



OUR STORIES ARE
YOUR STORIES

the children's
village®

THE CHILDREN'S VILLAGE
ANTHOLOGY
2019

It's not easy to come out of the foster care system with all the odds against you, but I had the grind and passion to succeed. CV was my home for 11 years and I won't forget where this story began. Thank you for always believing that I would make it.



Maurice

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE AND FAMILIES TOGETHER

We believe that every child can achieve their potential if given support and the right resources. We hope you enjoy this special collection of stories written by the people you are helping.

Together, we:

- **Help lonely kids become part of a family.** Some of the children we serve have no one – literally, not one person – who they can rely on. We work to find individuals who are invested, reliable, and committed to the health and wellbeing of each child, whether that be a biological family member, foster parent, or adoptive parent.
- **Educate students to make wise choices.** Our teen pregnancy prevention, mentoring, and afterschool programs serve as a platform for instilling confidence, leadership, and self-determination.
- **Give kids who are in trouble a reason to dream.** A poor choice, drug use, even a criminal conviction can lead a teen to feel he or she has no future. We provide a framework for rebuilding shattered lives through education, relationships, and job readiness training.
- **Keep children safe.** For years, our core programming has been in residential care. While today most of our work is in the community, we continue to offer safe, therapeutic care for teens who are homeless, in foster care, undocumented, or in the justice system.

The stories in this book were written by children, staff, and volunteers. We hope reading them helps you understand the impact your support has on so many lives. The work is difficult, but as you'll read in the following pages, the results are life-changing.

You made these stories happen. **Thank you.**



Gianni and Terry

EVEN IF WE FIGHT, ONE OF US WILL COME UP AND SAY SORRY

Gianni (G): When I first came to CV I was the new kid, and some of the kids gave me a hard time. But after a few days Terry stood up for me.

Terry (T): I just asked those kids how they would feel in his situation, and they left him alone after that. We knew pretty much right away that we wanted to be roommates.

G: Basically, we both have the same mindset. We love books, video games, and Kung Fu movies.

T: We mostly love to laugh, but sometimes we stay up arguing.

G: Terry says Bruce Lee is better but I think Ip is the best. Ip is Bruce Lee's trainer, he taught him everything he knows!

T: I try to tell Gianni Ip was older, all Bruce had to do was kick Ip in his old hip and it's over!

G: But even if we fight one of us will come up and say sorry, we always make up.

T: Have you ever heard of a thing called frenemies? Well that's us. Sometimes we're enemies, but after a couple hours we'll be friends again. We'll definitely be roommates as long as we're here.

G: We agreed that after we both get discharged, we'll still be friends. First, we'll hang out at my house, and then I'll visit Terry for a sleepover.



Miss Meggie

I'M THE MOTHER FIGURE

I've worked at Children's Village for 18 years, and almost from the start I was with the younger boys. I'm the mother figure in the cottage. The boys know they can come and tell me anything, ask me for anything. It may take me a little time, but if there's a way I'll get it done.

I think of the boys here as my kids. I tell them I give my daughter tough love sometimes, and I do with them too. I'm teaching them things I teach her – how to make their beds, separate laundry, fold their clothes, do their homework.

Christopher is a smart kid. Sometimes he'll tell me he doesn't have any homework, but I know all the other boys do. Then he'll laugh and pull it out of his pocket, folded up and hidden from me. He's a fanatic about cars. He told me he's going to buy me a Lamborghini when he's older!

Miss Meggie oversees Rose Cottage, which is home to the youngest children on our campus. These children come to us generally because they have been abused or neglected and need more therapeutic care than a foster family can provide.



I WANT MY KIDS TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES

I was put in foster care when I was 12. I was mad, hurt, and pretty scared. When I think of my mom back then, what I remember are broken promises.

But my first foster mom, Harriette, really helped me. I was having a tough time at school and she helped me figure things out, helped me get my head back in the game. She even homeschooled me for a while until I was ready to go back.

Another foster mom, Jeri, she's still in my life. I come to her to talk about everything. She helped me become a mom, a really good mom. I want my kids to believe in themselves, to know that they can always come to me no matter how hard life gets.

Parents make mistakes – I know that now. Having kids of my own helped heal things a little with my mom. We're working on it, but I have hope for us.

Miss Meggie oversees Rose Cottage, which is home to the youngest children on our campus. These children come to us generally because they have been abused or neglected and need more therapeutic care than a foster family can provide.

Monique



I'M BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS...

I'm performing soon in *Sweeney Todd!* This is a dream. When I heard about it I made it my mission to be selected.

I was in some elementary school plays, but nothing like this and never a musical. It's fun learning the songs and the choreography. If I wasn't at CV I would never have been able to do something like this. I'm so excited.

I'm enjoying the whole thing. I'm building relationships with the other actors. Rehearsing with them has opened a door, made me more comfortable talking with people I don't know.

I have a lot of family coming to the shows. I aim to impress them. I think I'll be a little nervous, but I know I can do it. When I'm out there, everything will go well.

Vincent is a resident on our Dobbs Ferry campus. The Irvington Clocktower Players generously offered a full scholarship for one of our residents, and Vincent enthusiastically lobbied to be the recipient.

Vincent



Chandini

THEIR THANKFULNESS MEANT SO MUCH TO ME.

I've been a volunteer Literacy Mentor at Children's Village for the past four years.

When I started, my goal was to help provide some of the kids at CV with a safe space where they could be curious, free, and open to learning.

I was really worried that students wouldn't want to open up and tell their true stories to me. Now that I've been working with the kids regularly for a few years and we've gotten to know each other, their openness has been such a pleasant surprise!

This year, on the first day back at CV from my summer break, the whole class was really emotional. A few boys told me how grateful they were for this program. Maybe it was the extra academic care they were receiving, or having time dedicated to helping them improve, but their thankfulness meant so much to me. I was inspired to try my hardest for those kids who want to be helped and succeed.

Chandini Singla and her fellow high school volunteers come weekly and engage with our younger residents in activities designed to be fun and academic. Thanks to a fundraising drive Chandini did in December, the group will be taking field trips in the spring.

The program has been in operation for 15 years--with student groups from local high schools such as Irvington, Ardsley, Edgemont, Scarsdale, Fordham, and Masters.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The ultimate goal of all of our programs is to prepare children to be successful as adults. To that end, we track education, work experience, family reunification, housing stability, arrests, and other measures that indicate how well kids are doing. The following are some of our recent outcomes:

KEEPING CHILDREN WITH FAMILIES:



of children in our preventive programs stayed with families



of teens in our intensive family support program remained safely in their family home



of teens in our homeless shelters were discharged to a safe & stable living situation

KEEPING TEENS OUT OF TROUBLE:



of young men on probation in our community mentoring program avoided re-arrest



of teens in our intensive family support program abstained from criminal behavior



of teens involved with the justice system and part of our Harlem support program avoided re-arrest

HELPING YOUNG ADULTS BECOME INDEPENDENT:



of Westchester teens in our employment program maintained a job the whole summer -- and 80% worked extra weeks



of young adults in our supportive housing moved into their own permanent apartment



of former foster teens in our aftercare program are in school and/or working





Our mission is to work 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. The Children's Village is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and the Better Business Bureau and was the gold prize winner of the New York Nonprofit Excellence Award.

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