

# News from the Village

the children's  
village

Winter 2021



OUT FOR A WINTER RIDE

Staff at The Children's Village have always worked hard to make sure each child has a joyful Holiday season. Being separated from family - especially during the Holidays - is so difficult. CV will never replace family, but with the support of donors like you, we help deliver the excitement of the Holidays and create happy memories. Pictured above, a CV staffer takes a group of children for a chilly ride around the Dobbs Ferry campus as a fun, but cold, treat. Inset: This good dog is one of the earliest canine therapists to work at CV!

*Read more about the Holidays at the Village on page 3*

## Students Find Their Passion in the Café – Next Stop: Inwood!

In 2008, the café work program was founded on the Dobbs Ferry campus to help young people find their passion and develop skills. The program helps young people like Akhi with communication skills, relationship building, and job-readiness, and helps them discover a passion for cooking they might not have been exposed to previously.

Students are taught menu planning, costing, healthy portion control and etiquette, and exit the program with a ServSafe certification that allows them to start training for better paying restaurant positions. "My favorite part is seeing the look on their faces that

"My favorite part is seeing the look on their faces that says wow, I did that!"

says wow, I did that! It's rewarding to know that they've learned it, done it themselves and mastered it" says Chef Kelli Scott, who runs the cafe program. The café has also been a very effective outlet for helping young people manage their emotions. "We don't have as many behavioral issues in the kitchen. Cooking has a way of doing that. With cooking, you have to communicate and talk things out."

Akhi, who is a sophomore in high school and a CV resident, says that cooking has helped him build friendships. "It's more than cooking. It's about being one with your peers. You need a team to help you out." When Akhi arrived at CV in May, he had barely been in a kitchen before, but now he wants to work in the restaurant industry after graduation. Thanks to Chef Scott, he'll be prepared to do just that.

*Story continues on page 4*

*Under the guidance of Chef Scott, Aaron prepares the noodles and sauce for their chicken piccata dish.*



## Support Instills Hope: Why I am Driven to Make a Difference by Eunice Escudero, MS, LMFT

My family emigrated from Chile in the 70's. My grandparents found it challenging to navigate their new life in New York: the language, the customs, and the different cultures. Needless to say, they struggled to build a support system. Not knowing how to speak English left my grandparents at a great disadvantage. My grandfather struggled to land a decent job that paid enough to sustain a family of 5 (my grandparents and 3 daughters). My grandmother struggled with locating a church that felt "like home." My mom was not fitting in in High School and experienced bullying. All of these stressors resulted in several concerning behaviors such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and truancy within my grandparent's family structure.

"I could finally step in and help families with similar struggles like my family navigate their system, build a community, develop better skills, and teach families that they are greater than the sum of their parts."

I often wonder, if my family had access to therapeutic services that helped prevent these behaviors and involvement in systems, would it have changed the course of their lives? Perhaps my mom would have graduated high school if she had a support to guide her parents with developing skills like implementing a behavior plan and developing a stronger home to school link. Perhaps my mom

would not have found marriage to be her only hope for financial stability. Perhaps she would have felt empowered enough to bravely end her relationship with my father when he battered and bruised her countless times.



Support instills hope. My grandparents eventually built their community, learned the language (Spanglish), assimilated (lost their native accent to fit in, changed their culinary diet to fit in [more rice and beans, burgers and fries, and pizza - less Chilean cazuelas, empanadas, asados and porros con riendas]). Eventually they found hope, although it came with great sacrifice.

When I learned about Multisystemic Therapy — a community-based program that helps families manage and navigate not only their children's challenging behaviors, but all the other systemic drivers contributing to these behaviors — I knew I had found my niche! I could finally step in and help families with similar struggles like my family navigate their system, build a community, develop better skills, and teach families that they are greater than the sum of their parts.

It is almost serendipitous that I am working in a field with such an effective community-based program, where I often feel like I am making a great impact in our Latin community. Or perhaps it was all meant to be — I'd like to believe the latter.

Thank you for letting me share my inspiration for doing the work that we do!

*Eunice Escudero, MS, LMFT, is a clinical supervisor in CV's Multisystemic Therapy program, where she partners directly with families to help them remain together.*

## Family Separation is Always Traumatic. When it Happens After Losing a Parent to COVID, It Feels Unbearable.

Natasha Beltran lost her father Julian to COVID at just 10 years old. Her mother Maxine has been her rock, but the loss they both felt was unrelenting. Maxine was urged to get therapy for Natasha by her school, but didn't know if she could afford it or where to turn. The delay set off an investigation and a painful journey that threatened to separate the family. While eventually they were allowed to remain together, they lived with the unbearable fear of being forced apart for months.

Thankfully, Natasha and Maxine were introduced to The Children's Village and functional family therapist Yolanda Elcock. To the Beltrams, Miss Yolanda has been much more than a therapist. She visits the family's apartment once a week just to talk and get to know the family. She and Natasha practice coping skills like mindfulness and turning negatives into positives. Sometimes they work on challenges that Natasha is experiencing, like bullying at school or on social media.

Yolanda doesn't just work with Natasha, she also partners with the adults in her life. She is in regular contact with Natasha's school on day-to-day challenges, and she helps coordinate between the school and Natasha's outside therapist, who she sees now in addition to Yolanda. "Now, everyone is working together. Everyone is on board" says Maxine.

Unfortunately, Natasha's story is not unique. The Children's Village frequently partners with families who are experiencing loss and trauma. The death of a parent — especially during the pandemic — can be particularly difficult. But any separation from family, especially to young children, is a major trauma that must be processed and continually worked on. Keeping children with people who love them unconditionally is critical to their wellbeing, and that should be the goal whenever possible.

Today, Natasha and Maxine are both looking ahead. Natasha plans to speak with other groups of children who have lost a parent. The two are eager to share their story if it helps other kids — or if it helps adults respond better to the needs of grieving children.



*Natasha and Maxine Beltran lived with the unbearable possibility of being separated for months. Thankfully, they remained together and found The Children's Village. Photograph by Sara Naomi Lewkowicz*

## Generous Donors Help Feed Over 700 Families

Thanks to our incredible circle of friends, this year The Children’s Village was able to provide over 500 Thanksgiving meals to families we serve, and an additional 200+ to families in the community. Each year the demand for meals increases, and our community partners, donors, and volunteers rally together to meet the need!

Our dedicated in-kinders, volunteers, and staff gave their time to help us receive, sort, package and distribute all of the donations this year. That meant over 500 families referred through CV programs received Thanksgiving meals!

We were able to serve over 200 more families through our Drew Hamilton Community Center, and countless more through the community at large. Thank you so much to our friends in Harlem who donated items and spread the word about the giveaway. And a special thank you to the local Harlem police department, who helped carry canned goods and turkeys for our community members.

We are so grateful to all of our supporters! Thanks to their generosity, it was yet another Thanksgiving to be thankful for.



*It takes a village! We would never have reached our goal without the amazing people who volunteered their time to help feed families.*



*Above: Local Harlem police officers lent a hand to pack up cars and fill bags for the community.*

*Left: At the Drew Hamilton Community Center in Harlem, over 200 families awaited their Thanksgiving meals.*

***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 organized and easy to share. You can **adopt a cottage or program**, donating gifts or sponsoring a group meal. You can **send gifts 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 our volunteer and giving opportunities, contact our Director of Community Engagement, 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 \_\_\_\_\_

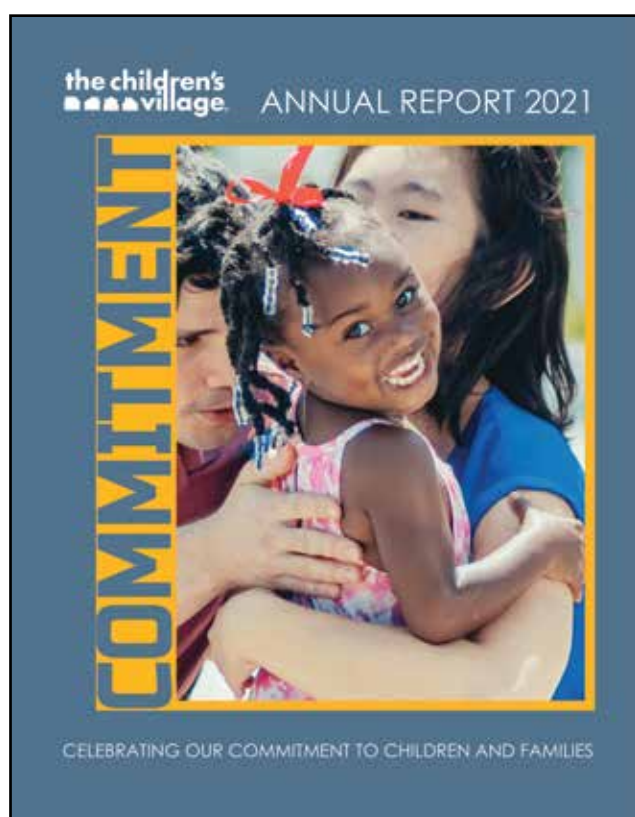
Please make checks payable to: The Children's Village  
Credit card: AmEx   Visa   MasterCard   Discover

number \_\_\_\_\_

exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

CVV \_\_\_\_\_

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 2022 with a sense of optimism and hope.

You can read the annual report online at:

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



### CV Café cont.

The café program has been so successful that it will be replicated in CV's new project in Inwood, the Eliza, which will hold a new NY public library, universal pre-k center, STEM education center, community learning space, and 174 deeply affordable and beautiful apartments. There, the café program will serve young people in the community by teaching the skills of cooking, building a business, and working in a restaurant. Most importantly, the program will focus on trying to make sure that all young people feel valued and loved, and are given the opportunities that they deserve. The Eliza is slated to open its doors in early 2023!



*Akhi, Aaron, and Thomas working the line behind Chef Scott. They're preparing a delicious meal with bbq ribs, chicken piccata, and potato croquettes.*