CSF Starts the New School Year with More Than 26,500 Scholarships Nationwide

More than 26,500 low-income children headed to school this fall using scholarships from CSF and our 27 CSF partner programs nationwide. In New York City alone, there are more than 7,800 scholarship recipients, including 1,500 brand new CSF Scholars.

These students are just the latest to use CSF scholarships to access schools their parents have chosen so they can flourish and live up to their full potential. All told, since John Walton and Ted Forstmann first launched CSF in 1998, more than 174,000 children have used CSF scholarships worth $789 million.

CSF families partner with CSF, each paying a portion of the tuition so they are truly invested in their child’s education. Despite the financial sacrifice, parents tell us their investments provide an excellent return.

For example, CSF Mom Marah Y., whose son, Michael, is a CSF Scholar at Bay Ridge Christian Academy, told us, “Fortunately, Michael received this scholarship, which I know will open countless doors of opportunities for him. I know that choosing a tuition-based school and paying part of his tuition is a challenge, but it’s definitely worth investing in his future.”
The Children’s Scholarship Fund provides children of low-income families with tuition assistance in grades K-8, and supports expanding educational opportunities for all children.

Message from the President: Thoughts of the Season

Dear Friends,

As fall slips into winter and 2018 soon becomes a part of history, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for making CSF’s 20th anniversary year an extra special year of celebration, thanksgiving, and inspiration.

We were able to connect with old friends and make many new friends, as well. We were especially inspired by getting a chance to celebrate with many of the first recipients of CSF scholarships who are now young adults doing amazing things with their lives.

One of these young people, Jason Tejada, told his story in our year-end letter, which I hope you will have a chance to read (please visit: http://bit.ly/CSFAlumJason). Jason has just moved back to New York City to take a job at Morgan Stanley, so we look forward to seeing and hearing much more from Jason. We have also added a new CSF alum, Nicole Serrato, to our staff and much of our social media content is now coming from her creative mind. Another CSF alum, Kathy Jiménez, is the creative hand and eye behind our graphic materials, including the layout of this newsletter! They are just a sampling of the talents and successes of our many alums.

All of us in the CSF family—our board, our staff, and all of our families and Scholars past and present—send you a heartfelt thank you.

George MacDonald once wrote, “If instead of a gem or even a flower, we should cast the gift of a loving thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving as the angels give.”

From our hearts to you, our friends, we send you our very best thoughts of the season.

Happy Holidays,

Darla M. Romfo
President

CSF Gets Top Rating from GreatNonProfits

This fall, positive reviews from scholarship families, donors, volunteers and others put CSF on GreatNonprofits’ 2018 Top-Rated Nonprofit List. Thank you to everyone who took the time to add their review and spread the word about the value of scholarships.

Here’s one example from CSF Mom Flordeliz N., who shared: “I am thankful for my children to have the opportunity to grow as individuals in the perfect school setting for them. Thank you for investing in my children’s future and for seeing their potential.”

You can read more reviews, and write your own, on the GreatNonprofits website: http://bit.ly/CSFgetstoppingratings.
Cascade Policy Institute, which runs CSF-Oregon, hosted a multimedia event called “School Choice Changes Lives!” in September. The event featured (l-r): Kathryn Hickok, CSF-Oregon Director and Cascade Executive Vice President; Bobbie Jager, Cascade’s “School Choice for Oregon” outreach coordinator; Tim Keller of the Institute for Justice, and Dr. Matthew Ladner of the Charles Koch Institute.

Children’s Scholarship Fund Philadelphia teamed up with GreatPhillySchools to host the third annual Philly K-8 School Fair this fall. More than 1,300 people came to the fair to meet representatives from 100 schools, including public district, public charter, and private elementary and middle schools.

CSF Partner Programs Around the Nation

TEXAS

From l-r: ACE Scholarships Alumni Board Member Javon Brame, Sir Ken Robinson, and ACE Scholarships Executive Director Norton Rainey at a luncheon celebrating ACE’s new scholarship program in Houston. Sir Robinson is a noted creativity expert whose TED Talk on education is the most viewed in TED history.

OREGON

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ST. LOUIS

Recently, Today and Tomorrow Educational Foundation (TTEF) Chairman and CSF Board Member Kevin M. Short was awarded the 2018 Elizabeth Ann Seton Award by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA. At the ceremony were (l-r): Archbishop Robert Carlson; TTEF Scholar and Seton Scholar Jada Davis; NCEA President Dr. Thomas W. Burnford; Kevin M. Short, and NCEA Board Chairman Bishop Gerald Kicanas.

PHILADELPHIA

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NEW YORK

CSF Alumni Nicole Serrato, Hansel López, and Francis Connolly were special guests at the American Federation for Children’s gala in New York this October.
This fall, the CSF Young Leaders Board hosted Party for a Purpose, which raised enough money through donations and ticket and raffle sales to fund scholarships for three children. The Young Leaders also reached out to their personal networks to fundraise for CSF on Giving Tuesday. We are grateful to the Young Leaders for representing CSF at nonprofit and corporate events. For example, Co-Chair Jackie Palma spoke about her work with CSF as part of a panel discussion for women in finance on corporate engagement on nonprofit boards.

CSF Alumni Attend Human Rights Conference

CSF was delighted to take more than 120 students, including many CSF alumni, to Lincoln Center this September for the second annual Oslo Freedom Forum in New York. Students from La Salle Academy, St. Jean Baptiste High School, and Cathedral High School joined several CSF alums now in college for the daylong human rights conference featuring powerful stories from activists from China, Russia, Turkey, North Korea, Venezuela, and many other countries.

While all the speakers were impressive, teenager Fatemah Qaderyan from Afghanistan was the one with whom the students most identified. Fatemah told her story of leading an all-girls robotics team that almost didn't make it to an international championship in Washington, DC last year after they were initially denied visas. Her team beat the odds by excelling in math and science in a country where only half of all girls go to school.

We are extremely grateful to the Oslo Freedom Forum and Human Rights Foundation for inviting CSF alumni to participate. Afterwards, many of the students told us the speakers' perseverance and human flourishing had inspired them and put their own concerns into perspective. Areli T. put it succinctly when she noted, “With every story I heard, my understanding of freedom grew.”

Students from St. Jean Baptiste High School were among the CSF alumni who enjoyed hearing amazing stories from human rights activists at the Oslo Freedom Forum this September.
Alumni Spotlight: Meet CSF Alumna Delia Cruz

**Elementary School:** Christ the King School, Bronx (Valedictorian)

**High School:** Academy of Mount St. Ursula (Valedictorian)

**College:** Stony Brook University, 2020, Psychology major

**The CSF experience:** I actually loved the public school I was at prior to Christ the King, but it only went up to the third grade. When we needed to find a new school, my mom really wanted me to attend a private school, and Christ the King was close to home. We also attend the church so it was an easy fit. It was a great experience and I graduated as a Valedictorian. I even went back during high school to do my service hours there and assisted in the after school program. One of my best friends is a friend I met at Christ the King. It really prepped me for success and for working hard to achieve.

**Future plans:** I want to go to grad school and become a teacher. I had to TA (serve as a teacher’s assistant) within our University Scholars program and work with new students to help them acclimate to college. I really liked interacting with the students.

**Motivation:** My parents motivate me. They are gung-ho about me finishing my education and they have always been so supportive. Growing up, my parents always said, “Education will open doors for you.” So I want to get as far as I can in my studies so I can succeed. Once I get through college, I will be the first in my family to have gotten my college degree and once I get my master’s, I will be the first one in the family to do that as well.

**Advice for younger students:** Always strive for what you want and stay true to yourself. Do everything you can do to develop good habits and morals so they are instilled in you. Succeed in your passion and make yourself proud.

**Gratitude for CSF supporters:** From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much. Having the scholarship opened up doors and made it possible for me to succeed and shape the student I am, the person I am, and my life. Thank you for opening up new chapters in my life.

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**High Graduation Rates for CSF Alumni**

High school graduation is a key measure of CSF’s success, so each year we survey CSF alumni to track their graduation status and post-high school plans. This year, with a response rate of 81.5 percent, we found CSF alumni who graduated eighth grade in 2014 had a 94.4 percent on-time graduation rate. By comparison, the most recent New York City public school graduation rate was 74.3 percent.

Of those who graduated, 89.4 percent told us they planned to enroll in colleges including: College of Mount St. Vincent, Fordham University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Lehman College, New York University, Vassar College, and Yale University. Other graduates reported entering the workforce (1.3 percent), joining the military (0.7 percent), or enrolling in a vocational school (0.2 percent).

These New York survey results are consistent with previous years and graduation rates of alumni from CSF partners nationwide. Previous studies have also found CSF alumni enroll in college and earn degrees at much higher rates than low-income students nationally.
“Unlike America, most democracies think of ‘public education’ as government funding for distinctive schools – whether Catholic, Montessori, First Nations, or secular – coupled with meaningful accountability over academic results. The result is educational pluralism: systems that empower parents and ensure the public good. Most of the world’s democracies, in fact, are educationally plural. It’s time for us to learn from our more plural peers.”

- Ashley Berner
  Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy, Assistant Professor at the School of Education, and author of Pluralism and American Public Education: No One Way to School (2017)