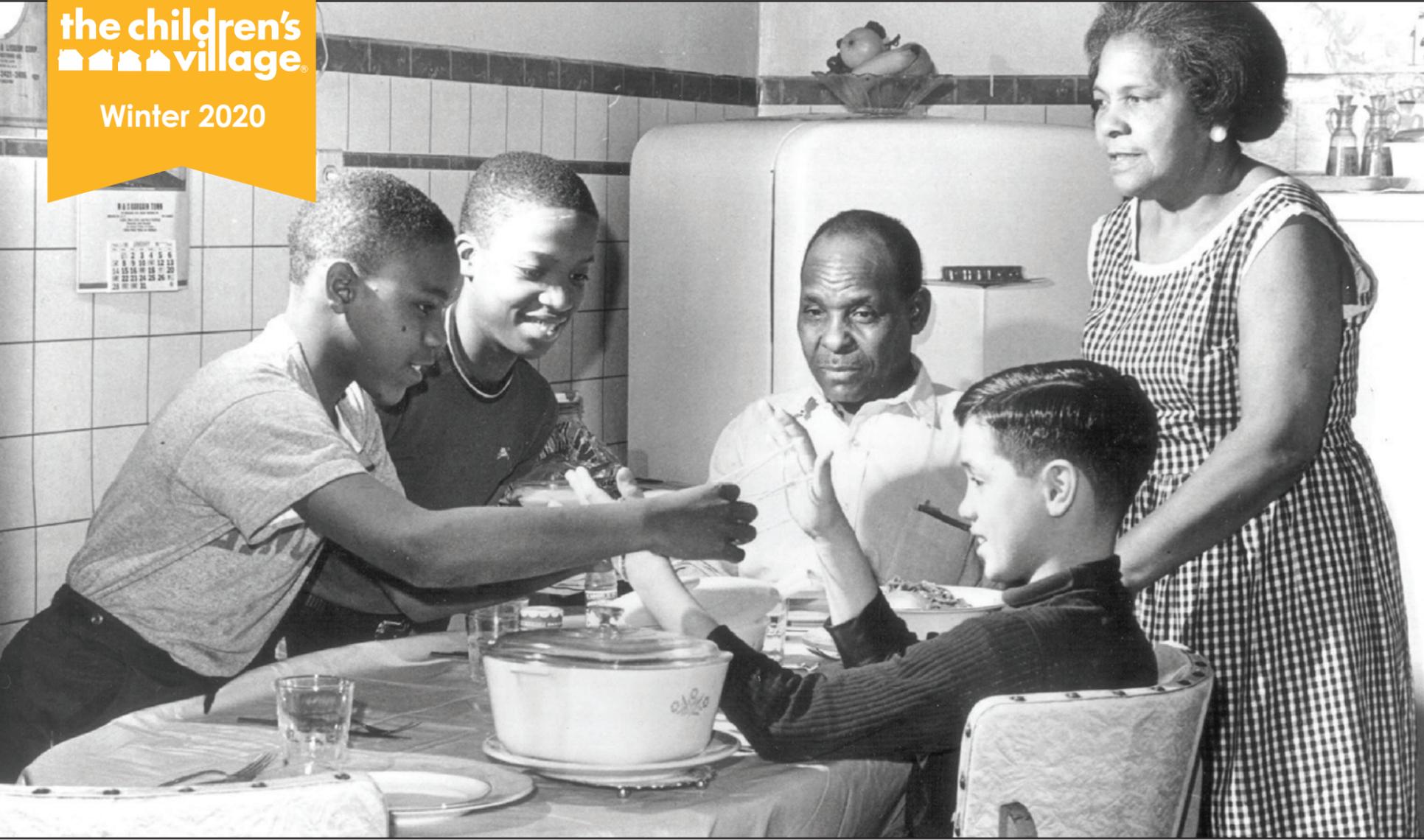


# News from the Village

the children's  
village

Winter 2020



*CV cottage parents having Thanksgiving, circa early 1960s.*

## Generous Donors Provide a Thanksgiving to be Thankful For

Thanksgiving has always been important at The Children's Village. It is a time of year when we think of family and loved ones and cherish spending time together. In the 1960s, some of our cottages were staffed by couples, who created family-style Thanksgiving meals for the residents. Today, we are able to provide Thanksgiving meals for nearly 500 youth and families thanks to our generous donors and community partners.

*Read more on page 3*

## Creating a Beautiful Blended Family Through Foster Care at CV

In a typical year, Aileen Loran throws what she calls the "Blended Family Cookout", bringing together over 100 people for a giant celebration of family and belonging. With cookout t-shirts, plenty of food, fun and games, it's the picturesque family barbeque – but it means so much more.

Ms. Loran experienced the foster care system firsthand as a child. At one point, she temporarily stayed with a foster mother who

“Every child deserves a strong support network of birth parents, foster parents, friends, and role models – the bigger the better”



had 6 birth children and adopted 6 more. She loved the feeling of having siblings and being part of a big family -- she even speaks fondly of doing family chores! That feeling of unconditional belonging is something she always wanted to give to children growing up in foster care.

So as soon as she was able to, she joined The Children's Village as a foster parent. Over the past 20 years, Ms. Loran has fostered over 12

children – some of whom now have children of their own that she remains in contact with. She is relentless in her service alongside CV to keep the birth families actively involved. She knows all too well that many youth in foster care do not have a network of family and friends, so she is determined to create that for all of the children who have become part of her life.

*Story continues on page 4*

## “Nothing About Us, Without Us!” An AmeriCorps Grant Takes Bravehearts to the Next Level

The Bravehearts at The Children’s Village are a youth-led organization comprised of and staffed by those with lived experience in the child welfare system. Living the mantra “nothing about us, without us”, Bravehearts empowers youth to use their lived experience to promote change in systems and communities by being authentic mentors, also known as credible messengers. Credible messengers are extremely effective at CV, with rates of youth avoiding re-arrest and successfully transitioning to adulthood steadily improving because of them. Their success has not gone unnoticed.

The Bravehearts were awarded a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps) to develop a new initiative: the Braveheart AmeriCorps Mentors (BAM). Beginning in early 2021, 26 Braveheart AmeriCorps

members will utilize their lived experience as young people aging out of foster care to mentor others who need guidance.

With over 15,000 locations and 75,000 members a year, AmeriCorps has been meeting critical needs in communities across the Nation for decades -- but they haven’t had a lived experience and mentorship approach that looks quite like what Bravehearts offers. Jessica Grimm, founder and Director of Bravehearts, says that “BAM mentors will now focus on empowering and engaging the youth voice in the communities they serve. Mentees will set their own goals and work over the year to achieve them. These goals include improving family relationships, creating a network of support, getting a college or technical degree, and improving economic opportunity.”

Partnering with AmeriCorps also allows the Bravehearts to expand into 6 new counties: the Bronx, Manhattan, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, and Dutchess. At The Children’s Village, we are thrilled! We have long invested in expanding credible messengers, and this new AmeriCorps Bravehearts partnership will take the lived experience model to the next level. It is wonderful to see the program get the recognition and value it deserves.



### Evidence Supports Credible Messengers

An Urban Institute study of CV’s ARCHES program showed that using Credible Messengers as mentors:

- Reduced one-year felony reconviction rate by over two-thirds
- Reduced two-year felony reconviction rate by over half, with especially profound impacts for the youngest program participants.

[Source: Urban Institute research report: Arches Transformative Mentoring Program](#)

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## The Harlem Yogi: His Lived Experience is Transforming Lives

“All people need help navigating the constant flux of life. For kids in foster care or experiencing trauma, the need for mindfulness is even more important” says Demetrius Napolitano, tenant at CV’s Harlem Apartments.

Demetrius was in foster care from the time he was a toddler. Over the years, he was diagnosed with countless emotional and mental disorders, and lived in many different homes. At one point, when he was facing juvenile detention, Demetrius decided that he was going to do

everything in his power to get out of the foster care system and become successful. His determination and support from his mentors and role models along the way helped him graduate high school, but like all young people he still needed support to transition to adulthood. Demetrius found the WAY program, which helped him move into his own beautiful apartment in CV’s Harlem building. While there he earned a BA from NYU – an amazing accomplishment! But he still felt unsettled, and sought a natural way to deal with focusing his mind. He started a GoFundMe campaign, and raised enough money to embark on a 9-month journey to India to study yoga, meditation, and mindfulness. He just returned from his trip and is teaching what he has learned to youth in NYC, including at The Children’s Village.

A 2018 study by the NIH indicates that mindfulness-based practices can be extremely effective for people who have experienced trauma. In foster care, we know all too well that removing

children from family can be a traumatic experience. Having lived through that himself, Demetrius wants to share what he has learned with kids who may not have the tools they want and need.

“At a young age I was saddled with depression, anxiety, and deep-seated insecurities, like so many youth in foster care. I believe they trust me and we can connect on a different level to find their own healing and awakening. It’s hard not to feel neglected, forgotten, and unable to focus when you are without family – I want to share the tools we have within us to address these feelings.”

Demetrius is in the process of forming his own nonprofit called “Fostering Meditation”, so that he can formalize his teachings and reach more youth in the NY metro area. He continues to serve alongside The Children’s Village, helping youth navigate the challenges of being in and exiting foster care.



## A Thanksgiving to be Thankful For cont.

Thanks to donors like you, we provided nearly 500 complete Thanksgiving meals for our families, and dozens of additional turkeys to our strategic partners in the community this year. When time was running out to meet our goal, Temple Beth Shalom in Hasting-on-Hudson asked how much more we needed, and the next day a donation arrived that ensured all of our families who requested assistance would have a beautiful Thanksgiving meal. The Temple has been a valuable community partner for years.

“The relationship between Temple Beth Shalom and Children’s Village goes back over 40 years!” said Rabbi Edward Schechter, who has been at the Temple since the Thanksgiving drive began. “Our high school students would play sports and chess with residents of one of the cottages, and The Children’s Village kids would join us here at the synagogue for pizza on Wednesday nights. And the Turkey Drive has been such an important part of our friendship; may it continue for many years to come!”



“The relationship between Temple Beth Shalom and Children’s Village goes back over 40 years!”

Today, over 100 CV families are fed through the Temple’s work alone. We are so grateful for all of our local supporters. Special thanks to Morgan Stanley and The Masters School community, who donate and organize drives for Thanksgiving year after year. Thanks to the outpouring of support from our community, this Thanksgiving was yet another to be thankful for.



Valerie Howell took off her Supervisor hat and put on her Chef hat to create a family-style Thanksgiving meal for all of the residents at Maya’s Place. Times, people, and programs have changed, but we still strive to create that sense of belonging and family that every child deserves.

**Thanks to all of our generous donors and volunteers, there are plenty of smiles to go around this holiday season!**

There are so many ways to make a difference for our youth and families during the holidays, and throughout the year. You can organize a gift drive with friends and family – where you can use our Amazon wish lists to keep everything simple and organized. You can adopt a cottage or program, donating gifts or sponsoring a group meal. You can send actual items to our gifts for giving drive, so that our youth have something to bring home and give to their families on Holidays or Birthdays. And you can donate gift cards to teen clothing stores, restaurants, and the like.

To learn more about volunteer and giving opportunities at the Village, contact our Director of Volunteer Services, Amy DelliPaoli, at [adellipaoli@childrensvillage.org](mailto:adellipaoli@childrensvillage.org).

*If you would like to add CV to your holiday tradition, fill out and return the form below with the enclosed envelope.*



I want to give holiday cheer to children and families in need!

Make your donation go twice as far. Please check to see if your company offers a matching gift program.

Donate securely online at: [childrensvillage.org/donate](https://childrensvillage.org/donate)

Enclosed is my gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

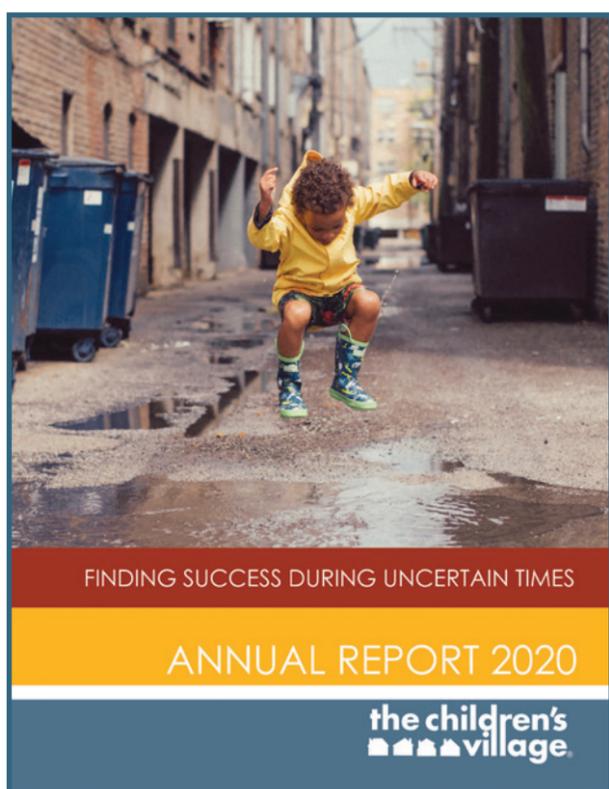
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: The Children’s Village  
Credit card: AmEx Visa MasterCard Discover

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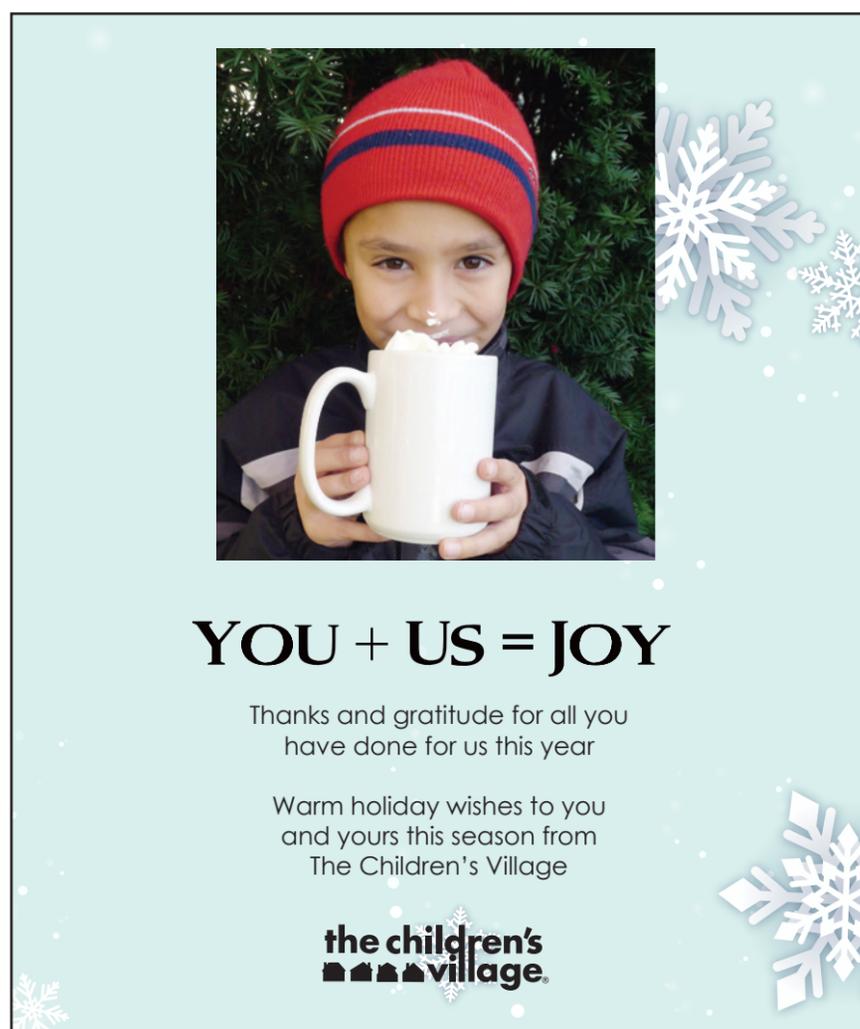
To volunteer, donate, or get involved, visit our website at [www.childrensvillage.org](http://www.childrensvillage.org) or follow us on social media @ChildrensVllg.



### You made a difference!

Your support is critical to our work. Together we can look towards 2021 with a sense of optimism and hope. You can read the annual report online at

[childrensvillage.org/annualreport](http://childrensvillage.org/annualreport)



### Beautiful Blended family cont.

“Every child deserves a strong support network of birth parents, foster parents, friends, and role models – the bigger the better” says Ms. Loran. “That’s why the blended family cookout started, and long may it continue.”

During the pandemic, Ms. Loran even purchased a vacation home outside of New York City so that the kids had more room to play and do their remote learning. And what does having more space inspire her to do? Foster another child of course!

“How can I just sit back and not give another child a chance? Who am I to say no? I feel it’s my duty to say yes.”

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent, visit our website at [www.childrensvillage.org](http://www.childrensvillage.org).

*Aileen Loran and her daughter at the 2017 blended family cookout. Ms. Loran hosts all of her foster children, grandchildren, and their birth parents for a day of family fun each year.*

