



OPPORTUNITY

FAMILY

MENTORSHIP

EDUCATION

EXPERIENCE

CONNECTION

ACCEPTANCE

Our Stories
are Your Stories

Anthology 2024

the children's
 **village.**



Our Values

OPPORTUNITY

All people deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential.

FAMILY

Families belong together whenever possible.

DIVERSITY

We should celebrate diversity and its power to enrich us all.

MENTORSHIP

The presence of at least one caring, committed adult is a non-negotiable requirement for a child's success.

SAFE SPACES

Housing should be safe, beautiful, and affordable.

EDUCATION

A high-quality education empowers children to create a brighter future.

TRUST

We must partner with and trust our young people and families to drive our services.

YOUR
SUPPORT
ENABLED
US
TO
SERVE
OVER
20,000
CHILDREN
AND
FAMILIES

Thank you

Last year, your support enabled us to serve over 20,000 youth and families. While the way in which a young person or family becomes connected to The Children's Village may vary our goal remains family and a stable caring adult for all young people; and creating opportunity.

Thanks to friends like you, we are able to provide:

- Family reunification and support.
- Community and school-based programs.
- Juvenile Justice Supports.
- Trafficking and homelessness prevention.
- Life coaching and long-term support from credible messengers.
- Housing that is safe, affordable, and beautiful.

The stories in this book were written by young people and staff. We hope reading them helps you understand the impact your support has on so many lives. As you'll read in the following pages, the results are life changing and the people are inspiring.

You made these stories happen. Thank you!

Angelica:

Traveling widened my perspective and ignited a determination to be a voice for those who may never have such opportunities.

At 13, I didn't know why I was being placed in foster care. I later found out my mother had health issues and she couldn't take care of me or herself. By my third placement, I found out that both my parents had passed away. This was at the height of COVID and my junior year of high school, so needless to say I was in a dark place. But eventually, through therapy and talking with my social worker at The Children's Village I was able to figure out that acceptance is the first step in dealing with life's challenges.

Entering college at Louisiana State University was rough at first, but with CV's support, I found stability. Now, as a sophomore with a 3.5 GPA, studying sports administration with a minor in coaching, I thrive, having found a permanent home with other relatives. I was ready to take on my next steps in life and see what the world had to offer me.

A year ago, my therapist surprised me with the opportunity of a lifetime: CV was taking a group of youth on a trip to Ghana, Africa to learn about black history. Before my parents passed, we always spoke about traveling especially to Africa. I was so excited about this new adventure, "The Sankofa Experience" and those previous conversations made the trip that much more meaningful.



After getting my first passport, that was it—I was on my way to Ghana. In the weeks leading up to our trip, all the participants met to discuss African culture, stereotypes, and our own implicit biases. I had to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

In Ghana, I enjoyed visiting the Learn and Play Foundation, and leading a cha-cha slide with underserved children in the area. By the end of the class, we were all like best friends. My favorite part of the trip was visiting The Last Bath at the Assin Manso Slave River Site. A CV chaperone had a special ritual done for his family members who had passed away that year and it reminded me of that dark place I was once in. Thankfully my peers gathered around me to comfort me. I do not do hugs but being there connecting helped me open up and let go.

Reflecting on my journey from feeling lost and lonely to exploring Ghana, I'm so grateful for this transformative experience. Traveling widened my perspective and ignited a determination to be a voice for those who may never have such opportunities.

TRANSFORMATION
DETERMINATION
ACCEPTANCE
OPPORTUNITY
ADVENTURE
CULTURE
PERSPECTIVE
COMFORT
CONNECTION
TRAVEL

Angelica, was a part of our Family Foster Care division and is one of the 26 participants to join CV in 'The Sankofa Experience'- in Ghana, West Africa. Our young people got to dive into history, culture, and heritage, following the principle of Sankofa -'go back and get it,' to understand where we've come from in order to move forward with purpose.



Cenada:

Being a resource and support system to other young people in any way makes me happy.

Two years ago, I was pregnant and living in a shelter with my family, surrounded by violence, which made me feel unsafe. This was something I was familiar with from my upbringing, and I knew right away it wasn't a situation I wanted my son to be around. I always said to myself that if I had a child, I'd want them to have a better living experience than I did. So, when I heard about the mom and baby home at The Children's Village, I knew this was our chance to change our lives forever.

When I was admitted to the program, being a mom and being on my own was still new to me. I was closed off and unsure of my next steps. But after the first year, I seized every opportunity that came my way! There was support from every angle: from the director to my case manager, to my peers living at the home. Every decision I made, whether for myself or my son, had their full backing, and they offered great advice if I ever struggled.

Being in the mother and baby home has opened so many doors for me. I've been able to attend and assist in many workshops on parenting. Being a resource and support system to other young people in any way makes me happy. I even started cosmetology school and was able to explore a passion of mine. But when I realized

STABILITY
REALIZATION
OPPORTUNITY
DECISIONS
BELIEVE
ACCEPTANCE
LOVE
EXCITEMENT
DREAMS

that cosmetology wasn't for me, the staff at the home were right behind me to ensure I didn't fall off track. I soon realized I wanted to be a social worker in the future. Knowing that there are programs for teen parents and people who need help starting their families is amazing, and it's something I want to be a part of!

A few weeks after leaving cosmetology school, I was approved for my first apartment. I was a resident at the mom and baby home for two years and knew I would one day leave, but sometimes it still feels like a dream. There are certain days when I wake up in disbelief that I have a place to call home. This month, my CV coach helped me find and apply to schools to get my social work license. I found a program that fits my schedule, so I can still focus on work and being a single mom.

I believe the saying that everything comes when it's supposed to, I've come a long way, and I'm excited for what the future holds as I continue to build a better life for myself and my son.

Ceanda found stability and support at CV's mother and baby home, where teen mothers and their infants receive assistance in parenting skills, career exploration, and job readiness. Through this program, many young moms transition to independent living with secure employment and a vision for their future and their families.

Dominick:

I didn't want to quit or go backward . . .

I came to The Children's Village because I had nowhere else to go. I had traveled from South America, and it was my first year in the United States. Within three months, I was arrested, and I felt like I didn't have much of a life. At 16 I arrived at CV's campus, and this is where I was connected to CV's mentoring program. They held group mentoring sessions, and meeting with the group helped put me on a path to live a life I was excited about. We talked about how to hold ourselves accountable and how to stay out of trouble. I even received help learning to speak and read better English.

Last year, we focused on setting goals, and one major goal for me was getting a job. One of my mentors was able to help me get an interview at Yankee Stadium, and I was hired shortly after. I would always walk by the stadium and was a big baseball fan, so when I was able to start working there, I was so excited! I never thought I'd be working somewhere so cool. I was trained to be on food prep but discovered I wanted to be more involved and was promoted to cook, finally feeling like I was taking steps on my own. In the next few months, I was moved up to cashier, but I hit a roadblock—I couldn't read a lot of the new menu items. I had never handled money.

I didn't want to quit or go backward, so, after hours, my mentors and peers helped me learn the new menu and practice counting bills. I finally got it! After a few months, I was promoted to group lead.

Completing my goal felt amazing. Looking back, I know the bigger accomplishment was being able to practice patience with myself and others. Now, mentoring is such a big part of my life that I've become so accustomed to this support system; and I look forward to going to group. My next goal is to finish my GED program and hopefully get my associate degree in the next year. My dream is to go away to school and be able to live on a college campus. Who knows, maybe I'll be a mentor one day!

CONNECTION
MENTORING
EDUCATION
DISCOVERY
AMAZING
TRANSITION
EMPLOYMENT
ACCOMPLISHED

Dominick is enrolled in our T.E.A.M. aftercare program, which supports Bronx and Harlem teen residents transitioning from juvenile justice facilities. Through T.E.A.M. (Transform and Empower youth to Aspire through Mentoring), participants explore effective communication, emotional awareness, self-care, job readiness, financial literacy, education, wellness, and restorative justice. Our program, led by Credible Messengers, offers interactive group sessions and personalized journaling to foster growth and empowerment.



Freddy:

My experiences have taken me across various initiatives aimed at supporting teens in need of a second chance.

I began my journey with The Children's Village as an intern while completing my MSW, and my work within the organization has been nothing short of fulfilling. Initially placed in Queens at Goddard High School and CV's mother and child home, I transitioned into a clinician role, and I am now the Director of our Juvenile Justice Programs.

My experiences have taken me across various initiatives aimed at supporting teens in need of a second chance. From assisting unaccompanied minors to facilitating parenting classes and support groups, I've found my niche in making a difference in the lives of young individuals and their families. My responsibilities include overseeing the Second Chance program, a diversion program offering counseling to teens addressing court involvement and prevention from further entanglement in legal issues.

Having played a key role in the growth of these programs since their inception in 2015, I have so much pride in the impact they have on the lives of the youth we serve. In particular, The Fatherhood program, tailored to individual needs, equips young fathers with the necessary tools to navigate their responsibilities. One of my favorite success stories involves supporting a young father in juvenile detention to virtually attend the birth of his child! Due to detention limitations, he couldn't be at the birth in person, but we worked with his legal team to get a virtual visit established. It was a beautiful moment, and I was proud to be a part of ensuring



these teens had access to essential rights and support. This family eventually participated in the 8-week co-parenting program to discuss their future and received co-parenting certificates!

Our programs extend beyond detention centers, allowing us to connect with fathers in their communities, and provide a space for them to share their dreams and fears about parenthood. Breaking through the stigma and labels associated with juvenile justice involvement, we strive to reassure these teens that their dreams are achievable. As we continue to grow and promote our services, our mission remains steadfast: to advocate for and empower young fathers, teens, and those in detention. Witnessing the positive transformations and being part of these young individuals' journeys reaffirms the importance of our work at CV, fostering hope, family connection, and opportunities for a brighter future.

Freddy, Director of Juvenile Justice Programs, oversees The Fatherhood program, providing tailored support for young fathers. Covering child development, financial literacy, job maintenance, and coparenting, the program empowers teens to navigate their responsibilities and family dynamics successfully.

JOURNEY
FULLFILLMENT
DIFFERENCE
SUPPORTING
MEMORIES
CONNECTIONS
AFFIRMATION
RESPONSIBILITY
EMPOWERMENT
HOPE



Yashua:

Everything I've experienced at CV has prepared me to go back to my community . . .

At the beginning of last year, I found myself regularly being in a bad environment, doing things that a 17-year-old shouldn't be involved in. It was then I had to be removed from that situation and came to The Children's Village. Despite the challenges, I chased opportunities for personal growth and took advantage of those presented at CV. It became a choice between watching life pass me by or actively bettering myself and my circumstances. Starting by saving up for my future.

When I first arrived on campus my peers told me about possible job opportunities through the WAY Works program. With the help of the staff, I completed my first-ever job application and secured a position in the Greenhouse and the Canine Rescue and Rehabilitation program at the Dog Kennel. The Greenhouse appealed to me due to my father's passion for gardening back home. It reminded me of him, and under Mr. O's guidance, I learned how to harvest different plants and maintain larger ones across the campus.

Working at the Kennel intrigued me, considering I never had a pet but always held a love for animals. Spending time with rescue dogs and learning how to train them for adoption was an amazing experience. On my first day, both dogs joyfully tackled me to the ground, I realized then this was

CHALLENGES
ADVANTAGES
OPPORTUNITY
GUIDANCE
PASSION
EXPERIENCE
POSITIVITY
ENCOURAGEMENT
FUTURE

a positive environment for me. I even got to be a part of preparing to open a new grooming station that will be open to the public!

My life was starting to get really interesting in a positive way.

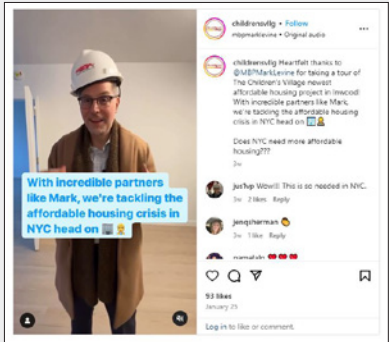
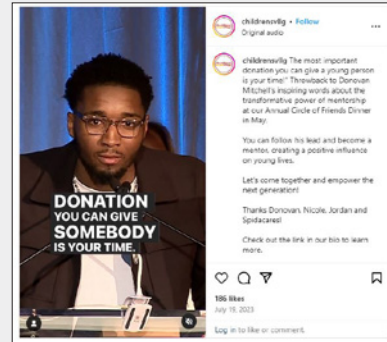
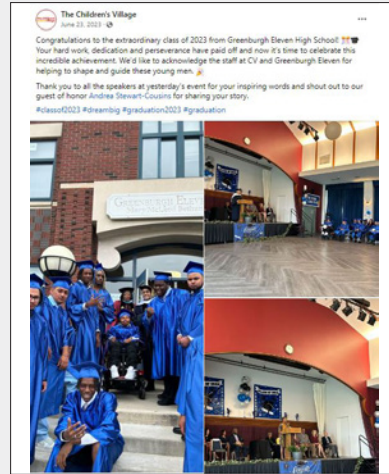
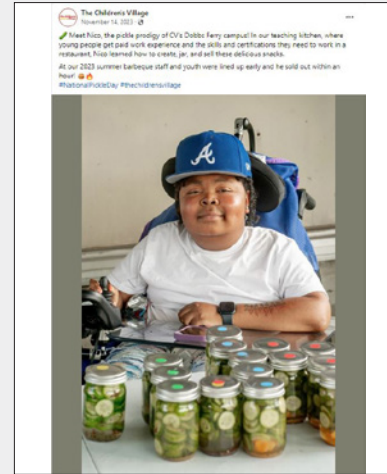
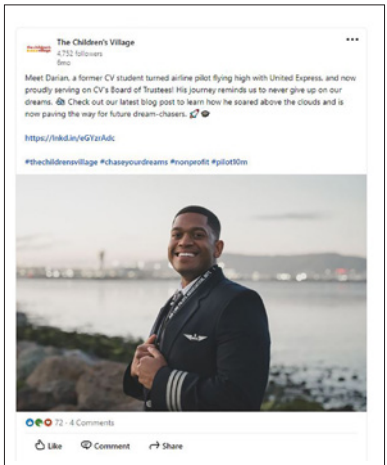
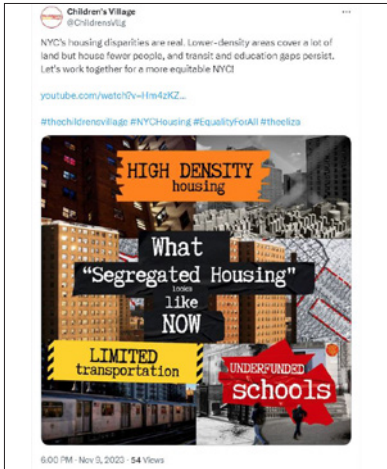
Encouraged by a staff member, I applied for an internship at The Children's Village. I was able to work closely with CV's Executive Assistant to the President and CEO, the Director of Communications, and the Equity and Special Projects Director. I learned things like how to send a professional email, proofread documents, and help set up events.

Two weeks after my internship started, one of my supervisors helped me get an interview at our local Chipotle. Due to my interview practice from my campus jobs and internship, I was able to land the job. Everything I've experienced at CV has prepared me to go back to my community and has shown me that the stuff I was doing before I came to CV is not the stuff I want to be doing when I get back. After I leave CV, I plan on furthering my work experience with a full-time job or exploring getting a college degree. I'm now really excited about what the future holds!

Yashua is a resident of The Children's Village Dobbs Ferry Campus- a residential facility for young people who need a temporary place to go. Our campus recreation department runs WAY Works sites designed to give young people real work experiences, certifications, and ways to explore their interests.

Connect with Us

Follow us on Social Media and continue to see more stories about the youth and families we serve. And visit our website to learn more about upcoming events and ways to get involved.



the children's village

www.childrensvillage.org



Our Mission

The Children's Village is committed to the well-being of children, teens, and families by advocating for, strengthening, and reuniting families; building community partnerships; creating innovating programs; and connecting people to resources that focus on equity, basic needs, and human rights.