

# News from the Village

the children's  
village

Winter 2014



Determined and hard-working, Quesar is defying the odds as a Freshman at SUNY Cobleskill. His former tutor, David Schwartz, couldn't be prouder.

## Punctuation and Support Make College Possible

Quesar arrived at CV after fifteen years of abuse, neglect, and rejection. He was angry at the world, rightfully so, but he was most angry with himself. Prone to explosive rages of violence and fury, he felt that somehow he deserved the years of violence and abuse he'd endured.

CV was a fresh beginning for Quesar. He was in a new state, far away from his troubled past. He threw himself whole-heartedly into the track team, dog training program, and his academics. He was determined to make a better life for himself and willing to work hard for success. Quesar was paired with a tutor, David Schwartz, a retired English teacher and long-time CV volunteer, Trustee, and member of the School Board.

"Like so many of the boys at CV, Quesar had been all but abandoned by our educational system and by society as a whole," David explained.

At their first meeting, David brought a poem, *Those Winter Sundays* by Robert Hayden, which he often assigns to gauge his new students. "What do you think the author is feeling?" David asked his usual question. After a long pause, Quesar replied, "Regret." David remembers thinking "Wow, he's good."

David worked with Quesar for more than a year. Quesar's technical writing ability improved, culminating in a brilliant essay on *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Quesar's determination eventually got him accepted into a foster home. His senior year of high school was the first full year he had ever completed without switching schools.

Quesar is now attending SUNY Cobleskill on a scholarship from a great organization called Of Home, Family, and Future Inc.

Continued p. 3

On his first vacation from college, Quesar catches up with his CV tutor, David.



## Just \$20 helps make a dream into a memory

For most of us, the holidays are a time for family, togetherness, and belonging. It's the season for hugging and laughter, sharing delicious meals and family traditions, and making new memories that will stay with us forever.

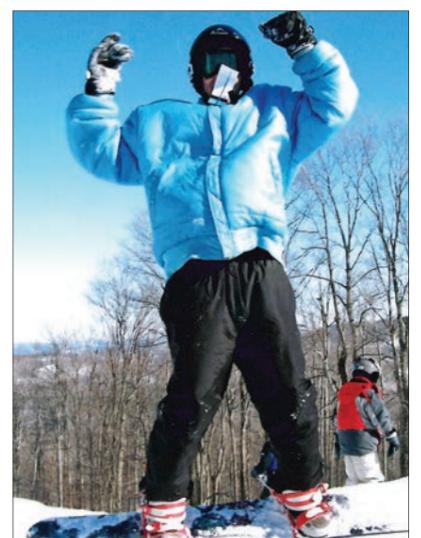
Unfortunately, for many children we care for, there is no family to hug and few traditions to share. But we can give kids special experiences that they will remember for years to come.

Just \$20 helps make a dream into a memory for a child who can't go home for the holidays. Dreams of flying down the mountain on a snowboard, cheering in the stands at a basketball game, or sipping hot chocolate on ice skates will be made possible with your support.

**Will you help us make holiday memories this year?**

You can use the enclosed envelope or make an online donation at:

[www.childrevillage.org/donate](http://www.childrevillage.org/donate)



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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.

**Goodbye, Bill**

The CV community mourns the passing of Bill Krupman. Not just because he was a trustee for forty years, or Board Chair for ten years, or that he was a major contributor to our work. It is also because he was a friend to anyone he came in contact with—a child, a staff member, a volunteer. No matter who you were, Bill wanted to hear your story.

Last Spring, we dedicated our new library to Bill and his wife Anne in recognition of the enormous contribution the Krupman family, including daughter Pam Allyn, has made to literacy at The Children's Village. This memorial is one reminder that Bill's legacy will always live on at CV.

Goodbye, good friend.



**There's Always More Room at the Table**



"Every time I turn around, I have new siblings! One time, I came home from school and there were twins," Travonya exclaimed with a huge, proud smile on her face. Travonya is the oldest daughter of Tracie Snell.

When Travonya was sixteen, Tracie decided to become a foster parent. Her two kids were teenagers, and she was ready to open her home and her heart to children who needed short-term care. In the beginning, it was difficult not to get overly attached to the children, mostly babies, who stayed with Tracie for a few days or a few months. But as she began returning children to their permanent families, Tracie realized that her role as a foster parent was to deliver comfort to the children, but that her real success came when the children were reunited with their permanent families.

Over the years, Tracie has cared for more than twenty foster children and adopted two, including Cierre, who has special needs. Travonya, who has a four year old son of her own, helps out with the foster kids when she's not at college or work, though she confesses that sometimes she has no idea how many places to set at the table. Tracie also gets support from her own extended family – nieces, cousins, and her mother.

"I'm everybody's grandma," Tracie's mother said, "I walk down the street and I hear somebody shout 'Grandma!' and I turn my head because chances are good they're talking to me."

To read Tracie's letter about her adopted son Cierre, who just hugged her for the first time in the six years she's mothered him, visit [www.childrensvillage.org/tracie-and-cierre](http://www.childrensvillage.org/tracie-and-cierre).

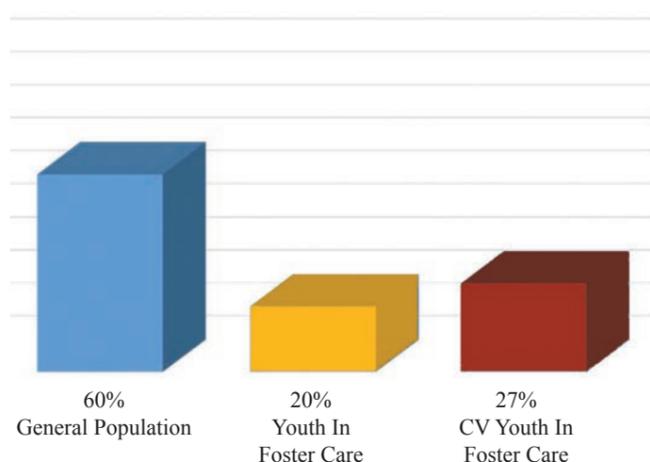
**I walk down the street  
and I hear somebody  
shout "Grandma!"  
and I turn my head  
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**Outcome Corner: College Education for Foster Children**

A Pew Research study found that earning a college degree doubles a typical person's annual income. For youth in foster care who lack family support, this degree could be the difference between becoming a self-sufficient adult and living on government handouts.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy reports that in the United States, 20% of young adults in foster care who graduate high school attend college (compared to 60% of the general population). At CV, the number is 27%. This includes 4 students, like Quesar from our cover story, who attend 4-year colleges, plus 14 who are full-time students in community colleges.

**Percentage of High School Graduates Attending College**



**Affordable Housing in Harlem**

On the chilly morning of November 19, The Children's Village and our partner organization, Harlem Dowling, broke ground on a 10-story building on Adam Clayton Powell Blvd that will provide 60 units of desperately-needed affordable housing. What's truly unique is that it will also include 12 studio apartments for young people aging out of CV's foster care program. The building will be completed in Spring 2016.



A rendering of the building that will house CV and Harlem Dowling office space and affordable apartments.

## Benicio's Words

"Ridiculous!"

Benicio, a 10-year old, loves to read but gets frustrated easily. Volunteer Joanne Levine works with him on word recognition – flipping through index cards and checking off the words Benicio can read. When he gets four check marks, Benicio "owns" the word and he gets to keep the index card.

For struggling readers like Benicio, it may take weeks to own a word. That's why they are particu-

**Benicio shouts when the card comes around in his pile. The whole room swells with laughter and Benicio smiles proudly.**

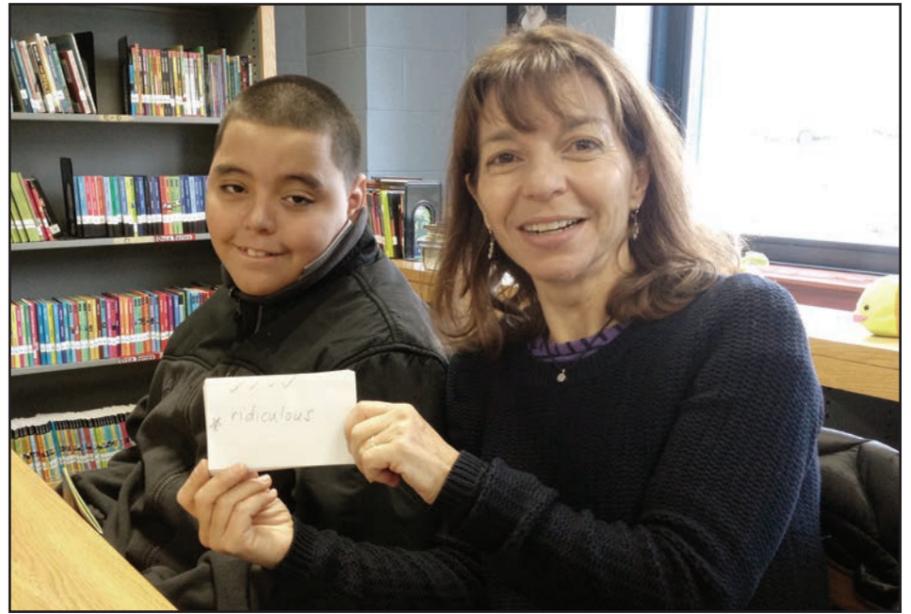
larly proud of "ridiculous" – a word that took months for Benicio to learn. "RIDICULOUS," Benicio shouts when the card comes around in his pile. The whole room swells with laughter and Benicio smiles proudly.

Benicio is working with Joanne through FLY (Foundations of Literacy for Youth), a volunteer-run program that has been at CV for seven years. The team of FLY volunteers, Nicole Clark, Carol Intner, and Nancy Kliot, provide one-on-one literacy tutoring during the school day.

"The key motivating force that keeps children reading is comprehension," Joanne says. Children won't connect with a book or with the joy of reading until they can follow the story.

"Can you name a book that you like?" the volunteers ask their new students. Most of the time, this question is met with blank stares.

As Joanne works with Sean, a 9-year old boy, it's



Volunteer Joanne Levine holds up a word that Benicio now owns.

easy to see why FLY is so popular. Each tutor is enthusiastic, supportive, charismatic, and engaging.

Joanne subtly records Sean's progress, scribbling notes like "stamina" on his record without taking her eyes off Sean and his book.

Sean sighs. He tires quickly, but he clearly doesn't want to let Joanne down, so he scoots to the edge of his chair and continues reading. With a lot of encouragement, he finally finishes the book and eagerly selects another, leaving with a book hugged to his chest for weekend reading.

## A Life Lesson at Bloomingdales

A cloud of musk and spice followed the teenagers down Third Avenue. The seven young men were headed to dinner after an evening at Bloomingdales where some of them spent a bit too much time in the cologne section.

The teens, all participants in CV's WAY to Success program, were participating in a social experiment

designed to teach them the importance of choosing how they present themselves.

Half of the teens were instructed to dress up for the evening and arrived at Bloomingdales donning sweaters and slacks. The other half of the group wasn't told anything regarding attire and showed up wearing sweatpants and t-shirts.



The well-dressed teens were treated like royalty on a quiet Thursday night in Bloomingdales – schmoozed by salespeople eager to help them slip into a Ralph Lauren leather jacket or sample expensive cologne.

The other group weren't offered a single spritz. One teen asked to try on a shirt and was surreptitiously followed into the fitting room. It was difficult to overlook

the men with earbuds who appeared in the periphery as the teens moved through departments.

"See the loss prevention guys?" John asked, nodding toward the security men gathered around the Prada briefcases, "It's because I'm wearing sweatpants and carrying a backpack. I worked in loss prevention. Sweatpants and backpacks are their worst nightmare. You can fit so much stuff in them."

The other teens who lacked John's wisdom took it personally. Not one of them suggested that what they were wearing may have communicated something to the salespeople.

It wasn't until the group sat down at dinner to discuss their experiences that the teens realized the moral of the evening – the way you choose to present yourself will impact how you are perceived and the opportunities that are offered to you.

John knows that dressing for success helped him earn and keep two well-paid jobs in Manhattan.

## Punctuation and Support cont.

"That he has been able to overcome these challenges and enter a four year SUNY college is a testament to the extraordinary person he is," David said.

Eager to reconnect, they met for dinner during Quesar's Fall Break. Quesar reported that he was doing well in five courses. Pushing his menu aside, Quesar pulled out his laptop and proudly showed David his most recent English paper. David read a particularly profound sentence aloud and said, "You have always been gifted in your ability to turn a phrase." Beaming ear to ear, Quesar said, "I had a really good teacher."

Despite his success in school, Quesar continues to struggle with demons from his past and admits, "I'm having a hard time. College is lonely, but knowing I have your support makes me feel better."

At the end of his evening with David, Quesar said, "Thank you for the wonderful time together. You made me feel as if I could find my true self again. You reminded me that I do have people who care so much about me."



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## Make a difference in a life and earn income for life!

The Children's Village is now able to offer donors the opportunity to establish a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA). With a CGA, you can make a lasting gift that will generate an immediate income tax deduction, plus provide an annualized income stream for life! (Interest rates depend on your age and can be as high as 9.5 percent.)

For more information, contact Linda Stutz at [lstutz@childrensvillage.org](mailto:lstutz@childrensvillage.org) or 914-693-0600 ext. 1413.



Shop at AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to:

Children's Village, Inc.



Your donation really matters.

A CV Alum recently told us:  
*"I liked that the staff taught me to snowboard and ice skate - things I always dreamed of doing."*



All the components for a Thanksgiving dinner on their way to CV's families. More than 200 boxes were filled with donated food and packed by volunteers.

Top Center: UPS collected food to donate to CV's community programs.



Top Right: Morgan Stanley volunteers brought donations and packed hundreds of boxes of food for families.

Left: CV's Leadership Council gave away 500 turkeys and bags of fixins at The Polo Grounds Community Center.

Right: Jennifer from Camuto of Greenwich delivered boxes of food collected in the store.



The children, families, and staff at The Children's Village wish you a happy holiday season and thank you for your generous donations of funds, food, and gifts that make our holidays so very special.

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