Exploring, laughing and learning!

For children in foster care, progress and healing from the trauma they have experienced comes slowly. Clinical, therapeutic support and having a safe nurturing environment all help the children to heal.

Solutions are far from simple, but there are times when just the simple joys in life can reap rewards beyond expectations.

Joy and laughter are always a gift, and on Thursday, July 13th, because of the support of our generous donors, the children in our foster care programs received the gift of joy. They visited the Bronx Zoo—many for the first time—and became “Explorer’s for a Day!” Every hour that we give a child in foster care a reason to focus on something positive is an hour when they are not thinking of the trauma and neglect that caused them to be removed from their homes.

Adorned with their safari hats, “Explorer” t-shirts and an abundance of excitement, the children made their way through the Bronx Zoo, and all of its exciting exhibits.

Their spirits were soaring. Can you remember the first time you saw a penguin, or a giraffe?

Our supporters helped give a day of fun and laughter to children who have experienced neglect and obstacles that no children should ever face.

On this day these children were truly Explorers, filling out their scavenger hunt booklets and believing they were on their very own safari.

What a gift you helped give them!

We would like to say a special thank you to the Bronx Zoo for their assistance in making this day both affordable and so very special.

In addition to the zoo visit, funds raised helped subsidize therapeutic support for these children as we know the trauma that they have suffered requires comprehensive care and attention.

But for the children on this day, it was all about the zoo and the fun, laughter and enjoyment that came with it! Thank you for your help in making it happen. ☀

One of our Explorer groups takes a break from their “safari” adventure.
A Letter from the President & CEO’s Office

Each day at CMCS there are moments that lift our spirits. It could be a painting we see from a child in foster care that contains so much beauty and emotion that we feel a sense of pride to be a part of helping this child grow beyond the limits and pain they have experienced. Or, it could be a morning hello we receive from an adult with autism who for years did not have the ability to communicate at any level.

These moments can serve as constant reminders that reinforce the belief in the work we do and the support made possible by your belief in CMCS and our mission.

Many times these instances go far beyond individual moments.

On June 8th, 2017 CMCS received some very special news! The SUNY Charter School Committee voted and approved our application for the Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School. This is a major milestone for the agency and the at-risk families we serve, and it was an effort and achievement that was quite literally years in the making. The importance of this school cannot be overstated for the opportunities it will present to at-risk children.

We are also pleased to announce a grant award we received from Autism Speaks to help fund the certification of 50 registered Behavior Technicians at CMCS in support of our Applied Behaviors Analysis (ABA) model. CMCS is at the forefront in working with adults with autism and helping decrease challenging behaviors.

We’ve been active online and in your communities as well. We kicked off our spring season with our wonderful Wine tasting at the home of our very generous hosts, Lori and Paul Guillaro. We took to the streets at our Walkathon in addition to the Bronx, White Plains and NYC St Patrick’s Day Parades. Most recently, with your support, the children in our foster care programs became Explorers for a Day at the Bronx Zoo.

Our Hearts to Homes program, that helps young adults as they age out of care has been featured on major media websites and garnered support, financial and otherwise from across the country.

We experienced the joy of the parents and children who graduated from our Head Start program at our 1st Annual alumni gathering of our Head Start families. These families are so thankful that their children have been given the opportunity to start their educational journey in the best possible way.

This is a very exciting time to be a part of Cardinal McCloskey Community Services. While the summer can typically be a time when work slows down it is certainly not the case at CMCS. What this means is more opportunity for growth and expansion, and for CMCS, this means the opportunity to help others.

There isn’t a day that goes by when we are not thankful or aware of the importance of the support we receive from you and your belief in us. That belief means so much to us and to the children, adults and families we serve.

Sincerely,

Beth Finnerty, President and CEO

CMCS Open House on Courtlandt Avenue

CMCS opened our doors to the community at our Early Childhood Education Division offices on Courtlandt Avenue, in the Bronx. We had a wonderful day, and were blessed to have a great showing from the community. So many individuals came out to support our Charter School and all of the programs we provide. The face painting, balloons, bouncy castle and magic show were a huge hit for the children, while the parents spoke with staff and learned more about our services. Many provided feedback and thanks for all that we do.

It was a wonderful way for us to connect with our neighbors. A special thank you goes to the 40th Precinct of the NYPD for their assistance in helping make this a great day for the community.
Cardinal McCloskey Community Services is grateful to our corporate and foundation grantors for their generous support of CMCS programs and projects:

The Strategies for Success Program, an educational advocacy program for youth in foster care, has received grant funding from: Frank J. Antun Foundation, Charles A. Mastronardi Foundation, The New York Community Trust.

Hayden House, our emergency shelter for abused and neglected children in Westchester was awarded grants from: Charles A. Mastronardi Foundation, Ronald McDonald House Charities New York Tri-State Area.

The Sunrise Drop-In Center, a safe haven for homeless, runaway and at-risk youth in the South Bronx, was awarded a grant from New Yankee Stadium Community Benefits Fund, Inc.

Developmental Disabilities Services received grants from Autism Speaks, The Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Inc.

Clinical Services received a grant from The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the City of New York.

Training and workshops were funded by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Hedge Funds Care.

CMCS technology and software needs were assisted through Microsoft.

The Healthcare Reform Learning Lab (made possible by the NY Community Trust and Altman Foundation) awarded CMCS funding for managed care.

General operating grants were awarded to CMCS from Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of NY, Sarah I. Schieffelin Residuary Trust, Syd & Jan M. Silverman Foundation and the Wasily Family Foundation.

CMCS thanks all our funders for their partnership in supporting our response to critical unmet needs of the more than 4,000 families we serve.
Maria Capasso is 18 years old, and has been an active Girl Scout for 13 years. Maria has always been drawn to helping children. When she learned of CMCS’ Hayden House Emergency Residence, Maria was surprised to hear that an emergency residence for abused and neglected children was located in her own community. It made her realize how fortunate she was to have “an amazing support system” in her life. Maria knew at that point that she had a unique opportunity to use the skills she’d learned in Girls Scouts to fuel her desire to help young children in need.

The Gold Award is a service project representing the highest achievement for a Girl Scout. Fulfilling the Girls Scout’s Gold Award by helping these children became her mission.

To get started, Maria first organized a car wash fundraiser so that she could purchase the supplies for her project. At the ready with her plan and supplies, Maria worked with the residents at Hayden house drawing, painting, and writing while discussing the importance of self-expression. Through these discussions the art projects focused on themes of non-violence and social responsibility. The themes were particularly important because these children had grown up in environments where abuse and violence were all too common in their lives.

Maria speaks of the special bond she built with each of the children she worked with and her hope that each of them would take something valuable away from the experience. During her last visit, as Maria said her goodbyes, one of the children hugged her and said that she hoped to do a project exactly like Maria’s so she too can help other children. Maria said she fought back tears realizing that she had impacted this girl’s life and encouraged her to help others.

We are grateful to Maria for reaching out and working with our Hayden House staff and for helping to inspire us. Moreover, congratulations to Maria for achieving her Gold Award from the Girl Scouts for her dedication and work in helping others. 🌟

(To protect the privacy of the children at our Hayden House Emergency Residence we do not publish photos of the children.)
SUNY Charter Schools Institute approves Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School

On June 8, 2017, at their offices on East 55th Street in Manhattan, the SUNY Charter School Committee voted and approved our application for the Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School!

On June 8, 2017, Cardinal McCloskey Community Services was honored to have the SUNY Charter School Committee vote and approve our application for the Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School!

It was a very special moment for so many, who have worked tirelessly to bring additional services and educational opportunities to the children and families we serve.

This was an effort and achievement that was collaborative in nature, collective in its mission, and years in the making. The impact this school can have on children who have suffered trauma and neglect in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the Bronx cannot be overstated.

The truly amazing and rewarding part of this achievement is that every program area within CMCS had a hand in the preparation in this long effort. It is a shining moment for CMCS.

The application and approval process for a charter school is incredibly rigorous and could have only have taken place with the knowledge, professionalism and care from all who were involved.

The school is scheduled to open in September 2018, and we are working diligently to select and review locations and continue with our approval process.

In year one, The Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School will open with 2 grades; kindergarten and first. Each grade will have 3 classes of approximately 25 students. We will add one grade each year until our re-application date (due at the fifth year). It will then be our goal to add additional grades until we are a K-8 school.

The community has rallied behind us and at-risk children will benefit tremendously from the school. The children in CMCS’ care have had to travel to receive many of the important services they require such as clinical and therapeutic support. Many of these types of services will be on-site at the school so they will be more consistent and accessible. With the children spending less time traveling, they will be able to spend more time in the classroom.

We will be sharing news over the course of the next few months about the progress of the Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School. We know that this is when the real work begin, and our team stands ready for the challenge!

Jason Acosta, Nicole Grogan, SUNY’s Susan Miller Carello, CEO Beth Finnerty, Dr. Reva Gershen-Lowy, Dunica Charles (w/daughter) and COO, Dr. William Ursillo
A Beautiful Day on the Hudson

Each year one of our most important and enjoyable fundraising events takes place in Garrison, NY, at the home of Lori and Paul Guillaro. The Guillaro family has hosted the Wine Tasting and Dinner for the last 12 years. It is just one of the many reasons the Guillaros were honored at the CMCS 70th Anniversary Gala in 2016. Their generosity, dedication and commitment to CMCS is always remarkable. It is on full display as they open their beautiful home and welcome both our longtime friends and new supporters who embrace our mission of helping at-risk children and families.

In addition to Lori and Paul, Paul Jones served as our emcee, perfectly mixing some laughter into the event, without losing focus on the children and families we were there to support. Thank you also to Phil Orlando whose expertise in running our “Fund a Need” campaign helped generate over $20,000 in additional donations for several important programming areas.

A highlight of the afternoon was a beautiful and heartfelt speech by Shauntia Aikens. Shauntia is a 22 year old mother of two children, who has spent much of her life in the care of CMCS and our programs. She spoke of her time in foster care and the opportunities and people at CMCS who helped keep her life on track as she tried to distance herself from the negative environments and people in her life. Shauntia thanked everyone who came to her aide over the years from CMCS, how the lessons they taught her have helped her to be the best mother she can. Additionally she described her most recent interaction with CMCS and the Hearts to Homes Program which helped furnish her apartment as she aged out of care. Congratulations to Shauntia!

It was an honor to recognize our very own Noreen Somerville, the first ever recipient of the Chuck Houghton Memorial Service Award. Noreen has worked in the CMCS Foster Care Division for 30 years where she tirelessly cares for, supports and guides the youth in our care. Put simply, Noreen understands the challenges — especially with our teens — and is able to connect with them like few others. Congratulations to Noreen on the honor and thank you for your dedication.

The day wouldn’t be complete without the culinary expertise of Chef Peter X. Kelly of the Xaviar’s Restaurant Group, Mr. Ned Kelly for the beautiful décor and sommelier, Eric Zillier, who gave perfect descriptions of the wine being served from wine connoisseur, Tony Corso. Thank you to all of those who attended and supported the event. We look forward to seeing you next year for the 13th Annual Spring Wine Tasting.
WAYS TO GIVE

In these challenging economic times, CMCS is more reliant than ever on private philanthropy. We have several methods for you to help CMCS continue its life-changing work. You can make your tax-deductible contribution to CMCS in any of the following ways:

**Check:** Please make your check payable to Cardinal McCloskey Community Services and mail it to us in the enclosed envelope.

**Credit Cards:** We accept American Express, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover. Please fill out the enclosed envelope, contact us by phone, or visit our secure website: www.cmcs.org

**Matching Gifts:** You can double your gift to CMCS if you or your spouse work for an organization with a Matching Gift Program.

**Real Estate:** Gifts of personal residence can be made for an immediate income tax deduction. Or, with a retained life estate, the donor or designee can live in their home for the rest of their life. After that time, the real estate is owned outright by CMCS, without the complications of probate proceedings. This gift allows the donor to receive current income deductions for the discounted value of the property.

**Bequest:** You can leave a bequest to CMCS in your will or trust. A donation through your will or trust is fully tax deductible, and enables us to provide critical assistance to those in our care.

**Securities:** You can avoid capital gains tax on securities held long-term and provide an income tax deduction equal to the fair market value at the date of transfer. To transfer securities to CMCS, please contact Kerry Gutekunst at (914) 997-8000 ext. 114 or kgutekunst@cmcs.org.

Please consult with your tax advisor, and thank you for your continued support of CMCS; we could not fulfill our mission without your help!

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Hearts to Homes Garners National Attention

The Hearts to Homes program launched in March of 2016. The idea was formed by two very special supporters of CMCS, Mary Theresa McCombe and Kim Cahill. They were discussing the tremendous challenges and obstacles that children in foster care have faced their entire lives and how tough it must be for them as they age out of care, many completely on their own. Together these women conceptualized the Hearts to Homes program.

Their idea was to put together a “virtual shower” so that generous donors could go online and help furnish apartments with kitchenware, furniture, a television, lamps etc. so these young adults would have a warm, welcoming apartment that they could call home. They believed it would give them a sense of pride and the comfort knowing that there are people who care for them, and that people remained committed to their success.

The program’s name perfectly sums up the effort, from our hearts to your home; “Hearts to Homes.”

The response was immediate. Many people felt connected to this cause as they have seen how difficult it can be when their children venture out on their own with the help and support of their family, but for children in foster care this is a major, and many times frightening transition.

National retailers like Bed, Bath and Beyond and Bob’s Discount Furniture have signed on to the initiative with CMCS and are providing discounts to help these young adults succeed.

In a short amount of time the program has already helped 11 young adults in the greater NY area who have moved into their new apartments with many more approaching the date they will “age out” of care. Through Facebook postings and other social media efforts, donations and requests to help volunteer have come from across the country. Assistance and donations have come from California, Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Virginia and more.

The Hearts to Homes program recently received some major recognition when the video was highlighted on the Upworthy.com website. Upworthy.com has over 10 million followers on Facebook and their mission is to change what the world pays attention to by helping feature programs that have a positive impact on those in need and on our society as a whole.

This program has captured the attention of people across the country who would like to help. A very special thank you to Mary Theresa McCombe and Kim Cahill for their inspiration and hard work. For information on how you can help a young adult aging out of care and looking to lead a healthy, caring and productive life, visit the website at HeartstoHomes.org.
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