



Chef Jontae offers instruction to students during their 11-week training course to prepare them for culinary careers.

The “Kitchen” is open at The Eliza!

In January, The Children’s Village (CV) and Emma’s Torch launched a culinary teaching kitchen at The Eliza, a new housing and community center in the desirable Inwood neighborhood in Manhattan. This innovative space offers training to refugees, asylees, and survivors of human trafficking, and our communities, providing them with the skills needed to enter the workforce.

The collaboration highlights the shared missions of CV and Emma’s Torch, both dedicated to helping New Yorkers by creating opportunities for skill development and offering long-term support after

program completion. The culinary program mirrors the curriculum offered at Emma’s Torch’s other locations in Brooklyn and Washington, D.C., with a focus on catering and consumer goods operations. The first class, made up of eight students from six different countries, has embarked on an 11-week training course. With hands-on experience, they are now on their way to securing jobs in the culinary industry.

“We are honored to partner with Emma’s Torch on the launch of the teaching kitchen,” said Jeremy Kohomban, President and CEO of The Children’s Village.

“Emma’s Torch’s high-touch and innovative approach in teaching, together with our combined commitment to ensure that graduates are placed in the workforce and supported long-term, fills an unmet need in our community.”

**With the
right support,
transformation is
always possible.**

Meet Ayden!
[Read more on page 4](#)

The Power of Support, Belief, and Second Chances

We are so proud of all of the young people we serve and, in particular, we wanted to introduce you to an amazing young man and his foster parent.

Dayshaun was a resident at CV's campus and was dealing with many new challenges – including fatherhood. Through his child's mother, he met her uncle Mr. Watters, who he grew close to.

Mr. Watters had always believed in the power of relationships, having grown up in New York's foster care system himself. His journey through the system had shaped his sense of compassion and commitment to helping others, which eventually led him to become a foster parent.

Mr. Watters's life took an unexpected turn when Dayshaun began speaking about his desire to visit Mr. Watters in Arizona. After much consideration, Mr. Walters offered to provide Dayshaun a home, something that Mr. Watters never experienced as a child.

For Mr. Watters, this journey wasn't just about giving Dayshaun a stable home - it was about witnessing the incredible power of belief.



By early 2024, the plan was set in motion, and Mr. Watters officially became Dayshaun's legal guardian.

Moving to Arizona was a fresh start for Dayshaun, and he dove into building a new life. He juggled multiple jobs, took online classes, and prepared for his GED exam. But what truly impressed Mr. Watters was Dayshaun's commitment to his growth. "Dayshaun's progress has been gradual, yet consistent. I'm incredibly proud of the young man he's becoming," Mr. Watters said with pride.

For Mr. Watters, this journey wasn't just about giving Dayshaun a stable home—it was about witnessing the incredible power of belief. "This has shown me how one person's belief in another can make a lasting impact," Mr. Watters reflected. "It's been a truly remarkable experience for both of us."

Through his support and faith in Dayshaun, Mr. Watters has not only helped a young man find his footing but has also deepened his own understanding of the power of family, love, and second chances.



***Do you have extra room at your dinner table?
Want to change a life? There are children in foster
care who are waiting for you!***

***We need more families in New York City and
Westchester County to provide the love and
belonging that all children deserve.***

To learn more fostering, [visit our website.](#)

A Groundbreaking Juvenile Justice Roundtable for Empowerment and Change

This February, CV's Sanctuary, a shelter for runaway and homeless teens, hosted a Juvenile Justice Roundtable, bringing together young people and law enforcement for an open discussion on understanding, empowerment, and community change. The event aimed to bridge the gap between youth and police by fostering dialogue, addressing misconceptions, and providing tools to navigate encounters with law enforcement.



Local police officers and young people in The Sanctuary having their discussion.

Participants included youth from the shelter, staff, and representatives from local law enforcement agencies such as the White Plains Police Department, Yonkers Police Department, and the New York State Probation Office. Discussions focused on reducing stigma, educating youth on risky behaviors, and empowering them in interactions with law enforcement.

A lead organizer from CV, shared, "We've seen an increase in youth referrals from law enforcement, and staff felt frustrated. We wanted a space where young people could openly share experiences and hear from officers in a meaningful way."

One powerful moment came when a young girl, initially vocal about her distrust of police, expressed her frustrations. Officers listened, validated her experiences, and engaged in a meaningful conversation, shifting her perspective.

One powerful moment came when a young girl, initially vocal about her distrust of police, expressed her frustrations. Officers listened, validated her experiences, and engaged in a meaningful conversation, shifting her perspective. "She walked away with a new outlook," noted Sarah Lonergan-Rothschild, Program Director of Shelter Services at The Sanctuary.

Moving forward, The Sanctuary plans to expand these conversations, strengthen partnerships with law enforcement, and enhance early intervention efforts in schools and community programs. "This is about prevention and meeting families where they are," Sarah explained. "By building relationships and trust, we can help young people make safer choices and create lasting change."

The Children's Village
Circle of Friends
Dinner & After Party

Join us Thursday, May 1, 2025!

[Click here for more information and to RSVP](#)

Ayden's Journey of Transformation and Empowerment

At just 13 years old, Ayden felt lost - running from home, cycling through programs and hospitals, and struggling to find a sense of stability. "Deep down, I knew I had potential, but I couldn't find a way to bring it to light," he recalled.

For three years, each day felt like an uphill battle. But everything changed when he found The Sanctuary, Westchester County's only runaway and homeless shelter specifically for teens. The Sanctuary provides a safe place to stay, individual and group counseling, family-style meals, and life coaching for youth returning to their communities. When the courts had no placement for him, they offered him the option to stay at the Sanctuary, giving him a chance to transition back into the community and off probation. It was a risk, but one that ultimately changed his life.

"At first, I didn't give the program a real chance," Ayden admitted. "But when I returned after a difficult time, including a hospital stay, I was ready. I needed the support more than ever, and I found it." The Sanctuary staff provided not just guidance but genuine care. They gave him space to make mistakes and the encouragement to move forward.

Now, Ayden is channeling his journey into something greater—helping others. He recently stepped into a new role as a youth advocate at The Children's Village, using his firsthand experiences to support teens facing similar struggles. We deeply value the power of lived experience and trust young people to help

shape our work. "I know what it's like to feel unheard, and I want to be a voice for other teens who need support," he shared. "The Sanctuary helped show me that change is possible, and now I want to do the same for others."

Ayden's journey is proof that with the right support, transformation is always possible.



Our Stories are Your Stories

Want more CV stories like Ayden? Read CV's anthology "Our Stories are Your Stories" and learn more about our successes. Your support is critical to our work and you make these stories happen. Thank you!

[Read "Our Stories" online!](#)

Honoring MLK's Legacy: Youth and Staff Give Back

In celebration of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, our youth and staff visited Part of the Solution (POTS) in the Bronx, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting individuals facing poverty and hunger. Volunteers assisted with kitchen, pantry, and server support, making a meaningful impact on the organization's daily operations. This experience inspired our young people to continue their involvement as interns at POTS. They also assembled care packages filled with snacks and winter essentials, which were donated to Concourse House, a shelter for women in the Bronx. Our youth were deeply moved by their experience and remain committed to ongoing volunteer efforts. As Muhammad Ali once said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."



CV staff and youth were excited to pack hot meals for the Bronx community.



CV staffers making sure each meal was complete.



CV staff and young people working together at POTS Kitchen.



Staff and youth are proud to give back.

Youth to Travel on an Inspiring Educational Journey to Montserrat

This week, The Children’s Village will take a group of fourteen people—including nine youth and five chaperones—on an enriching educational adventure to the stunning Caribbean Island of Montserrat. This immersive journey will offer a deep dive into the African diaspora in the Caribbean, Montserrat’s vibrant culture and political economy, and the island’s remarkable resilience following the Soufrière Hills volcanic eruption of the 1990s.

Young people and their chaperones will be based at the Bard College at Simon’s Rock field station. Planned highlights of the trip will include:

- Hiking Centre Hills, Garibaldi Hill, and the Exclusion Zone to examine Montserrat’s unique volcanic landscape.
- Visiting the Montserrat Volcano Observatory to learn about ongoing volcanic monitoring efforts.
- Snorkeling at Little Bay to explore the island’s vibrant marine biodiversity.
- Community service projects, such as helping at a local school or library.
- Exploring Montserrat’s history and heritage at the Montserrat Cultural Centre and the historic Waterworks Estate House.
- Cultural experiences, including a cooking class on Montserrat’s famous goat water dish and participating in an Easter Sunday community celebration.



This educational journey is part of CV’s ongoing commitment to offering young people life-enriching travel experiences that connect them with shared histories and global communities. Past trips, such as the 2022 Freedom 60 trip to Civil Rights movement sites and the Sankofa Experience in Ghana in 2023, have provided youth and staff alike with invaluable opportunities for growth and cultural exchange.

We look forward to sharing photos and stories about the trip in future publications!

Here are News Article Featuring The Children’s Village

- [A Rare Glimpse of American Unity](#), The Imprint April 4, 2024
- [Child Welfare Reckons With the Harm of Investigations](#), The Imprint, February 3, 2025
- [Taking a ‘Massive Risk’ Downtown](#), Peekskill Herald, February 6, 2025
- [The Power of Family in Foster Care](#), AMNY, February 7, 2025
- [Urban Pathways and The Children’s Village Build New Housing Initiative](#), Patch, February 25, 2025
- [Maya’s Place & Victory House](#), BronxNet, March 25, 2025

