



Children's Scholarship Fund

REQUIRED READING

Fall Semester 2024 Newsletter

25 Years of CSF Scholarships Celebrated

This October, Children's Scholarship Fund (CSF) marked the 25th anniversary of the first CSF scholarships awarded in the fall of 1999 with an intimate celebration that brought board members and supporters together with CSF Scholars, alumni, and school leaders. It's hard to capture the magic of the evening in written word, so we'll let the pictures tell the story.



Talented students from The Learning Tree Cultural Preparatory School in the Bronx performed a poetic recitation and violin solo.



CSF Co-Chairs Matt Bonanno and Margot McGinness addressed guests at CSF's 25th anniversary celebration.



Remembering CSF's co-founders, Siya Madikane, Ted Forstmann's son, led a toast to CSF's future at the event, and Darla Romfo read a congratulatory message from Jim Walton, John Walton's brother.

2024-25: CSF by the Numbers

35,138

CSF Scholars nationwide

217,434

CSF Scholars since inception

7,698

new scholarships nationwide

\$1.15 billion

in CSF scholarships since inception



Author Naomi Schaefer Riley moderated a panel discussion featuring CSF Alumna Mary Zhuo Ke, CSF Alumnus Alex Olea, and Lois Gregory, founder and principal of The Learning Tree Cultural Preparatory School.

THE CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND empowers families by providing children in need with scholarships, and by supporting expanded educational opportunities for all children. During the 2024-25 school year, CSF and its partner programs in 20 states are providing scholarships for 35,138 children.

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More Photos from CSF's 25th Anniversary Celebration



Before dinner, Mother Doliente of Saint John Paul the Great Academy, a new classical Catholic school in East Harlem, provided a blessing.



At the reception, pianist Debbie Ringdahl set a celebratory mood with familiar classics.



From l-r: Sonia Tavarez, CSF Alumnus Alex Olea, CSF Alumna Mary Zhuo Ke, and Harold Kim enjoyed the evening.



From l-r: Mother Doliente of St. John Paul the Great Academy speaks with Dan Henninger of The Wall Street Journal and David Asman of Fox Business News.

A Message from the President

Dear Friends,

Albert Einstein once reflected that there are two ways to live a life. One is as though nothing is a miracle, and the other is as if everything is a miracle.

Thanks to all of you for helping me believe as I observe the impact of CSF that miracles happen around me every day.

And thank you for the last 25 years.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Darla M. Romfo
President

CSF Partners Around the Nation

San Francisco Bay Area



CSF's Bay Area partner, The BASIC Fund, recently held its Transforming Lives Luncheon at the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco. Glenda Nuñez (above), mother to five BASIC Fund scholars, shared her story at the event.

New Hampshire



This October, CSF New Hampshire hosted a Donor Appreciation Event at Three Chimneys Inn in Durham, where CSF supporters mingled with scholarship families and school leaders. Pictured above: CSF New Hampshire Executive Director Kate Baker Demers (left) and CSF President and CEO Darla Romfo (right) with Portsmouth Christian Academy students.

Philadelphia



CSF Philadelphia (CSFP) recently hosted its annual CSFP School Fair, offering hundreds of families the opportunity to learn about Philadelphia private school options and apply for scholarships. Families also got to collect school supplies and win raffle prizes

Denver



This November, Denver area partner Seeds of Hope celebrated its 28th anniversary with its Evening of Hope gala. Pictured above are Seeds of Hope Executive Director Tricia Sullivan (6th from left) with some of the original founders of Seeds of Hope.

Buffalo



CSF's Buffalo partner, the BISON Children's Scholarship Fund, celebrated 30 years of scholarships in Western New York at its annual Celebration Luncheon in October. More than 41,000 Buffalo area children have benefitted from BISON scholarships since its founding.

New York



A team of runners, including CSF Young Leaders Board members Quinn Hermann, Carlos Navarette, and Ryan Snopes (pictured above l-r), represented Children's Scholarship Fund in this year's TCS New York City Marathon, raising more than \$20,600 in donations for scholarships.

CSF Earns High Ratings from Charity Navigator and GreatNonprofits

Once again, Charity Navigator has awarded Children's Scholarship Fund with a four-star rating - its highest possible rating for charities with strong financial health and a commitment to accountability and transparency. According to the charity watchdog, a four-star rating means a charity "exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause."

We're also happy to report that CSF has earned a spot on this year's GreatNonprofits' Top-Rated Nonprofit List, thanks to positive reviews from scholarship families, donors, and volunteers.

In one review, a CSF parent shared, "The scholarship has opened up a world of opportunities for my kids, providing access to quality education and resources that we couldn't have afforded otherwise. The teachers and staff at the school are dedicated and truly invested in the children's success, creating a nurturing environment that fosters growth and confidence. I cannot recommend the Children's Scholarship Fund highly enough."

If you'd like to celebrate CSF's 25th anniversary with a tax-deductible gift, please visit <https://scholarshipfund.org/fund-scholarships-change-lives/>. To learn more about making a gift of stock or including CSF in your estate plans, contact Michele Mitola at 212-515-7108 or mmitola@scholarshipfund.org.

Charity
Navigator



FOUR-STAR



CSF Joins Coalition for Educational Choice Programming at SPN's Annual Meeting

CSF helped lead a coalition effort to share learnings and practical tools for overcoming barriers to education freedom in states most resistant to change during the State Policy Network's Annual Meeting in Phoenix this August. Besides CSF, coalition members included the American Federation for Children, California Policy Center, EdChoice, Excellent Education for Everyone, and Kids' Scholarship Fund.



A school choice conversation with Paul Vallas, former superintendent for Chicago, Philadelphia, Recovery District of Louisiana, and Bridgeport schools (left) and the Manhattan Institute's John Ketcham was one of many educational choice programs hosted by the coalition during the State Policy Network's annual meeting in Phoenix.



CSF President Darla Romfo (far right) served as moderator for a school choice session at the State Policy Network's Annual Meeting in late August. Pictured from l-r: Joshua Dwyer of Excellent Education for Everyone, Shaka Mitchell of the American Federation for Children; Peter Murphy of the Invest in Education Coalition, and Lance Christensen of the California Policy Center.

New CSF Scholarships for Students At Learning Centers



Students from Freedom Christian Academy prepare for lunch. Freedom Christian Academy is one of 11 Massachusetts church-based learning centers partnering with CSF this year.

Among the more than 35,000 children using CSF and CSF partner scholarships this fall are more than 75 children attending church-based learning centers in Massachusetts. These learning centers, often referred to as microschoools, represent a fast-growing and innovative educational option.

Using church space that's not being used during the week and benefiting from devoted volunteers along with teachers, these learning centers can offer families a quality education at a fraction of the cost of many more traditional private schools. For example, annual tuition at some of the CSF participating learning centers starts as low as \$1,000.

Families choosing learning centers are considered homeschoolers learning in groups, and the growth in church-based learning centers

may be a significant contributor to the rise in homeschooling post-Covid. According to a recent article by Kerry McDonald in *The 74*, "Massachusetts is one of at least 19 states reporting an increase in 2023-24 homeschooling numbers compared to the prior academic year, according to data analyzed by Dr. Angela Watson at Johns Hopkins University. While Massachusetts, like many states, experienced a large surge in homeschoolers during the pandemic and related school closures, this recent uptick in homeschooling is being caused by unknown factors."

In her article, McDonald highlights GROW Christian Learning Center, one of the 11 Massachusetts learning centers currently partnering with CSF, noting that many of the families at GROW are recent Hispanic immigrants who are drawn to the "safe, nurturing, family-centered, values-affirming learning environment." At GROW, parents "collaborate closely with the learning center's nine staff members and seven additional adult volunteers, who work to individualize learning to meet children's specific academic needs."

We look forward to sharing updates about the CSF Scholars benefitting from these innovative learning centers!

Second Cohort of NH Education Freedom Ambassadors Onboarded

This fall marks the second year of the Education Freedom Ambassador Program in New Hampshire. The eight-session training program is designed to equip parents to mentor, coach, and train other parents and allies within the school choice movement, while also sharing their powerful education freedom stories in public settings.



A second cohort of CSF New Hampshire parents recently kicked off the first training session of the Education Freedom Ambassador Program with a session led by CSF President and CEO Darla Romfo.

Already, Education Freedom Ambassadors' stories have been featured in the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, EdChoice's Engage blog, and the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy's blog. Most recently, one of the newest trainees, Donna Chick, published an op-ed in the *Union Leader* about how her grandson's educational trajectory has completely turned around using an Education Freedom Account after he came to live with her following years of living in hotel rooms and attending school only sporadically due to his parents' drug use.

"All of his work has been on display at two county fairs and blue ribbons hang from each of his achievements. My grandson is learning to think. He is learning to problem solve and, most importantly, he is building pathways in his brain that will allow him to succeed in whatever he chooses to do. This is educational choice at its best!"



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The Last Word

"I wasn't the greatest student. I was acting up, getting into fights. Then all of a sudden, my mom was looking into opportunities. CSF came into her life and they gave me a scholarship that allowed her to send me to St. Nicholas of Tolentine in the Bronx. Even though I was very young, that was a fresh start and that was all I needed. ...Eventually I [went] to NYU. I don't think I could have had that opportunity if it wasn't for that scholarship, even though I didn't realize it at the time."

- Alex Olea, CSF Alumnus and cybersecurity engineer, speaking at CSF's 25th anniversary celebration



Children's Scholarship Fund
8 West 38th Street, Suite 804
New York, NY 10018-0102
(212) 515-7100
www.scholarshipfund.org

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