

News from the Village

the children's
village

Summer 2015



Phyllis Moore has been a foster parent at CV for six years. Eight teenage boys have come under her care, and she has nurtured each one of them like she does her own granddaughter above - as though they were her own.

Even Great Parents Need Help Sometimes

It wasn't until her own twins got into trouble with the law that Phyllis decided to become a foster parent. She realized that even great parents sometimes need help and, vice versa, wonderful kids can get themselves in trouble. She learned forgiveness. The first teenage boy she fostered came to her straight from prison. He left her to attend college.

When a teen arrives in Phyllis' care, she immediately calls him "son" and he is invited to call her "ma" whenever he's ready. She parents each boy as if he were her son, even if it means jeopardizing her own well-being. "Once they walk through that door, they are my children. When my own children messed up, I didn't think about sending them back. Why would it be any different with these boys?"

When one of the teens was caught smoking marijuana in the hallway of her building, Phyllis was threatened with eviction. "Family takes care of family. I'd rather move the whole family to a shelter than let this boy think I was going to give up on him over that," Phyllis explained.

Make no mistake, Phyllis runs a tight ship. When one of the teens gets into trouble, Phyllis calls a family meeting in which they all discuss the offense and offer potential punishments. The teen gets to choose from those suggestions. This exercise holds the boys accountable for their behavior in the presence of the whole family and it builds comradery and fairness as they decide what the consequences should be. It's easy to suggest harsh penalties for your brother, but you learn to be fair because next time it might be you in the hot seat.

I'd rather move the whole family to a shelter than let this boy think I was going to give up on him over that.

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CV Raises \$500,000 at Circle of Friends Annual Dinner

Thanks to our generous supporters, The Children's Village raised \$500,000 to keep children safe and families together at our 15th Annual Circle of Friends Dinner. The dinner honored former Board chair John Priesing and Enterprise Fleet Management. Special thanks to our many corporate supporters, including Ambac and Macquarie Group.

Visit our website to see the full list of generous supporters and photos from the event: childrensvillage.org/dinner

Read "Proud of Who I Have Become" on page 3 about Vaughan Thorpe, who spoke at the dinner about his dream to become a filmmaker.



"The credit goes to the staff. Despite the daily ups and downs of dealing with troubled kids and their problems, these people really care," said John Priesing as he accepted the Legacy of Service Award.

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About The Village

Founded in 1851, The Children's Village works in partnership with families to help society's most vulnerable children so that they become educationally proficient, economically productive, and socially responsible members of their communities.

Dr. Kohomban Goes to Washington

On May 25, CV President Jeremy Kohomban testified before the Senate Committee on Finance at their hearing entitled "No Place to Grow Up: How to Safely Reduce Reliance on Foster Care Group Homes". CV, the only social services organization represented at the hearing, was selected because of Jeremy's vocal stance on the need to strengthen communities and families with the goal of keeping kids home whenever possible.

The purpose of the testimony was to encourage Congress and the Administration to find ways to incentivize local governments and child welfare agencies to reduce the number of children placed in out-of-home care and return those who are placed in care home as quickly as possible. This is the approach CV has taken for many years with a great deal of success.

Jeremy shared four important points in his testimony:

1. Children belong in families, not in long-term residential care.
2. States must invest in help for children and families facing crisis.



3. Providers can and should change their business models for helping children and families by moving away from long-term residential care and investing in models that wrap services around children and families in the community. And, crucially,
4. The federal government can serve an important role as a catalyst for change by providing funding for strong systems of community-based care.

Testifying alongside Jeremy were a young lady who grew up in a group home, a foster parent who adopted a teenager, and the Commissioner representing President Obama's Administration. The full testimony can be read at childrensvillage.org/news

At The Children's Village, we recognize that children need — indeed have a developmental requirement for — family relationships.

- Excerpt from Dr. Kohomban's Testimony

Testifying before the Senate Committee on Finance (l to r): Leslie Gruber (former foster youth), Jeremy Kohomban, Matthew Reynell (adoptive father) and JooYeun Chang (Assoc. Commissioner, Children's Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services).

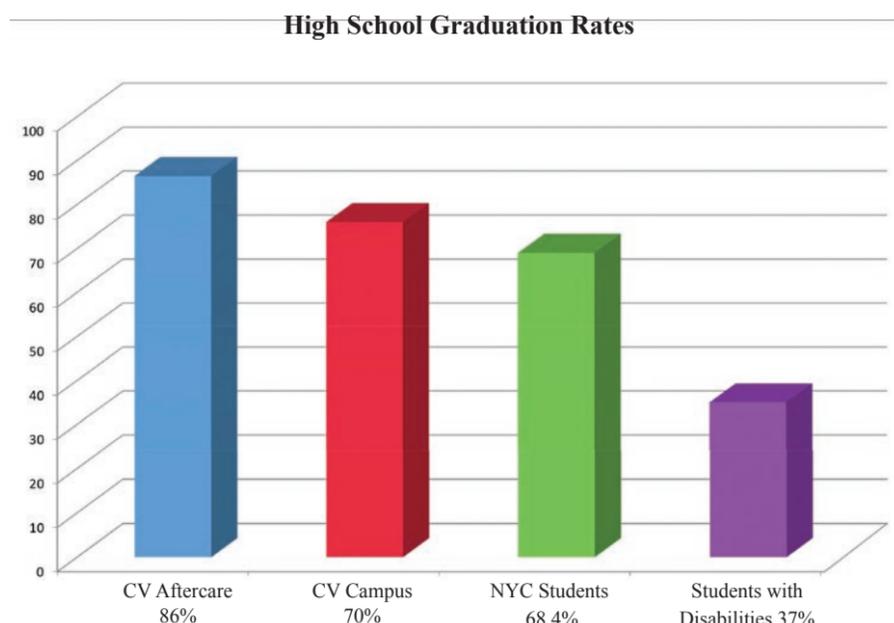
Outcome Corner: High School Education for Foster Children

Most of the children and youth we serve come from generations of poverty. Breaking that cycle, particularly for kids without families to lean on, who have arrest records, or who are teen parents, is difficult and, some say, impossible. The good news is that, with help, these students can succeed and often become the first in their families to earn a diploma.

As shown below, the graduation rate for youth in our WAY aftercare program is 86% compared to 68.4% for students in the New York City school system. The numbers are even more impressive when compared with similar students who only graduate at a rate of 37%. In fact, dropout rates for foster care students nationally are as high as 75%.

At our campus school, Greenburgh Eleven, CV has 10 seniors who have been with us since September, and 7 of them will be graduating. The good news is that they have all worked hard and completed their course work to graduate. In many cases, this involved significant credit recovery to make up for multiple school transfers, truancy, and academic deficiencies.

However, in order to graduate, they must also pass the state tests. The three students who are still hoping to graduate in the future came to us several years below grade level—one is actually reading at a primary level. We are proud of what they have accomplished so far and will continue to support them in their quest to achieve a high school diploma.



“Proud of Who I Have Become”

At the Circle of Friends Dinner this year, keynote speaker Vaughan Thorpe spoke about how CV helped him go from a Rikers inmate to an up and coming filmmaker.

“Filmmaking is the one thing that is stronger than the pull for money or nice clothes. It’s the one thing that I truly, passionately want to work at. Finding this motivation transformed me into the man I am today,” Vaughan told the crowd. He continued, “Thanks to CV, I am standing before you proud of who I have become. I don’t own a camera, I don’t have an apartment, and I want more than anything to go to college to study filmmaking, but my story already has a happy ending. I found my passion, I found a reason to wake up each morning and work hard.”



Vaughan Thorpe, who participated in a CV program for teens on probation, speaks about the film he created to show young men and women what it’s like to be in prison.

His speech was so moving that Jamie Marley, a CV trustee, personally collected funds to purchase Vaughan his first camera and all of the equipment he could wish for. Now, Vaughan can pursue his films and shoot whenever the inspiration strikes. He plans to give back to CV by developing a PSA to recruit foster parents. Then he’ll work on a portfolio to help him get into college to study filmmaking. With help from his CV friends, he will make his dream come true.



Vaughan is elated after receiving film equipment from Trustee Jamie Marley, who organized a drive to purchase the equipment, and Marcella Barganz, a generous contributor.

Full Circle – Merger with Inwood House



Paulette Young and Yolanda Webster get reacquainted (left) during a CV/Inwood House merger meeting, sixteen years after Paulette was in Yolanda’s care as a teenage mom (top).

In January, CV announced a pending merger with Inwood House, one of the country’s leaders in caring for pregnant and parenting teens. Inwood House is best known for its maternity residences, but the organization is also an important part of the network of pregnancy prevention education in schools in New York City.

Staff are already beginning to work together and finding a lot of common ground. Paulette Young (pictured left), who works with CV’s foster parents, is especially excited about this merger:

“In 1999, I lived at Inwood House when I was pregnant with my daughter. Living there was one of the best experiences I had growing up. The staff

were helpful and comforting, and the environment was warm and welcoming. Most importantly, as a nervous teenage mom, I always felt safe and secure.

“Yolanda Webster was my case worker, and she made a lasting impression and helped shape my career. Now, fifteen years later, Ms. Webster and I are working as colleagues. I am so happy to have her back in my life, and this merger makes me feel as though my life has come full circle.”

When the merger is finalized later this year, Inwood House will become “Inwood House at The Children’s Village”, maintaining its rich history and identity while enriching CV and its programs.

She doesn’t wait for the storm to pass

“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass. It’s about learning to dance in the rain.”

This quote is the first thing you see when you walk into Phyllis Moore’s cozy and colorful home in the Morris Heights neighborhood of The Bronx. The walls and shelves are plastered with family photographs of her three biological sons, four granddaughters, and eight foster boys who have called her “ma” over the past six years.

In the next room, her 5 month old granddaughter is sleeping soundly after a morning at court during which she was placed in Phyllis’ custody. One of her foster sons is resting with a sore throat in his bedroom. The other three teenage boys are at school, but the phone rings every few minutes as they check in with her to let her know that they got on the bus or arrived at football practice. Phyllis is relaxed - curled up on her couch, hugging a throw pillow, and chatting away. She has clearly learned to dance in the rain.

Phyllis’ parents taught her to be nurturing and compassionate. “My parents are my best friends,” she says. “My siblings and I learned how to be caretakers because they took such great care of us. Now that we’re grown, we always have our own kids and somebody else’s kids.”

As the baby wakes up crying from her nap and the phone rings again, Phyllis smiles peacefully and poses in front of her children’s photographs, trophies, and awards that her sons have won. She doesn’t wait for the storm to pass, she invites it through her door and dances with her family.



Even Great Parents... cont.

Phyllis has never had a teen neglect to fulfill his chosen punishment. She laughs at this and says, “I just sit back and watch them keep each other in line.”

There are six house rules for Phyllis’ family which Daniel, an 18-year old boy who has lived with Phyllis for five years, recites proudly, “1) Tell the truth; 2) No company; 3) Be on time; 4) Keep your space clean; 5) Be respectful; 6) Do your chores.” Phyllis adds, “You will follow the rules. The rules are there for a reason. I follow them and I expect each of the boys to follow them.” It’s easy to see why difficult teens don’t mess with her.

In Phyllis’ opinion, the first rule is the key to being a successful foster parent. “These boys don’t trust. They have been lied to for their entire lives. The one thing I can do for them is to tell them the truth, even when it’s not what they want to hear and even when it’s hard, I am always consistent and I never lie. Children never forget the one time you lie to them and you will never undo it.”

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Know someone who may be interested in our work? Pass along this newsletter to spread the word!

We hope you will join us for our upcoming events:

Golf & Tennis Classic
September 29
Tamarack Country Club

Masquerade Gala
October 24

Sally Paddle Tennis Tournament
October 28

For more information visit us online at childrensvillage.org/events or contact RoseAnn Magdaleno at rmagdaleno@childrensvillage.org



"Great job pitching yesterday"

The bleachers were filled with cottage staff, teachers, pediatricians, social workers, and recreation staff—everyone was there. It was opening day of Unit Softball, CV's own version of the World Series. Four teams of staff and teens compete on Wednesday nights all summer long for bragging rights and a pizza party.

It's loud, a bit disorganized, and one of the best signs of spring at CV. The best part is not the game itself, but rather the interactions it fosters between staff and kids. When a shy teen

walked in to meet with his psychologist last week, he was greeted by the doctor, "Great job pitching yesterday." The young man softened, smiled and began to talk.

Philip never wanted to participate in sports, but after some extra attention by a recreation staff member on his batting skills, he now comes to recreation whenever he can. He's proud of his excellent batting average, but he shows up each Wednesday because of the special relationship he now has with the staff member.



When Coach Tim's amplified voice announces "Batter's up!" everyone knows it's time to wrap up for the day, walk away from their desks, and head out onto the field. Our work is about relationships—and Unit Softball is a home run.

Is there room at your table for one more?

If our cover story inspired you to learn more about becoming a foster parent, please visit our website at childrensvillage.org/foster-and-adoptive-homes

