Juan Williams Joins CSF Board of Directors

CSF is proud to announce Juan Williams, the well-known journalist and political analyst, has joined its Board of Directors.

Mr. Williams currently serves as a co-host of FOX News Channel’s (FNC) The Five (weekdays 5-6PM/ET) and also appears as a political analyst on FOX News Sunday with Chris Wallace and Special Report with Bret Baier. Williams joined the network as a contributor in 1997. In addition to his more than 10-year career with NPR, where he served as a senior national correspondent and news analyst, Williams spent 23 years at The Washington Post, where he covered every major political campaign from 1980 to 2000 as a national correspondent and a political columnist.

Earlier this year, Mr. Williams served as emcee at CSF’s Champions for Children celebration, telling guests, “For me, what you do here is so personal. You’re looking at proof, living proof, that education is the most liberating force in the world. A good education, the kind that you all make possible, is truly the gift that keeps on giving.”

Miss Virginia Spotlights True Story of Hero Mom

This fall, a group of CSF families and staff attended the NYC premiere of a new movie which tells a story very dear to CSF’s mission of expanding educational opportunities and our belief that parents are the first educators of their children.

Miss Virginia, starring Uzo Aduba, Niles Fitch, Matthew Modine, and Amirah Vann, is based on the inspiring true story of Virginia Walden Ford, a long-time friend of CSF and a mom who led the fight to create a scholarship program for low-income DC families.

What started out as an effort to get her son into a better school became a movement when Virginia created DC Parents for School Choice, an organization which urged Congress to pass the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program in 2003. Since then, the program has empowered more than 10,000 children to attend the private and parochial schools chosen by their families.

Miss Virginia is now available to buy and rent on iTunes, Google Play, and Amazon Prime, among many others. For more information, visit https://www.missvirginiamovie.com/watch. Virginia also recently released a memoir, School Choice: A Legacy to Keep.
Dear Friends,

Joy. Family. Love. Tradition. By now, your mind has probably wandered to thoughts of the holiday season. But these words also happen to be descriptive of what I thought and felt when I recently had a chance to visit eight schools in the NYC area over four days to spend some time with our CSF Scholars and their school peers.

The schools ranged from independent schools to all kinds of faith-based schools including Jewish, Catholic, Islamic, and non-denominational. As different as that makes them, they all provide an environment where joy and love are felt, family and tradition are honored, and little human beings flourish—mind, body, and soul.

In one school, a group of four sixth graders provided the tour. I thought they were seasoned tour guides given the ease with which they conducted themselves. I learned only in passing at the end of the tour that this was their first time on the job. Their education gives them the confidence to rise to this occasion and many more.

In another school, eighth grade girls and boys gave very specific answers to questions about their career goals—civil engineer, software engineer, entrepreneur, doctor, and veterinarian, to name a few. And the academic progress of the students indicates these are dreams they are on track to attain. In a world where everything seems to be rapidly changing all at once, these school visits reminded me that nothing essential has changed at all. Human beings still flourish in environments where they are known and loved.

Our co-founder Ted Forstmann once told me, “Always remember, if you don't get the first things right, everything else falls apart.” The schools CSF Scholars can attend because of you get the first things right. May your holiday season be a little bit brighter, happier, and more hopeful knowing that you are helping other human beings flourish.

Happy Holidays,

Darla M. Romfo
President
CSF Partner Programs Around the Nation

PHILADELPHIA

Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia and GreatPhillySchools hosted the Philly K-8 School Fair this October, offering families the opportunity to meet representatives from 100 schools of all types, as well as nonprofits offering after-school enrichment, health and wellness services, and much more.

TOLEDO

This November, Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund (NOSF) Executive Director Ann Riddle, pictured with members of NOSF’s board, was named Outstanding Fundraiser of the Year by the Northwest Ohio chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Baltimore

CSF Baltimore parent and volunteer Teresa Smiley (left), with her daughter, Alumna Amber Smiley, at CSFB's recent Next Generation Investing Event. Amber was a featured speaker at the event, sharing how her education has led her to pursue a career in the medical field.

NEW JERSEY

Pictured at Tri-County Scholarship Fund’s 38th Annual Awards Dinner this fall were: (second from left) Rick DeBel, Executive VP Peapack-Gladstone Bank and TCSF Board Chairman; Eric Andersen, Co-President of Aon, who received the Hall of Fame Award, and scholarship students from DePaul Catholic High School.

NEW YORK CITY

At the recent Oslo Freedom Forum in New York, more than a hundred CSF alumni and fellow students from three high schools heard stories of bravery and hope from human rights activists including Iranian journalist Masih Alinejad, pictured here with Cathedral High School students. Special thanks to the Human Rights Foundation for hosting the CSF group.

BUFFALO

This October, the BISON Children’s Scholarship Fund celebrated its 25th anniversary with a luncheon, netting more than $450,000 for scholarships. Featured speaker BISON Alumnus Kenny Ngoopos (above) recently graduated from St. Bonaventure University and joined the Management Development Training Program at M&T Bank.
Donor Spotlight: Meet Reco Charity

Reco Charity is a member of CSF’s President’s Council and an attorney at Paul Weiss in New York City. Originally from Richmond, he earned a full scholarship to Virginia Tech and went on to graduate from Georgetown University Law Center. In 2018, he established the Reco Charity Fund “to serve and support inner city and low-income youth.” Recently, we sat down with Reco to discuss his motivation for philanthropy and giving back to the next generation.

Getting involved with CSF: I was online looking for opportunities to give back in the New York area and I stumbled across CSF. Going to the events and listening to CSF Scholars telling me about their goals and their dreams and their ambitions, I was just blown away with how intelligent, how articulate, and how smart these students are. Anything I can do to help on their journey, I want to do that. It’s about helping students get to their highest potential and not have their financial background be a roadblock.

On being a role-model and giving back: Now that I have been able to do some things, I want to be able to give back to anybody that’s coming after me and tell them, “Okay, this is how I did it, now you do it and do it better than me, go further than me. And when you do it, go back and get two more people and have them go further than you.” I think that’s a big part of why I care a lot about the generations after me, because we can create such a large impact in an incremental, person-by-person manner.

Why he set up the Reco Charity Fund: I started with a scholarship idea at my high school. I pledged to give $2,000 between two students every year for the rest of my life. Then after writing those thousand dollar checks, I was like, “Okay, that didn’t kill me. Let’s go further.” Then I decided to give at least $100,000 by the time I’m 35. That was going to require me to give away at least $10,000 every year. The Fund was a way for me to just take the money out of my hands and set it aside specifically for philanthropic giving. Now I have a new number that I’m aiming for.

Advice to CSF Scholars and Alumni: Read more! Being able to read and learn from other people’s experiences, you make these people into your mentors. You can learn from them and obtain a wider view of the world, while being able to connect different ideas and find synergies between and among concepts. I promise you, it’s not as tough as it sounds!

In Memoriam: Mrs. Bobbie J. Pease

The Children’s Scholarship Fund was honored to receive a gift this year from The Pease Family Trust upon the death of Mrs. Bobbie J. Pease (1927-2018). Mrs. Pease was a staunch supporter of educational causes throughout her life, and CSF is grateful to have been selected to receive this gift, which will directly support scholarships. Mrs. Pease’s legacy will live on in the many children who will now have the opportunity for a brighter future thanks to this generous gift.
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. In 2019, with a response rate of 82.2 percent, we found CSF alumni who graduated eighth grade in 2015 had a 99.4 percent on-time graduation rate. In comparison, the most recent New York City public school graduation rate was 75.9 percent.

Of those who graduated, 87 percent told us they planned to enroll in colleges including: College of Mount St. Vincent, Fordham University, Harvard University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Lehman College, New York University, St. John’s University, and Yale University. Other graduates reported entering the workforce (0.8 percent), joining the military (1.1 percent), or enrolling in a vocational school (0.64 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.

CSF Young Leaders Board Events Raise Funds and Awareness

This fall, the CSF Young Leaders Board hosted its annual Party for a Purpose, raising awareness as well as money for NYC scholarships. Also this fall, a team of eleven intrepid Young Leaders and friends joined more than 50,000 runners from all over the world in the TCS New York City Marathon, running 26.2 miles and raising more than $25,000 for scholarships along the way! We are incredibly proud and awed by the runners’ determination and stamina, and we are extremely grateful to the entire Young Leaders Board for all their support!

CSF is on GreatNonprofits’ Top-Rated List

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

For example, CSF Dad Abu M. wrote, “This is the best thing that ever happened to my family with regard to education.” Another parent wrote, “I am so glad to be a part of the CSF family. This organization is helping me to make my dream come true by assisting financially.”

The Last Word

“All children deserve to find the schooling option that works best for them. Doesn’t matter where they live. Doesn’t matter how much money their family makes. Everyone should have a choice.”

- Virginia Walden Ford, author of School Choice: A Legacy to Keep, and subject of new movie, Miss Virginia