

Summer 2021



Soulemon and Esther Foudja were issued a Proclamation by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer for their commitment to fostering teenagers. They have welcomed over 35 into their home so far!

Foster Parents Honored for Their Commitment to Caring

“They are my own children and they know that. We never called them foster kids.”

Over Mother’s Day Weekend, 5 foster parents, also known as “care givers”, were honored for setting great examples for their communities at CV’s Harlem Office on 127th and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard.

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer presented the honorees with proclamations acknowledging their service, and was on-hand to congratulate them. The nominations ranged from “Rookie of the Year” to “Kinship Guardian” and “Resilient Teen Foster Parent” awards. One of the parents, Sharon Johnson, was recognized as the Longest Serving Foster Parent. Over the course of more than 30 years, she has welcomed more than 50 children into her family’s home.

“They all come back to visit me, even teenagers, little kids, I’ve had all ages,” Ms. Johnson said. “I believe I’ll be caring for these children all my life. They are my own children and they know that.”

We never called them foster kids. They are our kids. We treated everybody the same as a family. No separation,” Johnson said.

Tara Stukes, Director of Adoption and Foster Care, said that “In the pandemic, people were asked to social distance and not take strangers into their homes and kind of separate themselves. But we still needed homes for so many young people. These parents have continued to take in children, they are incredible.”

Rebecca Collier, who is a first-time foster parent, says she had been thinking about fostering for some time. She decided to make it official after learning that the need was even greater during the pandemic.

Continued page 2

Foster Parents cont.

“Now, I have the most delightful little 2-year-old staying with me, who is the biggest challenge and biggest joy of my life. I moved to a bigger apartment in an area with great pre-schools, I am 100% committed.” Ms. Collier said.

At CV, foster parents and caregivers are true partners. Children belong with family whenever possible, and these foster parents are providing the unconditional love and belonging that every child deserves.



CV Launches Tech Hub to Provide New Digital Opportunities

“I love learning about computer programming and technology. It’s a great path to channel my talent.”

Technology has become an increasingly prevalent part of our lives over the past few years, especially as we have embraced remote learning and programs throughout the pandemic. CV’s Recreation Department, which runs WAY works sites designed to give young people real paid work experience, knew that it was critical to bring in cutting edge technology and programs to meet the needs of our young people.

In February of 2021, CV launched the “Tech Hub”, a space for young people to learn more about the digital world and what kind of career opportunities may be available. Young people come in to learn and practice skills like computer literacy, photo and video editing, coding, gaming, virtual reality, and even robotics. They can also use the space to get after school homework help and practice their typing skills.



The Tech Hub is not just about career opportunities, it can also be a therapeutic outlet. Khadim, who you can regularly find in the Tech Hub, says “I love learning about computer programming and technology.



Raven Shares Her Lived Experience to Help Others

“This book was written to shed light on the foster care experience for children . . . You are not alone!”

Raven Washington spent years in and out of foster care and dealing with homelessness while she sought a permanent place of love and belonging. She didn't want to be on the street or in the system, but her circumstances at home left her no choice.

It was incredibly difficult, but after years of instability she was hired by CV at age 21 as a Direct Care staff member working in a cottage, and today serves as a Behavior Specialist in the Adoption and Foster Care Division. She makes an impact by using her lived experience to help others. “I'm supposed to be helping these kids and be a good example. I feel blessed to share my own experiences with them.”

In 2019, Raven took inspiration from her life to write and self-publish a children's book, “Because I Have No Shoes”— a short story based on the perceptions of a 7 year-old boy and his understanding of why he is entering the foster care system, and what that process was like for him. She says “this book was written to shed light on the foster care experience for children and their perception of why and how they sometimes feel going through this process. You are not alone!”

Raven continues to put her story into writing, and she also aspires to one day start her own nonprofit working with kids in Foster Care. As she puts it, “my cure is working with these kids.”

Raven was one of a few key voices in CV's 170th anniversary Milestone Video, outlining its history, current work, and future. [Click here to watch!](#)

YOU CAN OWN YOUR OWN COPY OF
“BECAUSE I HAVE NO SHOES”



[PURCHASE IT HERE](#) FROM
AMAZON.

[CLICK HERE](#) TO GO
THROUGH AMAZON SMILE
AND BE SURE TO SET THE
CHILDREN'S VILLAGE AS
YOUR PREFERRED CHARITY.

Staying Connected During Covid with Literacy Skill Building Fun

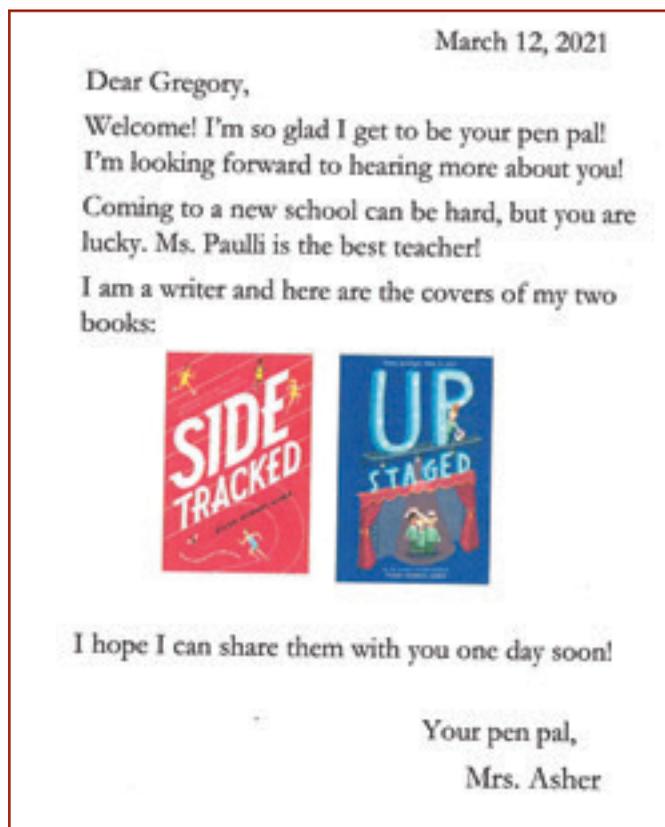
“The beauty of it was that we also got the kids writing!”

Remote learning has proven difficult for kids at CV – it lacks the individualized attention that many students need. But the Pen Pal Program has been serving as a fantastic supplement to keep young people engaged.

Sue Meigs, Director of the Open Door Library Program, explains that “the Pen Pal program made it possible for the volunteers and kids to really engage with each other—on paper rather than on screens—and to have the one-on-one interaction that’s fundamental to the Open Door and FLY programs. The volunteers put an enormous amount of energy and thought into the program, and the kids responded even more strongly than expected to the special, individual attention. The beauty of it was that we also got the kids writing!”

When the Pen Pal Program was introduced, all of CV’s literacy volunteers in the school — the teachers in the FLY reading-intervention program, led by Joanne Levine, and Open Door’s reading volunteers — signed on to be pen pals. The idea was for the pen-pal deliveries to serve as ‘virtual visits’ from the volunteers — taking the place of the Open Door and FLY reading programs until the volunteers could return.

The teachers in the school incorporated the letters being sent and received into the reading and writing curriculum for the day. The volunteers



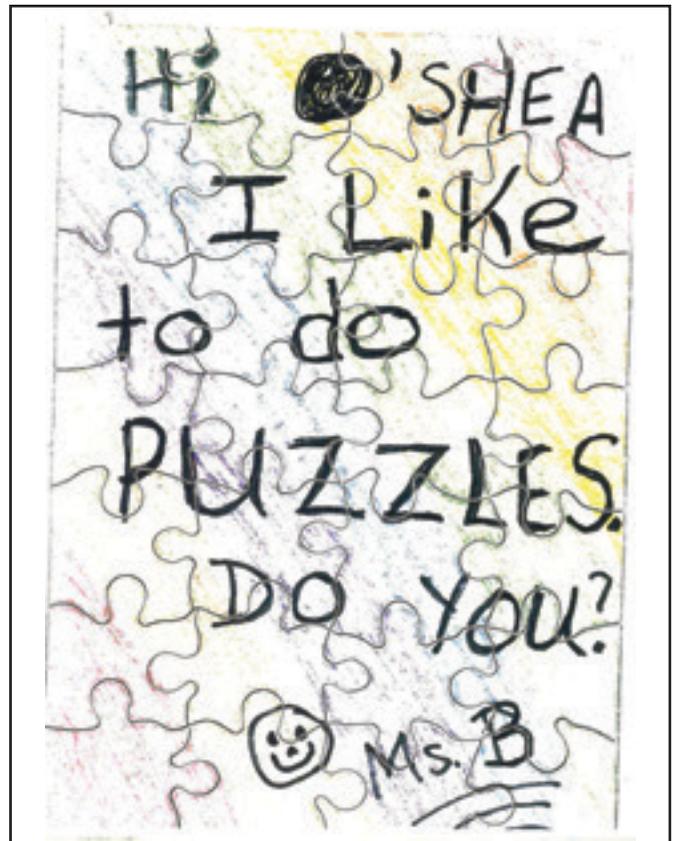
were creative with their letters — sending poems, little books, jokes, and more — and the kids would have the teachers’ help and supervision in the classroom to read and respond.

Each week the pen pals dropped off their letters to be delivered to the classrooms. This always included a different activity such as sticker books, connect-the-dot drawings, WordFinds, and new books for the kids to dive into. Each child had his own big envelope with his name on it to open with a letter and an activity inside.

Despite not being able to meet in person, the students have really enjoyed staying connected in this way.

Thank you to all of the volunteers, teachers, and students who brought the Pen Pal Program to light!





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

Elijah has All the Ingredients to Build a Very Exciting Future

In May, CV's Chef Kelli Scott transformed the café in the Lanza Activities Center into a fine dining kitchen and restaurant. The boys who are in the café work program, one of our CV's WAY Works career training sites, helped research and develop a restaurant plan for months, and created a menu with seasonal ingredients and sophistication.

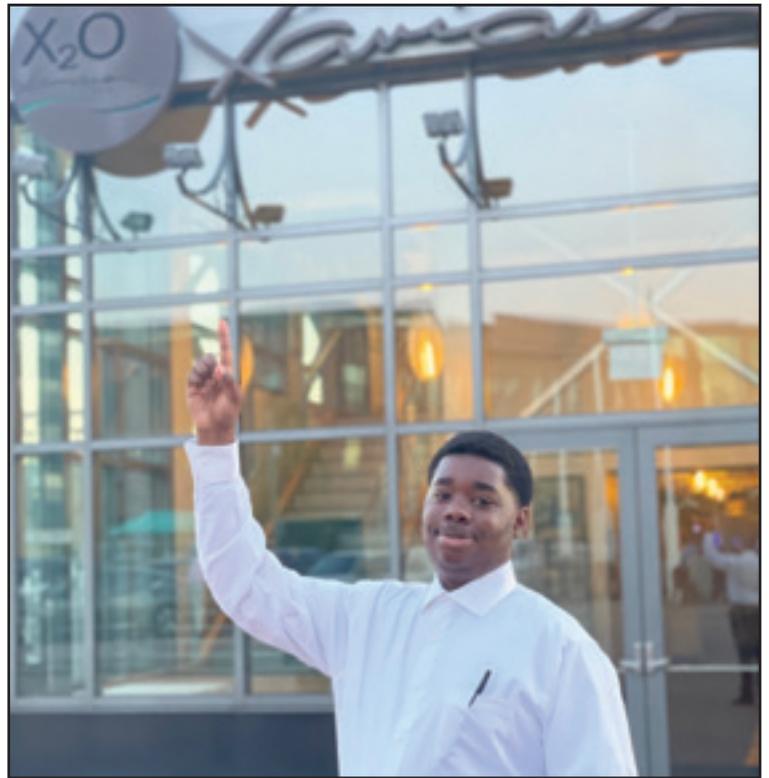
Through this process the team learned about batch cooking, braising, costing, classical preparations, and most importantly the "dance" – how one maneuvers in sync with others in a restaurant kitchen.

To celebrate the grand opening of their new restaurant, "De 'Laanz", Chef Kelli took the boys to X20, a beautiful glass-enclosed restaurant on the Yonkers pier with globally influenced food.

One young man, Elijah, couldn't wait to try the food at X20, but couldn't imagine where this meal might take him. He not only enjoyed a great meal, he also asked for and took a work application back to CV with him.

When Elijah went to drop off his application, the manager asked to sit down with him right away. After asking a few questions and having a good conversation, Elijah was invited to come in the next week for training!

One of Elijah's mentors at CV, Jose, took him on a shopping trip to get him geared up and confident for starting work. Working at an



upscale restaurant and utilizing all of the skills he has learned over the last few months is a major jump for Elijah, and everyone at CV is celebrating!

We're so proud of the initiative that Elijah took to make this happen. He has all the ingredients to build a very exciting future.

Tech Hub Cont.

It's a great path to channel my talent into. I feel like some of the anger I had before was clouding my judgment, but now its going away." He uses the Tech Hub as one of his coping tools in addition to the weight room, basketball team, and café work program.

CV is grateful to the Garden of Dreams Foundation and others for providing the funding for this project. Their support enabled CV to

create the space and launch a program that is truly driven by the interests of the young people who use it.

We're thrilled to see what's next for our young entrepreneurs, web developers, digital artists, cyber security consultants, and more. The sky is the limit for these young creative minds!