



Jumping Into Uncertainty and Adapting to COVID-19

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When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit, employees at The Children's Village had to adapt greatly to find new ways to serve youth and families. With over 1,400 staff on the frontline and over 400 youth in residential care, a new normal needed to be implemented that included use of personal protective equipment, housing in family-like clusters, education about safety and responsibility, and new ways of programming. Youth and families struggled and continue to struggle with basic

needs. Children were forced out of school and needed technology, internet access, and virtual tutoring. Thanks to incredible donors and staff, CV delivered laptops and tablets, food and medication, formula and diapers, and much-needed cash for supplies to our families. Programs were able to pivot quickly and creatively find new ways to do their work.

[Skip to page four](#) to see how three programs are adapting to implement a new normal.

CV is Committed to Racial Justice and Black Lives Matter:

“The Children's Village will do all we can to fight racism. We will speak clearly. We will act and lead by example. We will work hard to win the hearts and minds of those in power and we will do better as we urge into action those who speak of change but refuse to take the risks that are required to make change happen. Most importantly, we will be an organization that provides an example of what inclusion looks and feels like. Winning this battle will require all of us -- all colors, all faiths, and all people.”

- Dr. Jeremy C. Kohomban

CV Rallies for Change in Dobbs Ferry

Hundreds gathered at Dobbs Ferry Waterfront Park for a Black Lives Matter rally on June 4th. The rally was organized by seniors from Dobbs Ferry High School, and featured many speakers from CV, in addition to local politicians and New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. People came together not just to mourn the recent death of George Floyd, but also to advocate for major systemic change in this country.

CV President & CEO Dr. Jeremy Kohomban remarked that "Ahmaud, Breonna, George... these are just names in a long list of names that will continue if we do not reform our institutions. When cultures are positive and transparent, it pushes us to do better. When cultures are self-serving and opaque, it protects bad behavior."

As the man responsible for creating and maintaining the culture at CV, Jeremy knows this fight well. In a statement after the rally he said that at CV we "will do all we can to fight racism. We will urge into action those who speak of change but refuse to take the risks that



are required to make change happen. Most importantly, we will be an organization that provides an example of what inclusion looks and feels like."



The Work Ahead

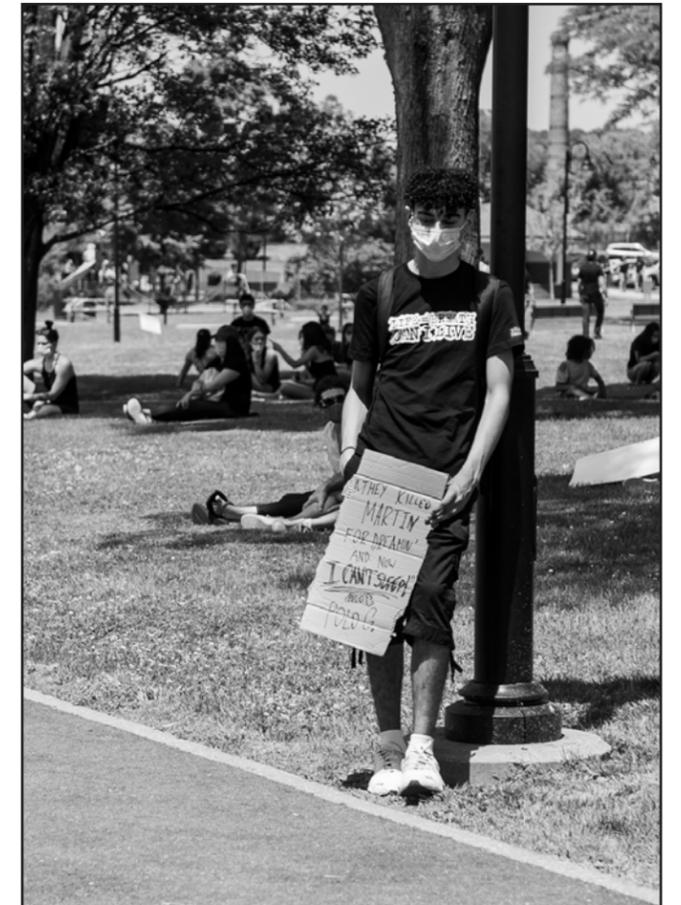
Despite the great strides that the UIR committee has made, there is much more to be done. At the Black Lives Matter rally in Dobbs Ferry, CV's Adoption and Foster Care office manager Marjorie Zuniga inspired the crowd. "Our willingness to show up today and stand in solidarity is a testament to the need for change. And there is much more work to be done. We must continue to stand together and fight for justice." Jeremy echoed her words. "The United States is an aspirational democracy, it's all about being a place where we can all be equal. But we haven't yet gotten there. It is my responsibility, and that of my generation, to create a future that is better than the one that was given to us. We can create new history every day."

Creating a Culture of Inclusion

In 2010, CV's Undoing Institutionalized Racism (UIR) committee was founded. The UIR committee was convened to examine and address inequities in CV's internal systems and its work with families, while also acting as advocates with external systems. The committee recognizes that race relations are important in institutionalized settings, and provides a setting where race, ethnic differences, color and boundaries are addressed head on. In the years since its founding, the UIR committee has effected major change at CV by leading workshops on disproportionality, developing bilingual positions, calling for transparency in promotion and hiring practices, providing workshops on trauma and racism, developing protocols for police involvement with our youth, and much more.



CV staff members gathered in support of Black Lives Matter at the Dobbs Ferry rally. Dr. Kohomban (R), was the first of many CV speakers on the day.



Adapting to COVID-19 cont.



Thanks to our generous donors, all of our youth in residential care have the personal protective equipment they need.

CV's Adoption and Foster Care Department (AFC) has transitioned to virtual support as the main method of interaction with families. Nothing replaces in-person interaction, and that still happens when necessary, but now potential foster parents are able to easily apply online and do all of their trainings and home assessments virtually, with the same rigorous standards applied. Staff is available 24/7 for foster parent support, and families are also being provided with educational tools like "virtual trips" to museums. Unfortunately, with the courts currently closed and very few virtual hearings happening, adoptions are not being processed at the same rate they were before the pandemic. But the AFC team is making the most of it and providing the creativity and personalized support that families need right now.

The Inwood House Division typically serves over 25 schools in NYC by providing after school support, college and individual counseling, and sex education through its Teen Choice and School Success Programs. The programs have

a high success rate with helping teens graduate and gain acceptance to college. Despite school closings, these programs continue to operate virtually, with graduation and college acceptance rates remaining steady. CV employee Gurpreet Grewal, who was responsible for transitioning almost all programming to online platforms like Google Classroom, said "I've been so pleased with how effective the online meetings have been. We've actually had an increase in attendance, and our teens have been even more engaged." It's possible that some students may actually be

more comfortable having tough conversations in a virtual setting rather than in person.

CV's Transformative Mentoring Programs use [Credible Messengers](#) to provide stability and offer guidance to youth. Mentor Hassan ElGendi says that despite COVID-19, "young people still need support, guidance, mentorship, and access to resources." But what that looks like has changed. Mentors are now helping with educating on social distancing and cleanliness, sourcing food and employment opportunities, and adapting how they interact with youth. They are hosting weekly Zoom calls and fostering a real sense of community virtually. Carl Johnson, Division Director, says that "all of our futures depend on this. We must protect one another, now more than ever."

The needs of staff, youth and families are changing every day with the pandemic, but CV continues to meet their needs creatively, compassionately and effectively.



Our foster care team provides creative ideas for projects that kids can do at home with their families.



Our expert medical team has kept CV up to date with the latest protocols throughout the pandemic.



Distributing Fresh Direct boxes of food to families at the Drew Hamilton Community Center in Harlem.



Youth live in family-like clusters and wear masks when social distancing is not possible.

We hear the term "unprecedented" all the time with COVID-19. But the words we hear from our youth are "scary" and "uncertain". It is our job to create a sense of normalcy as best we can. You're generous gifts have helped us to make our kids feel safer, secure, and cared for. We thank you so much.

Nothing Can Stop the Class of 2020!

For Greenburgh Eleven, the public school on CV's Dobbs Ferry campus, graduation looked a little different this year due to COVID-19. With a full in-person graduation not possible, the school filmed their program ahead of time and published it live on their website. It featured inspiring speeches from teachers and staff, and video messages from the graduates.

[Click here to watch the 2020 Commencement](#)

For the CV residents who graduated, their cottages and the recreation department threw a socially distanced party with a DJ, gift baskets, and food trucks to create a special festive environment.

With having to shift from learning in-person to using virtual tutoring, all of the graduates should be applauded for adapting and completing their degrees in difficult circumstances!



Hoop Dreams Come True

For one graduate and CV resident Kevoy, this day was even more special. At the beginning of this year, he told his CV mentors that he had a dream of playing college basketball, but it felt unreachable. And yet in March and after an extremely difficult season, Kevoy led the Varsity Basketball team, who rallied in the playoffs, to win the Section 1 Class D title, earning MVP of the game. It was such a great achievement for the team and Kevoy, but he still didn't know what that meant for his future. Thankfully his hard work paid off, and on graduation day Kevoy signed to play for SUNY Fulton-Montgomery Community College in the Fall. In a live signing session over FaceTime, Kevoy's new coaches expressed how impressed they are with how far he's come on and off the court this year.



Surrounded by his coaches and teachers, friends, mom, and CV staff, he signed with a big smile!

Congratulations to Kevoy and all of the graduates, who worked so hard for this day.



Engage with CV!

Want to do more or get the latest information about CV? Here are some ways you can support and get more involved over the coming months:

Events are changing due to COVID-19, so make sure to check out our [events page](#) for the latest information on your favorite upcoming events like the Sally Paddle Tennis Tournament and the Masquerade Gala.

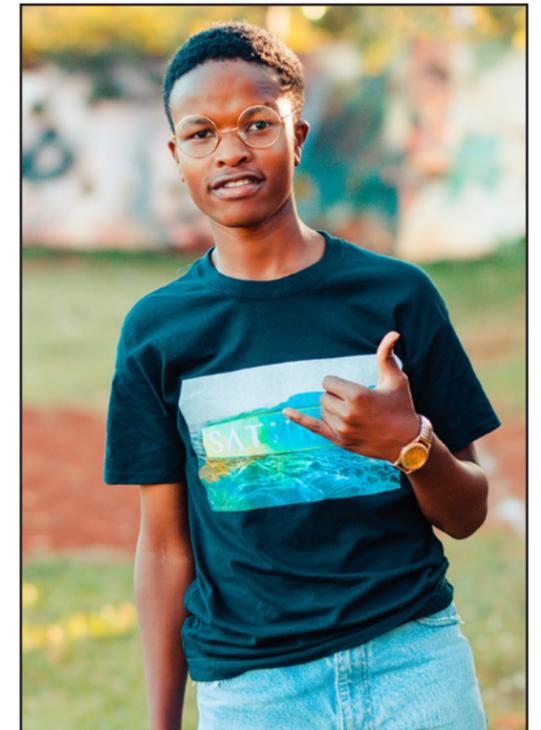
Read the latest press and advocacy on the [CV news page](#).

Thank a CV staff member for their dedication to youth and families using [our online form](#).

Visit our resources page if you or someone you know needs information or support related to COVID-19.

To offer support specifically related to COVID-19, visit our [Ways to Help Now](#) page.

[Make a donation](#) on our website.



Thank you!



Sponsorships are available

[Click here for information](#) or contact RoseAnn Magdaleno at rmagdaleno@childrensvillage.org or 914-693-0600 ext 1224