal is to allow people living with HIV to lead healthier, more productive lives.

Through participation in the Social Innovation Fund program, AIDS United supports 13 community organizations in 13 U.S. cities with a high incidence of HIV:

### East Coast

- Boston, Mass. – AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts
- New York, N.Y. – Amida Care
- Philadelphia, Pa. – Action AIDS
- Washington, D.C. – Washington AIDS Partnership

### Midwest

- Chicago, Ill. – AIDS Foundation of Chicago
- Indianapolis, Ind. – Damien Center
- St. Louis, Mo. – St. Louis Effort for AIDS

### South

- Birmingham, Ala. – Birmingham AIDS Outreach
- Montgomery, Ala. – Medical AIDS Outreach of Alabama
- New Orleans, La. – Louisiana Public Health Institute

### West Coast

- Alhambra, Calif. – Pacific AIDS Education and Training Center
- Los Angeles, Calif. – AIDS Project Los Angeles
- San Diego, Calif. – Christie's Place



had to overcome hurdles to get the Alabama Medicaid system to pay for treatment given through the telemedicine equipment. While Medicare has offered coverage for telemedicine treatment for some time, Alabama's Medicaid did not, which meant that many patients were unable to pay for their treatments. Alabama's major private insurance company also does not cover telemedicine treatment.

But other challenges that they had anticipated did not come to pass, Dill said. Originally, MAO was concerned that patients would not react well to the idea of seeing their doctor over a TV screen instead of in person. Although MAO tries to always do the first visit with a new patient in person so doctor and patient can form a good connection, after that point most visits will be over the HD screen. However, MAO found that patients responded very well to the use of the equipment. As Will Rutland, former project director of MAO's Telemedicine Program, pointed out, "Folks in rural Alabama want good health care just as much as folks in San Francisco do — and if this is a tool that offers them good health care, then they are thrilled to participate in it."

MAO hopes to enroll 200 unique patients into HIV treatment over the course of their grant from AIDS United and the Social Innovation Fund. Given that there are about 12,000 individuals living with HIV in Alabama, this is just the beginning, and Dill hopes to find ways to reach many more of those in need through this technology. Her vision is that this new technology will change rural health care delivery as a whole, not just HIV care, and make it possible for more people, regardless of where they are located, to live healthy and productive lives.

"Folks in rural Alabama want good health care just as much as folks in San Francisco do — and if this is a tool that offers them good health care, then they are thrilled to participate in it."

—WILL RUTLAND, FORMER PROJECT DIRECTOR OF MAO'S TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM





## Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky Inc. and Oldham County Hope Health Clinic

Community Health Clinic Brings Quality Health Care to Under and Uninsured Kentuckians

Oldham County is considered a well-off area of Kentucky. Most people would not envision the need for a health clinic devoted to caring for the uninsured there. However, the need for affordable and accessible health care is very real in this community, as well as in the three surrounding rural counties, where transportation is difficult to come by and medical providers are scarce. Many people living in this community are employed as hourly, low-wage workers or have been laid off because of the recession and the changing workforce environment. Unable to afford health insurance, many do not seek medical care until they are in dire need and wind up in the emergency room — a far more costly and less effective intervention than receiving regular medical care.

The Oldham County Health Department, with the support of the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and the Social Innovation Fund, is seeking to disrupt this cycle by supporting the growth of the Oldham County Hope Health Clinic (HHC), a low-cost, nurse-managed primary care clinic for the under- and uninsured in four counties in Kentucky. Teresa Gamsky, the grant administrator for HHC, explained that the clinic seeks to “build a positive relationship with each client to empower them to be an active participant in their health status. These clients are demonstrating positive results by applying what they have learned from the HHC providers and volunteers.”

Unable to afford health insurance, many do not seek medical care until they are in dire need and wind up in the emergency room — a far more costly and less effective intervention than receiving regular medical care.



Chronic medical issues, such as diabetes, heart disease and pulmonary disease, require consistent medication along with patient education on how to manage the disease through healthy living practices and oversight from a qualified physician. Without this holistic approach to care, the disease can spiral out of control and lead to even larger health emergencies that are costly to treat and dangerous. With this in mind, HHC seeks not only to treat patients for the symptoms they exhibit on the day they enter the clinic, but also to provide them with education about how to manage their illnesses and counseling and access to regular medical providers who know their histories and can manage their treatment plans long-term.

Diane Riff, a nurse practitioner who serves at HHC, emphasized the importance of this holistic care with the story of one of her patients. This particular patient was a 60-year-old woman who, after being a stay-at-home mother for much of her life, had reentered the workforce when her husband lost his job. A diabetic who could not afford her insulin, the patient would go to work at a local restaurant with dangerously high levels of blood sugar on a regular basis. When she overheard customers at the restaurant talking about the clinic and realized it was only a mile down the road, she was determined to go. The staff at HHC helped her obtain insulin through the state prescription program and connected her with a volunteer counselor at HHC who could help her work through the depression and anxiety she had been experiencing.

The staff at HHC also provided the patient with education on managing her diabetes. A couple of months later, the patient dropped a heavy can on her foot at work. Because a staff member had explained to her that diabetes can block feeling in your extremities, she knew that even though she didn't feel the pain at once, she needed to come into the clinic to be treated. She was put on a course of antibiotics. What could have turned into a bad infection, if she had waited for treatment, was instead cleared up quickly. This is the aim of HHC: To not only provide patients with the care they need on the day they come into the clinic, but to help them learn how to manage their own health, to prevent future costly medical problems and to treat the whole patient — mind, body and spirit.

Hope Health Clinic is a community-supported and community-driven initiative. The building for the clinic was donated by the Baptist Health Network System, and a team of dedicated volunteers provides additional nursing, clerical work, general maintenance and counseling services. In order to provide access to more specialized care for its patients, the clinic approached several physicians within the Baptist Health Network and asked if they would be willing to see patients referred to them by HHC. In the beginning, about 20 specialists agreed; that number has now grown to 30. HHC also has six local physicians and two nurse practitioners who come to see patients at the clinic on a volunteer basis. This allows the clinic to place patients with regular doctors who have skill sets that are good matches for their needs. For example, one of their volunteer physicians was a pulmonologist before she became a hospitalist, so the clinic puts patients on her schedule who have those specific health care needs.

“The last 10 years have been hard in this country. I can't tell you how many patients I've seen who can't even afford insulin, and for them it's life or death.”

—DIANE RIFF, NURSE PRACTITIONER AT HHC





Janet Warren, the clinic administrator, said HHC has made these partnerships possible by showing people how deep the need is in their community for low-cost medical care. “It is enlightening to many people that those needs are there,” Warren said. Riff shared that, although she knew the need in her community was great, she had not realized the extent of it. “The last 10 years have been hard in this country. I can’t tell you how many patients I’ve seen who can’t even afford insulin, and for them it’s life or death.” Riff noted that many of the clinic’s patients work two or three jobs and care for aging parents, young children or both. Taking care of themselves is more time and effort than they feel they can afford. “The people coming to Hope aren’t looking for a handout,” Warren emphasized. “Once the community partners see what is happening here, and the intentions of this project, you can’t help but know that this is a great model.”

HHC plans to continue to expand its services to better care for patients in need. Plans are in the works to open a satellite clinic to overcome the transportation issues many patients face, as well as to add dental, psychiatric and other specialty care services. The need for HHC’s work is clear, and it continues to grow. Since HHC was launched two years ago, it has had about 1,500 patients call the clinic their medical home. The clinic anticipates between 5,000 and 6,000 patient visits during 2013. With the support of its dedicated community partners, the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and the Social Innovation Fund, HHC will continue to expand and help more Kentuckians achieve a healthy future.

## Supporting Community-Driven Health Care Initiatives in Kentucky

When low-income families, particularly in rural areas, cannot afford to see a doctor regularly, or even to pay for transportation to a faraway clinic, a minor health issue can turn into a chronic and costly disease or acute illness.

The Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky’s approach is far more cost-efficient: Treat small ailments before they become big (and expensive) and encourage healthy behaviors as a means of preventing illness. Through its Social Innovation Fund grant, the foundation funds nine organizations that provide easy-to-access and affordable medical care to nearly 12,000 Kentuckians each year in seven rural areas, as well as downtown Louisville.

Supported organizations include:

- Cumberland Family Medical Center (Burkesville)
- Home of the Innocents (Louisville)
- King’s Daughter Medical Center (Ashland)
- The Meade Activity Center (Brandenburg)
- Montgomery County Health Department (Mt. Sterling)
- Norton Healthcare Centers for Prevention & Wellness (Louisville)
- Oldham County Health Department (Lagrange)
- St. Elizabeth Healthcare (Edgewood)
- St. Joseph Health System (Lexington)



“We planned for about 350 people at our grand opening, but we had well over 500. And we were hoping to sign up at least 100 family and 200 individual memberships. As of October 2012, we had a total of 633. That’s 16 percent of our county’s population.”

—LORI MOOTS-CLAIR,  
ADMINISTRATOR OF  
THE KNOX COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT



## Missouri Foundation for Health and Knox County Community Center

### New Community Center in Rural Missouri Helps Residents Stay Active and Healthy

**S**ituated in the northeast corner of Missouri, Knox County used to be like many other rural parts of the state: rich in land and full of hardworking people, but lacking the fitness facilities and exercise opportunities larger communities enjoy. In the past, county residents had to drive 30 to 45 minutes just to find the nearest gym or YMCA. For many Knox families trying to make ends meet, that distance was enough to put better physical fitness just out of reach.

The solution to that problem was a new community fitness and activity center for those interested in improving their health, said Lori Moots-Clair, administrator of the Knox County Health Department. With the help of a \$388,187 grant from the Social Innovation Fund through the Missouri Foundation for Health, construction for the new Knox County Community Center (KCCC) began in 2011 on a distressed block in Edina, a centrally located county seat. Other grant funds and local dollars were secured for the project as well, and the 11,000-square-foot, \$1 million center held its grand opening in April 2012. It features an indoor walking track, classrooms, a variety of fitness equipment and a 24-hour card entry system. And it can host health and exercise classes of many kinds, including yoga, dance, nutritious cooking and smoking cessation.



Moots-Clair said the local residents' response to the new facility has exceeded her expectations. "We planned for about 350 people at our grand opening, but we had well over 500," she said. "And we were hoping to sign up at least 100 family and 200 individual memberships. As of October 2012, we had a total of 633. That's 16 percent of our county's population."

On a busy day, the center may log as many as 170 user visits. And visitors to the area can buy reasonably priced temporary passes, so the facility's doors truly are open to everyone. "We have people who come in at 5 a.m. to exercise before work, and others who use it after getting off the night shift at 3 a.m.," Moots-Clair said.

"Knox County has had very little in the past; we've been the second poorest county in the state," she said. "We're not used to having good things like this. But we have not had a single problem at the center. People are showing a great deal of responsibility, and taking pride in it."

"When the center was built, I was reaching an age where I was out of shape and needed to get working on it before I couldn't move at all," said Edina resident Mary Couch, 58, a retired teacher who had been suffering from arthritis pain for many years. "I'd had bad knees since the '70s, and was having trouble getting around. I figured weight loss would be a benefit, so I signed up for a KCCC membership. Thomas Christen, the center director, gave me tips on which exercise machines would help, and which I should stay away from. I started with yoga and other low-impact classes, and worked my way up."

Couch found professional attention and a gradual increase in regimen intensity to be her tickets to success. As she stepped up her workout routine and shed pounds, her arthritis pain waned, and her mobility and motivation increased. "I wouldn't have been good at sticking with an exercise program on my own," she said. "I needed that structure, an instructor telling me to do it."

Several months later, Couch said even her doctor is impressed with her progress, and she's hopeful her more active lifestyle will help her avoid surgery later on. "I've lost about 30 pounds," she said. "Some days, I forget I ever had knee problems."

"I love that there are instructors who know you and can help keep you from injuring yourself when you're just starting a fitness program," Couch said. "If you haven't exercised in a long time, it's easy to do. Now, I know how to use the equipment, and I go to lots of fitness courses. In fact, you can't keep me away from them. I've graduated from having painful arthritis to taking hip-hop dance and Zumba classes."

The center's success has fired up Knox County residents to strive for further health and fitness opportunities as well, according to Moots-Clair. There are hopes and plans for new basketball and gymnasium facilities nearby, an outdoor exercise trail, a softball and baseball complex and Complete Streets improvements to enhance the area's walkability and bikeability.

"Many people said nothing much could ever happen in Edina," Moots-Clair said. "But our new center has put everyone on notice. This area has become a magical block with a miracle building."

To see a video about the Knox County Community Center's opening, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g11YIF4Er6E&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g11YIF4Er6E&feature=youtu.be).

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Scotty obtained supportive housing, received help to manage his medical condition and began the process of stabilizing his life.

## CSH and OPCC

### New Pilot Program Works to Prevent and End Homelessness

**S**cotty calls himself “Scotty the Medical Miracle.” By the time he was 15 years old, he had been hospitalized 23 times and thrown out of his last foster home because of the mounting medical bills. Scotty suffers from a rare genetic disorder that prevents his body from metabolizing protein, a condition that landed him in the hospital consistently during childhood and plagued his adult life in the form of seizures and blackouts that made it impossible to hold a steady job. His chronic unemployment made health insurance unaffordable and left him unable to manage his medical condition. As a result, he remained chronically homeless, struggled with a drug addiction that aggravated his medical issues and lost touch with his children and family over the years.



But through the services of a pilot program, the 10th Decile Project, funded by CSH and the Social Innovation Fund, and implemented through the Los Angeles Economic Roundtable and OPCC, Scotty obtained supportive housing (affordable housing that provides access to health and social services, such as mental health and addiction therapy, medical care, case management and employment services), received help to manage his medical condition and began the process of stabilizing his life.





Chronically homeless individuals often have multiple barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing. They may suffer from an addiction as well as a major health condition such as diabetes, or have a physical disability along with suffering from depression or another form of mental illness. In 2012, nearly 100,000 people in the United States were identified as chronically homeless by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>5</sup>

This demographic is extraordinarily costly for public service institutions, with health care being the major expense because of frequent and avoidable emergency room visits and inpatient hospitalizations, as well as a high use of sobering centers and nursing homes.<sup>6</sup>

Because homeless individuals move so frequently across institutional settings like hospitals, jails and shelters, and then back to the streets, it is challenging for health care providers to identify and distinguish high-need and high-use individuals from other homeless individuals who may have less intensive health and social service needs.

The 10th Decile Project addresses this issue with the help of the 10th Decile Triage Tool, created by the Los Angeles Economic Roundtable. The Triage Tool is a short series of interview questions that can be administered in 10 minutes or less to homeless individuals in hospitals and emergency departments by a medical professional or social worker, and then run against an algorithm to quickly and accurately predict whether or not a homeless patient fits into the top 10 percent of hospital system users. This tool allows hospitals to quickly recognize which patients are most in need of supportive housing services — and most costly to public service systems — and move them to permanent housing in the care of organizations like OPCC.

Debby Maddis, director of housing and special initiatives at OPCC, noted that many chronically homeless high users of the hospital systems do so because hospitals are the only places that do not turn them away when they are in need of shelter or medical care. With no options left, they come to view hospitals as “their primary care, their home and their resource for basic shelter and wellness needs.” OPCC works to break that cycle. Maddis explained, “Our goal is to help them establish permanent housing and a health ‘home’ so that they get their care in an appropriate setting, based on their needs, and have a single point of responsibility for their care that’s not the hospital.”

OPCC accomplishes this goal by partnering with the Venice Family Clinic and other hospitals using the Triage Tool to help individuals identified as the heaviest users move into permanent supportive housing and establish a “health home.” Through this system, they receive not only an apartment but also consistent medical care, social services and other resources that comprehensively address their issues and help them get back on their feet.

“Our goal is to help them establish permanent housing and a health ‘home’ so that they get their care in an appropriate setting, based on their needs, and have a single point of responsibility for their care that’s not the hospital.”

—DEBBY MADDIS,  
DIRECTOR OF  
HOUSING AND SPECIAL  
INITIATIVES AT OPCC

5 “2012 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, Volume 1,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012. Available at [https://onecpd.info/resources/documents/2012AHAR\\_PITestimates.pdf](https://onecpd.info/resources/documents/2012AHAR_PITestimates.pdf).

6 “People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness,” U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2012. Available at [www.usich.gov/population/chronic](http://www.usich.gov/population/chronic).



Through the Triage Tool, Scotty was identified as a homeless, frequent user of the hospital systems in 2009, and he was sent to OPCC in a taxi from a local hospital. OPCC helped him navigate the health insurance system to gain access to Medi-Cal, locate a handicap-accessible apartment through the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, and connect with a primary care clinic in his new neighborhood to be his permanent health care provider. Scotty also receives home health visits through OPCC's registered nurse, who helped control his seizure disorder and placed him on a healthy diet.

Over the past year, Scotty has reduced his hospital visits from 52 down to just three. He was able to get a service dog, which he affectionately named Momas, and he now volunteers at his local church as an usher. He expressed his gratitude to OPCC for "staying right with me and going the journey." This February, Scotty celebrated his one-year anniversary in his apartment.

This program is still in its pilot phase, with a focus on 500 individuals in four states nationwide. In Los Angeles, OPCC is one of five organizations in the region receiving funding through the Social Innovation Fund and CSH. Over the first two years (of the five-year grant), OPCC will house 17 individuals. Even with the small numbers served, the program has significant monetary value — CSH estimates that redirecting an individual who has been a heavy user of public systems can save upward of \$30,000 per person in county costs every year.

For Scotty, the program gave him the opportunity to change his life. He says, "My dream is to get my health stable and to see my kids again — I miss having that close contact with my family." Through this program, Scotty and others like him can move forward from chronic homelessness and illness and find their way to a better future.

## Expanding the Use of the 10th Decile Triage Tool

The Los Angeles Economic Roundtable is one of four organizations in the United States that received a grant through the Social Innovation Fund, matched by CSH, to implement its 10th Decile Triage Tool. The 10th Decile Project identifies homeless individuals who are the heaviest users of public services, such as hospitals, and provides them with immediate and ongoing supportive housing.

- Participating hospitals treat more than 4,000 homeless inpatients and 9,000 emergency room patients each year. Each hospital will receive technical assistance and training from the Economic Roundtable in using its 10th Decile Triage Tool to identify high-need homeless individuals and hand them off to partner service providers.
- Five implementation partners work to place identified individuals in supportive housing. These include: Housing Works, Homeless Health Care Los Angeles, OPCC, PATH and Ascencia.
- The project team aims to move 107 high-need, high-cost, homeless individuals into permanent supportive housing with the use of the 10th Decile Triage Tool.





## U.S. Soccer Foundation and Brotherhood Crusade

### Soccer Program Gets Kids and Families Moving Toward Better Health

**V**icky was shocked when a doctor said her nine-year-old daughter Celeste was at risk for juvenile diabetes due to poor nutrition habits. That day she made a big decision for her whole family: “We have to change our life.”

Celeste enrolled in *Soccer for Success*, a U.S. Soccer Foundation initiative funded in part by a federal Social Innovation Fund grant and implemented in her South Los Angeles neighborhood by a local social services agency called Brotherhood Crusade. Through this free, after-school program focused on fitness, nutrition and mentoring, both mother and daughter met their goals: Celeste lost weight, and the whole family improved their eating and exercise habits. “I can run faster, I can do more things,” Celeste said.

*Soccer for Success* has a proven track record in combating childhood obesity in under-resourced urban neighborhoods. Solutions to this growing problem are becoming ever more critical, according to a 2011 report of the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, which found that one out of three children aged two to 19 are overweight or obese.

Through this free, after-school program focused on fitness, nutrition and mentoring, both mother and daughter met their goals: Celeste lost weight, and the whole family improved their eating and exercise habits.



Beyond exercising more, Vicky and her family have changed their eating habits, opting for brown rice, wheat bread, unsweetened yogurt and homemade, no-sugar-added fruit juices.

“The problem was the way we were eating at home, with a lot of white rice, white sugar, white bread. Everything like cream,” said Vicky, who is from Columbia originally. “In our country, it’s different: We like to eat cream with rice. We eat everything together. So, we think ... for the baby, it’s okay because later [she’s] going to lose the weight.”

The risks associated with childhood obesity, including diabetes, elevated blood pressure and/or high cholesterol, come at a hefty price: The cost to society of childhood obesity exceeds \$3 billion a year.<sup>7</sup>

In underserved neighborhoods such as Celeste’s, where more than 90 percent of public school students qualify for the federal free and fee-reduced lunch program, many schools have slashed recess and gym time due to budget constraints. In these same areas there are few structured, safe opportunities outside of school for children — who make up more than a third of residents in South Los Angeles — to play and exercise.

*Soccer for Success*, before launching in Celeste’s area, already had proved successful in low-income communities in eight U.S. cities. In 2011, the U.S. Soccer Foundation received a \$2 million Social Innovation Fund grant to add 10 new *Soccer for Success* cities, along with Los Angeles, reaching an additional 12,000 children in kindergarten through eighth grade over five years. Celeste is among 1,600 children who will benefit from the U.S. Soccer Foundation’s partnership with and support of programs like the one run by Brotherhood Crusade, which is applying federal SIF funding for *Soccer for Success* programs at six school campuses and three community centers in South Los Angeles.

The program, which meets three afternoons a week for two 12-week sessions each year, engaged Celeste’s entire family. Celeste’s younger sister, Genesis, asked to enroll in the program, inspired by her sister’s weight loss. Celeste’s father helps coach and



7 “Presentation: The Childhood Obesity Epidemic: Threats and Opportunities,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010. Available at [www.cdc.gov/about/grand-rounds/archives/2010/06-June.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/about/grand-rounds/archives/2010/06-June.htm).





mentor the participants when his work schedule permits, and Vicky walks around the track surrounding the soccer field with the other mothers while her daughters play soccer.

“I try to lose weight because Celeste says, ‘Mom, if you want to do it, you can do it,’” said Vicky. “So, if my daughters do it, I have to do something. I do exercise with my friends. We do the ‘fun waiting’: I walk around the field with my friends and that’s the way we wait until they finish [soccer practice].”

Beyond exercising more, Vicky and her family have changed their eating habits, opting for brown rice, wheat bread, unsweetened yogurt and homemade, no-sugar-added fruit juices. And Vicky has noticed since beginning *Soccer for Success* that Celeste takes initiative on her own to make better choices.

“I don’t have to be behind her saying, ‘Don’t eat this,’” said Vicky, because Celeste reads food product labels at the market, looking at the number of calories and the amount of sugar. “She’s so happy, and I’m so happy, too. Because she’s doing great.”

## Bringing Soccer for Success to 10 Additional Cities

Brotherhood Crusade is one of 13 nonprofits awarded funding from the U.S. Soccer Foundation in March 2012 to launch or expand the Soccer for Success program in 10 states and the District of Columbia. The others are:

- **California:** Brotherhood Crusade in Los Angeles and El Monte Community Building Initiative
- **Colorado:** Colorado Fusion Soccer Club in Denver
- **Georgia:** Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta
- **Michigan:** Think Detroit Police Athletic League
- **New Jersey:** Boys & Girls Club of Camden County and the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton and Mercer County
- **New York:** Independent Health Foundation in Buffalo
- **Ohio:** YMCA of Greater Dayton
- **Pennsylvania:** Widener University in Chester
- **Texas:** Houston Parks and Recreation Department
- **Washington, D.C.:** DC SCORES
- **Washington State:** Washington Youth Soccer Association in Seattle





# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GROUP

## Introduction

The grantmakers and nonprofits in the Youth Development group seek to prepare America's youth for success in school, a sustainable career and healthy and safe lives. These programs help young people build academic, job skills and life skills, providing them with the support they need to overcome barriers that stand in the way of achieving their full potential.

**The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation** was selected by the Corporation for National and Community Service as a 2010 Social Innovation Fund intermediary as part of the Youth Development group, and is currently in the process of creating a series of stories on the impact that their grantees are having across the country. You can access the first of these stories at

[http://www.emcf.org/fileadmin/media/Grantees/RP/Grantees\\_in\\_Action\\_Reading\\_Partners.pdf](http://www.emcf.org/fileadmin/media/Grantees/RP/Grantees_in_Action_Reading_Partners.pdf).

In 2012, the Corporation for National and Community Service selected additional Social Innovation Fund intermediaries to be a part of the Youth Development group, including Twin Cities Generation Next: Social Innovation Fund Initiative and GreenLight Fund.



**Twin Cities Generation Next: Social Innovation Fund Initiative** is a partnership between Greater Twin Cities United Way and the Strive Partnership, and will support a portfolio of replicable, evidence-based youth programs serving kids from kindergarten through college in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota. The partnerships will focus on programs designed to improve kindergarten readiness, third grade reading proficiency, ninth grade readiness for upper-level math, four-year graduation rates, and college enrollment rates for more than 1,500 low-income youth each year.

**GreenLight Fund** works with the local communities to attract and support relevant national programs to close the achievement and opportunity gap for youth. Working in Boston, Philadelphia and the San Francisco Bay area, GreenLight Fund will impact the lives of 20,000 low-income children by improving school persistence and academic achievement, increasing high school graduation and GED attainment, and increasing college access, credit accumulation and degree completion.

Both of these 2012 intermediary grantees are currently in the process of selecting and launching their subgrantees, and will have stories of impact to share as they build their programs within the communities that they serve.





## New Profit Inc. and YouthBuild USA

### YouthBuild Program Helps Young People Overcome Obstacles to Education and Employment

Converting just one student from dropout to graduate would yield more than \$200,000 in higher tax revenue and savings for the government over the course of that person's life.

**D**avid did not have a smooth path to getting his high school diploma. He had a difficult home life and bounced in and out of the juvenile justice system, which put him behind schedule to graduate. When he left juvenile detention and came back to high school at age 17, he was unfocused and frustrated, and he had little motivation to complete his schooling. David's probation officer told him that his best option would be to drop out of high school and get his GED on his own time. However, instead of getting his GED, David ended up homeless, and he would remain homeless for another five years.

High school graduates will earn on average \$130,000 more over a lifetime than their peers who drop out of school. Converting just one student from dropout to graduate would yield more than \$200,000 in higher tax revenue and savings for the government over the course of that person's life.<sup>8</sup> Many young people without a GED or high school diploma are unable to obtain employment that pays enough to support them, let alone a family. These young people may end up disconnected from both work and school and unable to find a way to move forward in life.

<sup>8</sup> "Building a Grad Nation Report: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic," America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises and Johns Hopkins University, 2010. Available at <http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx>.





YouthBuild USA seeks to change the outcomes for young people like David who are lacking the education and job skills they need to be successful in today's economy. The program gives young adults access to steady jobs and income and the support they need to finish their high school educations and, in many cases, go on to college. YouthBuild implements its model through nonprofit organizations and community groups across the country and currently has 273 programs in 46 states, Washington, D.C., and the Virgin Islands that serve some 10,000 young people every year.

YouthBuild seeks to reach young people who haven't been in work or school for a year or more and who face myriad challenges to success. Many are parents or caregivers or may have recent court involvements; others may have to work full-time while going to school to stay afloat. Many students come to YouthBuild programs with reading and math skills that are far below their grade levels and need remedial studies to catch up.

The nonprofit and community organizations that implement YouthBuild USA's model get young adults back on track academically while simultaneously helping them build the soft skills they will need for a career. Students may participate in job training or pre-apprenticeship programs that teach construction skills, help build housing for homeless or other low-income community residents or engage in leadership development programs. This combination of work and academics helps young people stabilize their lives and gain the confidence and skills they will need to build solid careers. It gives them access to consistent academic support and encouragement to complete a high school education and go on to college.

YouthBuild USA was founded in 1988, and the organization is consistently looking for ways to better serve young people as the workforce landscape continues to change. Scott Emerick, vice president for education at YouthBuild USA, explained that over time, the organization realized that a shift was needed from a focus on GED and high school diploma attainment toward getting students into and through college. "It's the realities of the labor markets," Emerick said. "We needed to become more of a college prep program rather than a GED program — that was what young people needed to access meaningful careers."

With this shift in mind, YouthBuild, with the support of New Profit Inc. and its Pathways Fund program and match funding from the Social Innovation Fund, is expanding its existing postsecondary program with the goal of helping an additional 500 students apply, enroll in and complete two- to four-year degrees. YouthBuild USA is also building and strengthening its relationships with technical and community colleges around the country to ensure that YouthBuild graduates have the support systems they will need to be successful once they reach the college campus. This includes establishing strong relationships with the financial aid office and creating cohorts of YouthBuild students on campus that mentor and support each other as they navigate the college process.

David first heard about the YouthBuild USA program being implemented by American Youth Works (AYW) in Austin after he had been homeless for nearly five years. He had

The program gives young adults access to steady jobs and income and the support they need to finish their high school educations and, in many cases, go on to college.



come to a shelter in Austin to stay for the winter months, and one of the staff members suggested that this program could help David get back on his feet. David was originally skeptical — he had been through a fair number of “get your life together” programs with his history in the juvenile justice system. But, he says, “AYW was not kidding; they get you a job. And that was the biggest thing — getting stable employment.”



The YouthBuild program at AYW provides its students with GED attainment courses in the mornings and work in the construction industry in the afternoons. David was able to make steady progress on his GED every day with support from staff members, and he maintained a job and received a steady income at the same time. With these supports in place, David completed the requirements needed for his GED in a little over a month. Although staff members at AYW were pleased with this accomplishment, they felt that David could do more. He recalls that after he finished his GED requirements, his enrollment counselor put him in the car and drove him to Austin Community College to sign up for classes. David continued to work through the AYW construction program for the first year and a half of his time in community college,

and the staff members of AYW remained a source of steady support by purchasing needed school supplies, helping him move apartments and being flexible with his work schedule during exams. After two years at Austin Community College, David hopes to transfer to the University of Texas this spring. He has chosen to major in physics.

Organizations like YouthBuild USA can change the direction of young people’s lives, help them complete their education and set them on a course for stable careers. With the support of the Social Innovation Fund and New Profit Inc., YouthBuild USA will continue to expand its work to reach more young people and help them achieve their dreams.

## Improving College Attainment and Completion for At-Risk Youth

Building pathways to and through college and into living wage employment is arguably one of today’s most pressing national issues. Only 60 percent of America’s low-income youth graduate from high school. Fourteen percent of 18- to 24-year-olds in the United States — a total of 4.3 million young adults — do not attend school, are not working and have no credentials beyond high school. Yet virtually all jobs that offer wages sufficient to support a family require at least some training beyond high school.

By leveraging Social Innovation Fund dollars, New Profit Inc. seeks to address these issues via its Pathways Fund, which supports six organizations that focus on improving at least one of four primary education and employment outcomes: high school graduation, college enrollment, college persistence and credit accumulation and living wage employment.

The organizations receiving support through the Social Innovation Fund and New Profit Inc.’s Pathways Fund include:

- College Advising Corps
- College Summit
- iMentor
- Single Stop USA
- Year Up
- YouthBuild USA





## Venture Philanthropy Partners and the youthCONNECT Network

Network of Nonprofits Provides Strong Support for D.C. Youth

**F**or a young man or woman growing up in a low-income family in the National Capital Region, there are many barriers to a meaningful career and a healthy life. Venture Philanthropy Partners believes that investments in individual nonprofits, no matter how worthy, will not solve the most complex problems facing our youth today. From this belief came youthCONNECT, a network bringing together some of the region's highest-performing nonprofits to provide a range of services — from college preparation and internship placement to health education — to help these young people gain the skills to become productive, self-sufficient adults. With support from Venture Philanthropy Partners and the Social Innovation Fund, youth are finding paths to success through this transformative collaboration. This story focuses on two of those young people who are learning English, caring for their families, and preparing for their future thanks to the resources of the youthCONNECT network.

David\* (\*names changed) moved from Bolivia just one year before he began classes at the Latin American Youth Center Career Academy Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. He came to the school still striving for fluency in English and still adjusting to a new country and culture. He had dreams of going to college to study

Venture Philanthropy Partners believes that investments in individual nonprofits, no matter how worthy, will not solve the most complex problems facing our youth today.



Targeted, thoughtful resources through youthCONNECT network partners means David, Alejandra and their fellow students will gain easier access to the tools they'll need to complete college, find meaningful employment and lead productive, healthy and safe lives for them and their children.

computer science. Alejandra\* came to the LAYC Career Academy carrying her young daughter on her hip, unable to afford child care but determined to find a path toward a solid job for her family. They, like their peers at the school, were disengaged from their community, came from diverse backgrounds and were looking for another route to success. They needed a range of resources to make that transition possible.

youthCONNECT @ Career Academy, launched in September 2013, is offering David, Alejandra and nearly 150 other young adults a portal to resources that can help them become successful students, employees, parents and community members. youthCONNECT network partners bring extended wraparound services to students, addressing needs that range from college and internship skills training to sexual health services. They also provide training and support services for teachers and faculty working at the school.

**College Summit** offers workshops for students that provide support for college applications, SAT and ACT preparation, college search services, and Free Application for Federal Student Aid and financial aid workshops.

**KIPP DC** offers training and professional development services for teachers and student support specialists.

**LAYC**, in addition to managing the Career Academy, offers case management support for each student, and when more intervention is needed, a Promotor: a long-term mentor, case manager and advocate for the young adult.

**Metro TeenAIDS** hosts “Being a Responsible Teen” workshops and office hours, as well as HIV testing and counseling support services.

**Urban Alliance** holds pre-internship training sessions and career preparation support, including mock interviews and resume workshops.

**Year Up NCR** provides a possible path for yearlong information technology internships and skills training for graduates of the Career Academy.

Career Academy students like David and Alejandra now have access to these services in a single location at their school.

David’s English is improving thanks to the Career Academy’s support for non-native speakers, and he’s working toward earning every IT certification the school offers. He has already participated in a health class through Metro TeenAIDS, and will soon be able to prepare for IT internships with resources from Urban Alliance. If he wants to attend college, College Summit will be able to help David with applications, financial aid and the search for the right school. He would also be eligible to participate in Year Up NCR’s program, which provides a post-graduation option through its competitive yearlong training and IT internship program.

Meanwhile, Alejandra is working toward her medical assistant certification, aided by an LAYC case manager who helped her find stable day care. That case manager will serve





as Alejandra's advisor and advocate, coaching and working with her while she attends school. The school's teachers are receiving professional development from KIPP DC's training program and will provide Alejandra with support to help her transition successfully into her new career.

Targeted, thoughtful resources through youthCONNECT network partners means David, Alejandra and their fellow students will gain easier access to the tools they'll need to complete college, find meaningful employment and lead productive, healthy and safe lives for them and their children.

YouthCONNECT @ Career Academy is the pilot program of the youthCONNECT school-based collaboration, and it is a prototype that youthCONNECT intends to replicate in other schools and places. The six nonprofits that comprise the youthCONNECT Network will be carefully evaluating what works to learn from and improve on the model.

## Increasing Educational and Employment Outcomes for Low-Income Youth

youthCONNECT is a network of nonprofits testing the theory that a group of high-performing organizations can make a greater difference in the lives of youth than each acting alone can. With a five-year, \$10 million grant from the Social Innovation Fund, the diverse group of nonprofits is working toward the common goal to increase the educational and employment outcomes of an estimated 20,000 low-income youth, ages 14 to 24, over five years. The network has already impacted the lives of more than 10,000 young people.

*youthCONNECT Network Partners:*

- College Summit NCR is a national nonprofit that helps high schools raise their college enrollment rates by building a college-going culture.
- KIPP DC is part of the national KIPP movement that operates a network of open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools for students from underserved communities in the nation's capital.
- Latin American Youth Center is a regional nonprofit that has provided a wide array of multilingual education and workforce services to some of the most disconnected youth for more than three decades.
- Metro TeenAIDS is a regional nonprofit dedicated to preventing HIV infection among young people in the D.C. metro area.
- Urban Alliance is a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., that empowers under-resourced youth to aspire, work and succeed through paid internships, formal training and mentorship.
- Year Up NCR is part of the national organization that seeks to close the Opportunity Divide by providing urban young adults with the skills, experience and support they need to realize professional careers and higher education.





## Mile High United Way and Save the Children

### Early Childhood Literacy Program Expands to Reach More Families in Rural Colorado

Children living in rural areas often struggle with many barriers to early childhood literacy. The geographic isolation of these communities makes it difficult, and quite costly, for parents to access high-quality early education programs.

Sitting quietly along the mountain valleys of southern Colorado, the rural town of Romeo is home to a mere 375 residents, including a young couple, Ivan and Leticia. The two are first-time parents of a six-month-old daughter and, like many new parents, they felt overwhelmed upon their baby's arrival. They want their daughter to grow up in a supportive home and receive the best education that she can. But because they live in a remote area, where access to early development and education resources are scarce, these basic needs present a daunting challenge for the couple.

Leticia is dyslexic and struggles with a speech impediment, making it even more important to her that her daughter learn to read, write and speak well. But without help or knowing where to turn for support, Ivan and Leticia felt that they were on their own to figure out how to be the best parents possible.

They are not alone. Children living in rural areas often struggle with many barriers to early childhood literacy. The geographic isolation of these communities makes it difficult, and quite costly, for parents to access high-quality early education programs. For low-income families, who can't afford books and age-appropriate toys, it is even more challenging. The combination of resource-scarce locations and families struggling to make ends meet means many of these kids fall behind developmentally before they even start school.



Studies show that children living in poverty who do not have access to high-quality early education programs are 50 percent more likely to be placed in special education, 25 percent more likely to drop out of school, 60 percent more likely to never attend college, 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime and 40 percent more likely to become a teen parent.<sup>9</sup>

Early Steps to School Success (ESSS), a program created and implemented by Save the Children, is designed specifically to serve remote areas where there are few other early childhood education supports in place. Founded in 2006, ESSS was first implemented in 2009 and is currently serving families in 14 states and the District of Columbia.

In 2012, Save the Children received a grant from Mile High United Way and the Social Innovation Fund to expand ESSS to 10 additional communities in Colorado's San Luis Valley region. One of those communities was Romeo, Colo., home to Ivan, Leticia and their new daughter.

ESSS focuses on literacy and language development for children from birth to age five. The program provides in-home support to parents by matching the family with a locally hired Early Childhood Coordinator who works with them consistently over the course of their child's development. Through biweekly home visits, the coordinator helps children build a strong foundation for learning by teaching parenting skills, providing them with age-appropriate exercises and serving as a support and guide.

In addition to teaching important skills, ESSS coordinators provide families with books to read with their children through a book exchange. At each visit, the coordinator brings a book bag filled with age- and culturally appropriate books for the child to enjoy, and models read-aloud techniques for parents that best facilitate children's learning. Through this practice, children are exposed to new words, rhymes and stories that improve vocabulary and build language skills. By working closely with parents in the home, ESSS coordinators help ensure that parents are empowered to support their child's education.

ESSS also fosters strong connections between parents and community schools that help children easily transition into preschool, and then kindergarten. To build this positive relationship, ESSS facilitates parent support groups that meet regularly in the local schools. These groups provide a forum for parents to share challenges, celebrate achievements and become comfortable with their child's future school, teachers and administrators.

To address additional barriers facing children growing up in rural areas, ESSS connects families in their program to other social service agencies in the area, such as pediatricians, GED programs for parents or housing services. By partnering with other community agencies and nonprofits in this way, ESSS provides families with seamless access to needed support services that help children thrive. The combination of at-home support, connection to the community school and help accessing needed supplemental resources helps children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and succeed.

Through biweekly home visits, the coordinator helps children build a strong foundation for learning by teaching parenting skills, providing them with age-appropriate exercises and serving as a support and guide.

<sup>9</sup> "Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40," HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2005. Available at [www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219](http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219).



Ivan and Leticia first heard about ESSS while attending a community wrestling match, where they met a Save the Children staff member and struck up a conversation about their daughter. Coral Hartless, the ESSS program specialist, explained that the program could provide them with support and guidance, and she gave them contact information for the coordinator working in their area. Leticia and Ivan were excited to learn that not only was the program free, but the coordinator would also continue to provide support to their family until their daughter was five years old.

Leticia says that she has benefited greatly from working with Coral through the ESSS program. Coral taught Ivan and Leticia about the stages of early childhood and how a baby's brain develops. She showed them how to stimulate their daughter's language and learning abilities, as well as her gross motor skills. Leticia says that learning these skills helped her overcome the intimidation of being a first-time parent. "Young parents have a bad reputation for not caring for their child," Leticia says. "We did not want to be those parents!"

With these new skills in place, Leticia and Ivan say that they now read and sing with their daughter regularly, and they feel more confident that they are providing her with good care. With the help of ESSS, Leticia feels that she is now a better parent than her parents ever were, while Ivan says he has learned how to be a better father and husband. Both parents say that, overall, the program has helped them become more in tune with each other and with their child, strengthening the core of their family foundation.

For Leticia and Ivan, as well as thousands of other parents across the U.S., Save the Children's Early Steps to School Success has provided the support and knowledge they need to put their child on the path to a brighter future. Leticia says that is very important to her because "we want our children to know us, and to learn all they can."

## Improving Early Childhood Literacy Across Colorado

A child's vocabulary at age three and school readiness at kindergarten are among the most important predictors of reading ability by third grade. In Colorado, 30 percent of the state's 60,000 third graders are not able to read at grade level. Seventy-five percent of the children entering fourth grade who are reading below grade level never catch up, putting these students in danger of failing to graduate from high school.

Building on its work to ensure Colorado's children are prepared for school, Mile High United Way, with additional support from the Social Innovation Fund, funded 11 organizations working to strengthen early childhood literacy across Colorado. These grantees cover 48 of Colorado's 64 counties — 36 rural and 12 urban. In addition to Save the Children, grantees include:

- The Bridge Project
- Centennial Board of Cooperative Educational Services
- Clayton Early Learning
- Colorado Humanities
- Colorado Parent & Child Foundation
- Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition
- Denver Public Schools Foundation
- The Jefferson Foundation
- Reading Partners
- Summit54







# United Way of Southeastern Michigan and The Michigan National Kidney Foundation

## Teaching Kids about Health While Improving Classroom Skills

**A**nna, a teacher at Vistas Nuevas Head Start in southwest Detroit, improved her preschool classroom's behavior by first improving their nutrition.

Regie's Rainbow Adventure® is a nutrition and physical activity–focused curriculum offered by the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan for preschool and early elementary children. The seven-week program chronicles the adventures of Regie, a superhero who looks like a piece of broccoli and travels to exotic lands that correspond with the colors of the rainbow. In addition to supporting improved health outcomes, the project promotes positive socialization, improved focus and concentration, and increased self-efficacy among the students.

The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan uses Regie's adventures as part of an integrated strategy to engage young children, their families and caregivers in making healthy choices. This year, working in partnership with Social Innovation Fund grantee United Way for Southeastern Michigan, the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan will bring the curriculum to 500 households through Early Learning Communities, Head Starts and other early childhood settings. As Anna introduced Regie's Rainbow Adventure® to her class, she noticed the students were able to focus better. They started to understand healthy foods. There was a lot of discussion in the classroom and at lunchtime about which foods

The children liked the Regie's Rainbow Adventure® books so much that they asked Anna to read each of the books twice a day! The children started to recognize words and soon were able to read the books on their own.



This is the power of the Social Innovation Fund. SIF funding is changing the way organizations assess program effectiveness by underwriting data collection and analysis on a huge scale.

were “Regie Foods.” Picky eaters in her classroom became less picky thanks to the fruit and vegetables tasting component of the Regie’s Rainbow Adventure® program.

Anna extended the program throughout the year, even constructing a hands-on island where the children could go on adventures with Regie. There were many concepts in the Regie’s Rainbow Adventure® program that helped Anna expand the children’s vocabulary, and the idea of an island was new to most of her students.

The children liked the Regie’s Rainbow Adventure® books so much that they asked Anna to read each of the books twice a day! The children started to recognize words and soon were able to read the books on their own.

Regie’s Rainbow Adventure® is one of eleven early literacy initiatives being studied by United Way for Southeastern Michigan’s Social Innovation Fund portfolio. Each initiative is being rigorously evaluated to identify factors that impact early literacy, such as nutrition education for children and their families, increased parenting skills, and community outreach that promotes whole family reading in community settings, such as local businesses and doctors’ offices, where parents and children spend time together. Successful components will be rolled out in new neighborhoods across Greater Detroit and elsewhere.

This is the power of the Social Innovation Fund. SIF funding is changing the way organizations assess program effectiveness by underwriting data collection and analysis on a huge scale. That will lead to more effective use of private philanthropic dollars and, ultimately, much greater impact.

## Expanding Early Childhood Programs in Detroit

Detroit regularly ranks at or near the bottom of the nation for high school graduation rates. The United Way for Southeastern Michigan (UWSEM) proposed tackling this challenge early in a child’s life, before he or she ever sets foot in a school building.

With \$4 million in federal funds from the Social Innovation Fund, UWSEM aims to prepare Detroit-area, preschool-aged children to become proficient readers and to provide them with building blocks for a successful life.

In spring 2012, UWSEM announced 11 organizations that will receive \$100,000 to \$250,000 in grants and other resources to expand and/or replicate evidence-based early childhood programs in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. Supported programs include:

- Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
- The Detroit Parent Network
- Detroit Public Television
- The Guidance Center
- Living Arts
- The Macomb Intermediate School District
- Matrix Human Services
- The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan’s Project for Early Childhood Health
- Southwest Counseling Solutions
- Starfish Family Services
- Vanguard Community Development Corporation





## United Way of Greater Cincinnati and Books in Action

Bringing Programs That Support Kindergarten Readiness to Kids in Cincinnati

**W**hen Orlando started preschool at Cincinnati Union Bethel, a community and family services agency, he barely spoke. A boy like Orlando statistically has a slim chance of finishing high school. He's a preschool-aged, African-American boy living with four siblings and their single mother, Anitra, in a low-income neighborhood of Cincinnati.

But thanks to his participation in Books in Action, a proven prekindergarten literacy initiative launched at Orlando's preschool this year with support from the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the Strive Partnership and their local funders, and additional funding from the Social Innovation Fund, the odds have improved greatly that he will complete his public school education. Now, the summer before kindergarten, he finishes sentences from books his mother reads aloud and remembers stories word for word from hearing them in school.

According to Dr. Monica Mitchell, an associate professor of pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, who has been charged with evaluating the impact of Books in Action, the groundwork for literacy should be laid before kindergarten. By third grade, she says, students should finish "learning to read" and start "reading

"By third grade, students should finish 'learning to read' and start 'reading to learn.'"

—DR. MONICA MITCHELL, CINCINNATI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER



Orlando's mother appreciates receiving copies of some of the 40 Books in Action storybooks from his classroom rather than walking three miles to the nearest library with five young children.

to learn.” Children who cannot read proficiently by then are four times more likely than their peers to drop out of school by age 19, according to a recent national study.<sup>10</sup>

At first, Orlando's ability to predict what would happen next in a story surprised Anitra, who did not realize he had read the books in school. She then learned that this kind of repetition and reinforcement is a hallmark of Books in Action. When Orlando's class read a book about pigs living together in a house, teachers used word cards and puppets to enhance the story's relevance. Some math and science lessons tied directly to the storybooks, too. Once a month, two actors joined the class to perform a Books in Action story and engage the children. For a story about nutrition, the actors dressed as vegetables and simulated how they felt after eating healthy versus unhealthy foods. Parents were invited twice a month to participate in classroom Books in Action exercises.

Orlando's mother appreciates receiving copies of some of the 40 Books in Action storybooks from his classroom rather than walking three miles to the nearest library with five young children.

Poverty historically has proved to be the greatest predictor of a child's academic success, says Mitchell. According to a report by City University of New York's Hunter College, one in three low-income, African-American third graders unable to read at grade level will fail to graduate high school.<sup>11</sup>

Without Books in Action, Orlando's odds may have been even worse: According to the most recent Census data, nearly half of the children in Cincinnati live in poverty — the third highest rate in the nation <sup>12</sup> — and Orlando's neighborhood is among the poorest.

For Orlando and students like him, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati and their collaborating funders are leading a community-wide effort to ensure that by 2020 at least 85 percent of Cincinnati's children will be ready for kindergarten. School districts, businesses, local nonprofit agencies, parents and community leaders all are uniting to help improve low-income preschoolers' preparation for kindergarten and beyond. For the academic year ending in June 2012, Orlando's classroom and one other at his preschool — 51 children in total — comprised the first group outside of Cincinnati Public Schools to participate in Books in Action.

Community results are promising: Since 2007, the percentage of Cincinnati kindergartners passing Ohio's kindergarten readiness assessment for literacy has increased from 45 to 57 percent. Evidence indicates that Books in Action in particular has helped make a difference, says Mitchell. A decade ago, a Cincinnati Public School pilot program showed that students in six early education classrooms implementing Books in Action significantly

10 Donald Hernandez, "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation," City University of New York's Hunter College, funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012. Available at [www.documentcloud.org/documents/347386-doublejeopardyreport030812forweb.html](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/347386-doublejeopardyreport030812forweb.html).

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.





improved kindergarten readiness scores compared with peers in six control classrooms. In the years that followed, Books in Action expanded to public school Head Start classrooms across the city, reaching 646 children in 2010 – 2011.

Now, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the Strive Partnership and their local funding partners plan to boost that number by 27 percent in 2012 – 2013. By leveraging seed funding from a Social Innovation Fund grant and additional private investment, they will add a third CUB classroom and two additional Head Start–funded public school classrooms, bringing the total to 820 children.

Results for the first year are encouraging. Orlando and his fellow CUB Books in Action students as a group significantly improved based on a national preschool test that covers basic concepts such as numbers, letters, colors and shapes. Before Books in Action, the group had scored better than only 33.6 percent of their peers across the nation, and by the school year’s end had moved up to the 48th percentile.

At this rate, Anitra has high hopes that she will one day applaud joyfully as Orlando, clad in cap and gown, walks across the stage to be awarded a well-deserved high school diploma.

## Supporting Kindergarten Readiness Initiatives in Greater Cincinnati

Books in Action is one of four kindergarten readiness programs in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to benefit from a public–private partnership among the Social Innovation Fund, the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the Strive Partnership and more than a dozen local funders committed to improving outcomes for Cincinnati youth. In addition to literacy, the other three initiatives each focus on a complementary aspect of a preschool child’s intellectual, emotional and social development:

- **Transitioning to preschool:** Every Child Succeeds operates a home visitation program for first-time mothers of at-risk children under age three. The program will expand its transition services to help parents ensure that their child enrolls in a quality child care or early learning program.
- **Fostering social and emotional development:** The Consortium for Resilient Young Children ensures each child’s nonacademic needs are met by encouraging positive behaviors and improving classroom management via teacher training, parent engagement and mental health referrals.
- **Spotlighting science and math:** The Cincinnati Museum Center, which prepares Head Start teachers to integrate science activities into their curriculum, will expand from Northern Kentucky into Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati.

