



The Next 25

*The 25th Anniversary Campaign for
Horizons for Youth*

Philanthropic Case for Support
November 2016

*“We all live under the same sky,
but we don’t all have the same horizons.”*

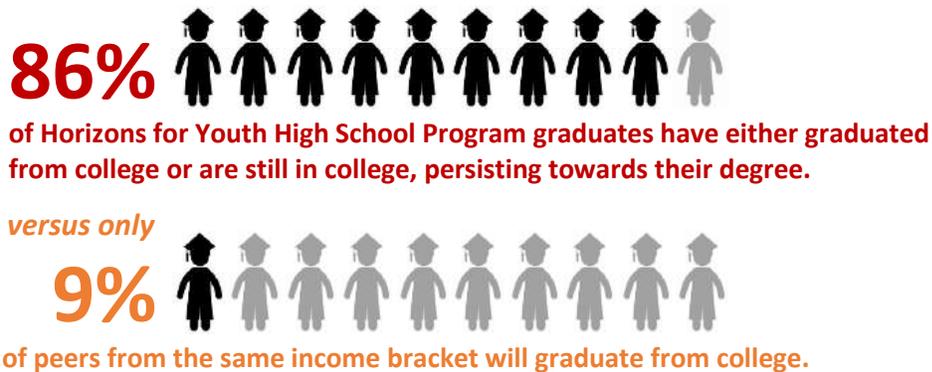
- Konrad Adenauer

Only **9%** of children from low-income families will earn a college degree.

Among Horizons for Youth program participants, the rate is **86%**.

Same profile of kids.
Same neighborhoods.
Same socioeconomic challenges.
Same array of learning abilities.

And yet, a nearly **10-fold increase** in college persistence.



There *are* academic success stories in low-resource neighborhoods.
Horizons for Youth creates them.

The obvious questions:

- *How does Horizons for Youth achieve these remarkable results?*
- *Could the organization be even more effective?*
- *How can we support this incredible success story?*

The Keys to Academic Success

To understand why Horizons for Youth’s kids succeed academically, first ask why *you* did.

That’s what Horizons for Youth’s founders did, 25 years ago. Over an intimate and now legendary breakfast gathering, a handful of altruistic young friends found themselves reflecting on the dismal success rates of children from low-resource neighborhoods. Well-educated and on track to professional success, they wondered what had allowed *them* to succeed where those kids had not.

Their formula was probably the same as yours:



Horizons for Youth’s founders might have stopped the conversation there, gaining nothing more than a deeper appreciation for their own good fortunes.

But this group dared one more question:

Could we *create* that formula for success where it didn’t exist? If we gave children from low-resource neighborhoods *those same advantages* – could kids with the odds stacked against them rewrite their futures?

Turned out, the answer was *yes*.

Turned out, the answer was...*Horizons for Youth*.

“Whatever it Takes”

Determined to focus on kids’ needs rather than barriers, the group started weaving a tapestry of support around the first five Horizons for Youth kindergarteners. They scraped together funds to cover parochial school tuition for a handful of youngsters. When they discovered those kids needed tutors, they found them. When it became evident that positive adult role models would go a long way, they recruited mentors.

There was no prescribed recipe. As founder Mike Murdock explained, “We just concentrated on filling each new need as it came along.”

They didn’t know it, but this organic, “find a way” approach was to become enshrined as a distinctive and enduring part of Horizons for Youth’s organizational DNA: *Listen well. Understand the need. Fill the gap.*

Child by child...family by family...year by year...learn to weave solutions that *work*.



Twenty-five Years of Organic Growth

Under that enterprising, organic, opportunistic approach to growth, the organization evolved. At first, support was guaranteed for two years, then through 8th grade, then eventually through high school. Today, 25 years later, the organization can claim this superlative:

Horizons for Youth is Chicago's first and only organization providing scholarship, mentoring and enrichment programs for children from kindergarten through high school.

That description does little to explain how a full-time staff of just 15 reaches into the high-need areas on Chicago's south and west sides and, year after year, changes lives for 250 students and their families. They do it with a comprehensive program:



Access to high quality schools: As its bedrock, Horizons for Youth ensures a quality education by assisting families with finding high-performing charter schools and private schools across the city. Horizons for Youth pays 90% of tuition; parents pay the balance (still a daunting commitment for families earning an average of \$24,750 a year).



Tutoring: Nearly half of Horizons for Youth students receive tutoring, which is required of every child with less than a B average. For the roughly 15% of its children with diverse learning needs (same as the general population), they hire professional educators at a below market rate.



Mentoring: Every student spends at least five hours a month with their designated Big Sibling, in outings that emphasize new experiences, socialization, and confidence. As parent Socorro V. points out, the impact of this supportive relationship cannot be overstated: "Having someone volunteer to spend time with my son makes such a difference. He learns about careers and sees that there are other possibilities for him that are within reach."



Summer Academic Program: While their peers are losing two-plus months of grade-equivalency (per the research), Horizons for Youth students are posting academic *gains* through an innovative summer academic program.



Enrichment outings: Every month, a total of 500+ Horizons for Youth kids and Big Sibling mentors assemble for a museum trip, skating expedition or similar outing, providing the kind of developmental experiences that are all too rare for children from low-resource areas.



Counseling: Some children face deeper personal challenges that pose barriers to success. Nearly 30 students participate in counseling with certified professionals, provided free of charge.



College preparation: Most Horizons for Youth kids are their family's first to pursue higher education. Horizons for Youth helps them with the daunting tasks of visiting campuses, identifying the best-fit school, securing funding, and navigating the bewildering process of ACT testing, essay-writing and applications.



“All things -- for these kids”

Horizons for Youth’s program is *broad*; business school purists might say *too* broad. Horizons for Youth’s leaders shrug off the critique – or embrace it, and proudly. As Board Chair John Gallo puts it: “We’re not worried about ‘being all things to all people’ – just ‘being all things for *these* kids.’ The corporation is not our model; the *family* is.”

And *family* – with all the complexity, depth and magic that we associate with that word -- is *profoundly descriptive* of Horizons for Youth.

When you break Horizons for Youth down to its component values you understand the “secret sauce” that makes it uniquely effective: it cares for kids *the way a family does*.

Whether you are a family -- or insightful nonprofit -- *here’s* how you ensure kids succeed:



Start early

To build good academic habits, start when kids are young (just like you do with *your* kids). Every new Horizons for Youth family must have at least one child in third grade or earlier.



Commit to the long-term

Guarantee every child a full *17 years* of support (like any family does). Understanding that children’s needs change over time, keep a comprehensive, evolving circle of support in place throughout their *entire* academic career.



Work with *entire* families

Children learn best within a family culture focused on academic attainment. To build that culture, commit to serve *every* kid in the family, not just the gifted or troubled one; develop parents’ life skills as well.



Meet kids where they are

Every kid deserves a chance, regardless of his or her ability level. Provide students of all academic ability levels with the tools they need to succeed. Parent Loretta S. attests to the significance of this, saying, “My daughter would not have received her individual education plan without Horizons for Youth’s support. She is now preparing to enter high school, and Horizons for Youth will go with us, to talk about her needs. They’re my family.”



Hold members accountable

Select families based on just one pivotal element: *parental commitment* to their children’s education. Formalize accountability with an annual contract signed by parents, students and the organization’s staff and volunteers.



Integrate your support

Reject any hint of silos between your academic, social, and emotional support initiatives. Assign each family a program staffer who gets to know them intimately and becomes their “whatever it takes” advocate. Don’t let program parameters get in the way of meeting family needs. “We don’t find kids to fit our programs; we develop programs to fit our kids,” declares Chief Executive Officer Audrey George.



Support the child’s *entire* ecosystem

Be ready: like many families from troubled neighborhoods, Horizons for Youth families encounter disruption: divorce, job loss, fire and flood, eviction, hunger, violence. Be honored: bonds of trust built over years will mean that many families’ first calls for help will come to your staff and volunteers. Be open: Define no request as out of scope (would you say “no” to *your* family?). Rally staff and volunteers to improvise solutions – it’s the Horizons for Youth way.



Pursue justice – ferociously

Where parents may lack the experience and skills to navigate the system, kids may miss out on what they deserve. Close ranks and push back against marginalization. “For example, some kids might not get adequate testing for learning disabilities, or have an individualized education plan that gets overlooked,” says Chief Executive Officer Audrey George. “We are advocates in those cases, and we are tenacious. All children deserve a quality education. Our job is to make sure they get it.”



Uphold high quality level of care

Be uncompromising when it comes to quality of services. Make decisions based on what is best for the kids.



Honor the dignity of every partner

Embrace the culture of equity that grows in this environment, where commitment to kids trumps every other potentially divisive factor between people from very different worlds. Marvel as kids and families, board members and donors all socialize together with genuine warmth, even at your toniest fundraising events. “People in that room come from many different roles and layers of society, but the differences become meaningless almost instantly,” says donor Bernadette Broccoli. “There’s not enough of that in our society.”

When children are born into poverty, there’s no simple or short-term solution. The main thing they lack is a tapestry of enduring, supportive relationships upon which to build – the familial fabric of caring and connectivity that Horizons for Youth provides.

Many organizations “value family.”

Few of them *are* family.

And that is the secret of Horizons for Youth’s success.



Today, that success enters a new chapter, with a major initiative to secure Horizons for Youth’s future – and, thereby, *to secure the future for hundreds more Chicago schoolchildren and their families.*

THE NEXT 25:

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN FOR HORIZONS FOR YOUTH

For 25 years, Horizons for Youth's family of generous donors and sponsors have kept pace with the organization's growth. But as Horizons for Youth expands to serve more children in more refined ways, additional programs and supports are needed – at increased cost.

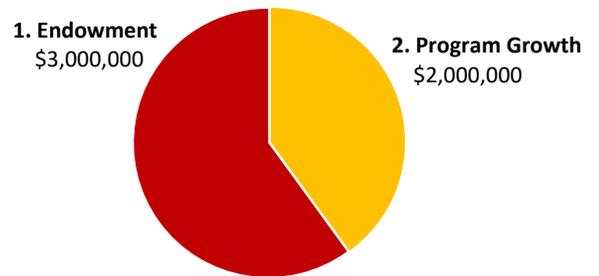
Facing a pivotal point in its history, Horizons for Youth will mount its first-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign. Commemorating our 25th Anniversary, the campaign will...

- **Raise \$3 million to ESTABLISH OUR FIRST ENDOWMENT**, to solidify our financial position and enable student success for years to come,

- **Raise \$2 million to EXPAND OUR PROGRAMS**, including:

- Formalizing our support of students during their college years
- Offering comprehensive, sophisticated support to our students with diverse learning needs
- Serving more children by deepening our presence in the traditionally underserved areas of Chicago's south and west sides, with an initial focus on the Austin community through the Lauren's Hope initiative, and

Campaign Targets



- **EXPAND OUR DONOR BASE** to new supporters who will foster our ability to sustain these initiatives throughout and beyond the campaign.

I. ENDOWMENT TO SECURE STUDENT SUCCESS

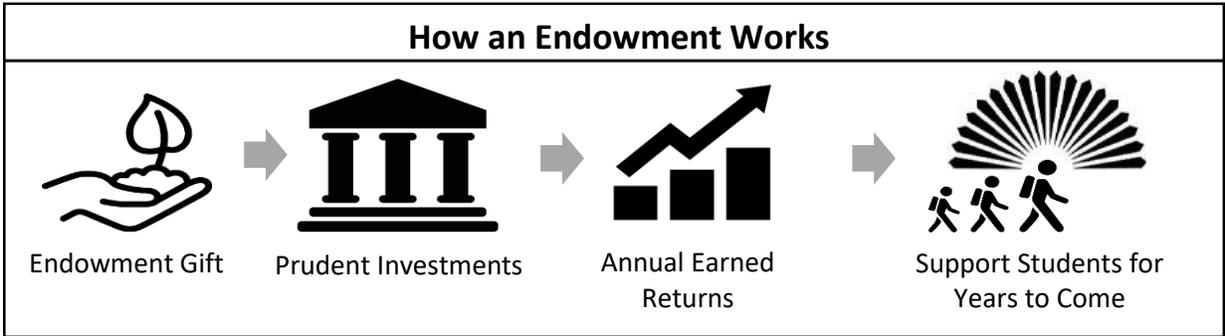
“Because these Kids Deserve It”

For each child entering the program as a kindergartener, we must be prepared to sustain seventeen years of support. The bold commitment we make to Horizons for Youth students and families requires an equally strong commitment to financial sustainability.

Every nonprofit needs a diverse and predictable stream of funding so it can plan and grow with confidence. At this point in Horizons for Youth's organizational maturity, it is time to diversify revenues beyond sponsorship commitments and the annual success of large fundraising events. “For 25 years the organization has been very successful,” says campaign Co-Chair Patrick Collins. “The campaign is about deciding *today* that we're going to be here in another 25 years.”

Establishing an **endowment** will enable Horizons for Youth to generate its own income on an annual basis. A return on the **\$3 million** endowment will supplement annual fundraising and will provide financial flexibility. The effect of that steady funding cannot be underestimated. This campaign will establish a starting point from which we will continue to build over time. The endowment will become a significant source of income as it grows, supporting Horizons for Youth students and programs for years to come.

Campaign Co-Chair Greg Dingens sums it up succinctly. “Why raise an endowment? Because these kids deserve it. This organization is so good that it needs to be around forever.”

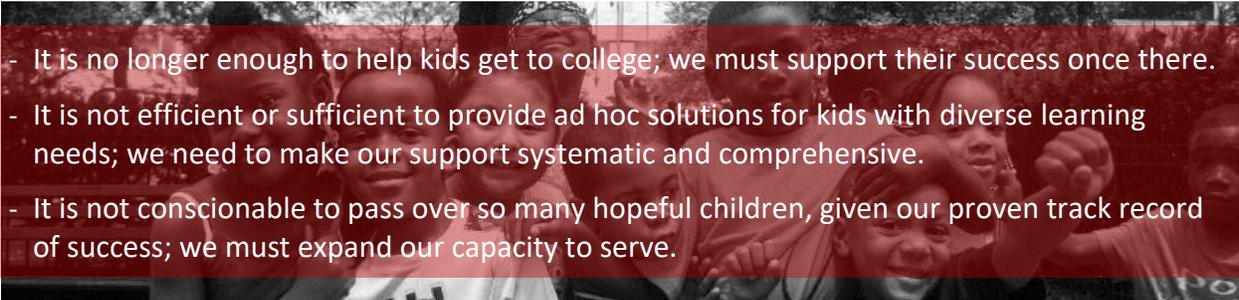


II. FUNDS FOR CURRENT GROWTH

“Responding to the Needs”

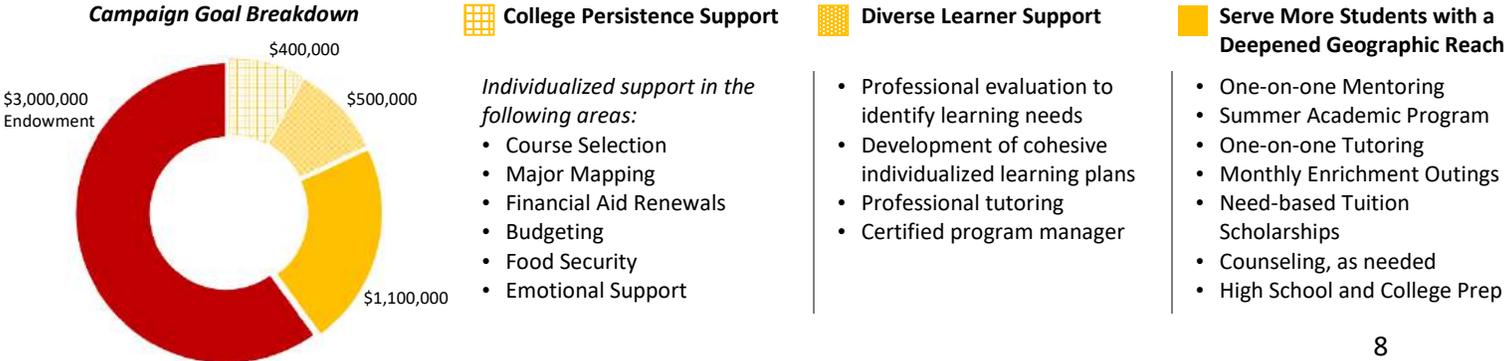
These days, Horizons for Youth’s tapestry of support must stretch tighter, deeper, farther.

Amid Horizons for Youth’s inspiring success stories, there are still far too many hard and powerless moments. Watching a child whose capacity and confidence we have nurtured begin to crumble under the pressure of college. Containing a parent’s anguish over her child’s newly diagnosed learning disability. Referring children and families whose lives we could transform elsewhere simply because there is no more room in the program.



The Next 25 Campaign will address these needs while maintaining the organization’s personal scale. As Board Chair John Gallo explains, “Our intimacy is our strength; that’s why our strategic plan calls for refining the program and making it sustainable for every kid we serve. As we have since the founding, we’re just responding to the needs as they present themselves. In that sense, we didn’t create our strategic plan – our kids did.”

A campaign goal of **\$2 million** will take Horizons for Youth to the next level: expanding our college persistence support (\$400K) and our diverse learner support services (\$500K), with the remaining funds (\$1.1 million) enabling growth from 250 students to 400 by the 2020-2021 school year.



II. A. College Persistence Support

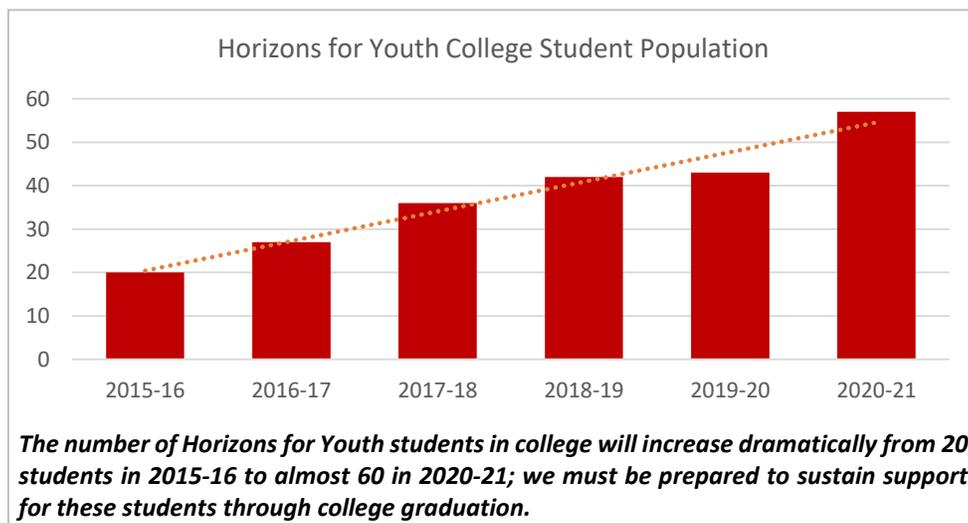
“Based on Real-World Barriers to Graduation”

In the final year of our High School Program, Horizons for Youth positions students for success in college by addressing two common barriers to college graduation: fit and finances. First, Horizons for Youth launches students toward success by helping them determine their best-fit school. Then we go to work to reduce their financial burden: our extensive grant and scholarship research assistance and application guidance helps students cover an average 80% of their total college costs from outside sources.

But that’s where our formal programming has traditionally stopped – just as vulnerable first-generation students pick up the challenge of actually *attending* college.

Without the advice of family members who have been through the experience, first-generation students can quickly feel overwhelmed by a “perfect storm” of uncertainty: financial stress, getting a bad grade, struggling to rebound from failure, not knowing where to turn for help, feelings of isolation, and struggling to fit in socially. Without proper support these self-doubting feelings can spiral, and students end up back home, in debt, and without a college degree.

Of course, as these struggles commence, our graduates tend to look back toward their Horizons for Youth support system; of course, our “whatever it takes” commitment has compelled us to respond. For the past six years, we have informally supported our High School Program graduates during their college career. We have stretched existing resources to meet students’ needs, but our steadily increasing number of college students now requires dedicated support. Families stick together, and it is time for us to formalize our ability to support students through college graduation.



As with all our programs, we listen closely to the needs of our students. Our college support efforts are built around their real-world barriers to graduation:

BARRIER	EXPLANATION	HORIZONS FOR YOUTH SUPPORT
COURSE SELECTION	Even when working with their college academic advisor, students are often placed in classes that will not count toward their major, jeopardizing their prospects for graduating in four years.	Track course selection to major requirements. Teach students to address administrators. Contact administration ourselves if need be.

MAJOR MAPPING	Even though 75% of students will change their major at least once, many schools push freshmen to take courses in their declared major. This practice frequently results in students needing more than four years to graduate.	Map a major path that incorporates general education requirements into freshman year course load.
FINANCIAL AID RENEWALS	Most grants and scholarships require ongoing verification each year or semester. These requirements are often difficult to understand, and students can miss key deadlines for renewing aid.	Remind students of annual deadlines. Assist with completion and review of annual financial aid renewal.
BUDGETING	Most college students are budgeting for themselves for the first time; first-generation college students have extra challenges in learning to do so. Unanticipated expenses of just a few hundred dollars can cause students to get behind financially and keep them from registering for the next semester's classes.	Guide students through budget creation. Mentor students when they run into unexpected financial obstacles.
FOOD SECURITY	An alarming one in three college freshmen has inconsistent access to adequate food, with low-income students most at risk. This can have devastating effects on students' well-being and success.	Ensure that students have money for food. Incorporate food expenses into budgeting process. Identify additional resources if needed.
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	While schools have counselors and supports available, the fear of stigma and shame make it incredibly difficult for many students to speak with a stranger about their personal issues. The pressure to succeed is intense, and they often feel that reaching out for help is a sign of failure.	Maintain communication with regular check-ins. Be a resource students can contact when in need.

These supports, provided for our college students at critical times, have had an extraordinary payoff. With these interventions, Horizons for Youth has enabled an astonishing 86% of students to graduate or persist toward graduation.



II.B. Diverse Learner Support

“Unlock their Ability to Succeed”

Twenty years ago, the teacher of one of our third grade students met with her mother, her mentor, and her Horizons for Youth staffer to explain that Ari had learning challenges and not much should be expected of her. Ari’s mentor, Nancy Owen, with characteristic Horizons for Youth spirit, flatly rejected that projection. Nancy took charge, getting Ari a more nuanced assessment – and learned she had dyslexia. Nancy continued to advocate for Ari, helping her find the resources she needed; with a few key interventions and support from a specialized tutor, Ari began to find academic success. Ari went on to graduate -- *with honors* -- from DePaul University; she later earned a full tuition scholarship to a highly competitive Master’s program at New York University, which she completed in 2014.

Ari represents the 15% of kids who learn differently, and our school system is not properly equipped to address those differences. The key for these children is to determine and secure the interventions and services that can help each child compensate for her challenges.



Faced with this reality, Horizons for Youth leverages key partnerships developed with expert practitioners over many years. Where needed, we provide full battery psycho-educational testing to help identify how each student learns. Visual processing disorder, auditory processing disorder, and dyslexia are common diagnoses. For families who may not have understood why their children were having trouble, this information alone can be life-changing.

But diagnosis is only the first step. Armed with the results, we forge a team response that includes each student’s teacher and own individually-paired professional tutor. Individualized learning plans – along with steady monitoring and advocacy by Horizons for Youth – make it possible for students to develop newfound confidence and, for the first time, unlock their ability to succeed academically.

While we have been effective so far, we need to make our supports more robust and comprehensive. As we grow to serve more children, we expect our number of students with diverse learning needs to grow in tandem. The resulting funding need is significant. But the commitment will enable something that would not otherwise have been possible: the chance for these children to attend and graduate from college.

II. C. Deepened Geographic Reach

“Exponential Impact”

As Horizons for Youth’s founders understood, education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Kids who earn a college degree have a 50% better chance of escaping the bottom-fifth income bracket; their odds of making it into the top-fifth bracket nearly *quadruple*.

But these advantages are only realized by 9% of children in that demographic. At that rate, will higher education’s ability to provide upward mobility ever truly make a difference for the cycle of poverty in Chicago’s south and west sides?

This is the urgent opportunity posed by Horizons for Youth’s remarkable 86% persistence rate: if the organization could serve *more* children, it could have an impact on Chicagoland poverty *far out of proportion to its size*.

The need on Chicago’s south and west sides is immense. Horizons for Youth currently draws heavily from Humboldt Park, Pilsen, and Brighton Park, where the low-income rate is over 60% and well above the city’s average. In the coming years, we will seek to deepen our presence in the neighborhoods of Austin, Englewood, and North Lawndale, which have low-income rates of 56.6%, 72.4%, and 69.9% respectively.

	Neighborhood	Poverty Rate
1	Austin	56.6%
2	Humboldt Park	62.2%
3	North Lawndale	69.9%
4	Pilsen	60.3%
5	Brighton Park	61.4%
6	Englewood	72.4%
	City of Chicago	43.7%



Through this commitment, *Horizons for Youth plans to nearly double its number of children served over the next five years, growing from 250 to 400 students at the kindergarten-college level. During this period of growth, we will add layers of programs and services – and incur associated costs. Philanthropy must enable this growth.*

As Board Member Bob Dunklau says, “Compared to the need, 400 students is still a small number. But consider the real impact these kids will have on their communities. More than role models of success, they will come back as people who have learned the importance of *giving back*. Imagine the effect when they return in the helping professions – as physicians, teachers, pastors, coaches. They will touch their neighborhoods in a million ways, with exponential impact.”

“In giving, we receive.”

Horizons for Youth’s plans for the future are outstripping its traditional sources of support. “Horizons for Youth does whatever it takes, and the result is remarkable,” says long-time supporter Phil Coffey. “But even in a lean organization, impact takes resources. We are outgrowing our success; it’s time to move to the next level.”

The need is urgent, so stakes are high for *The Next 25 Campaign* -- the organization’s first. While campaigning is unfamiliar territory, the organization is confident of success: leaders know the passion that giving instills in Horizons for Youth donors.

“What inspires me is the transformation in the kids,” says student sponsor John Philbin. “They start out shy, but they gain so much from the connections they make. They become amazingly sharp and confident – even worldly. This little community becomes their place, their home, their turf. It transforms them -- and I get to help make that happen.”

That realization changes parents’ lives as well. “I see my son grow and I want to grow with him,” says parent Cyndi V. “That’s why we joined the White Sox volunteer group together. We go on outings and I tell him, ‘This is how you can help someone else, like they help you at Horizons for Youth.’ He loves it, and I love it too.”

“Having such a personal connection with the outcome of the gift is very rare,” says Horizons for Youth founder and campaign Co-Chair Patrick Collins. “You get to see a life changed. When people realize that, they tend to lean in even more. The opportunity to give something and also get something back is not to be missed.”

Student sponsor Bernadette Broccolo echoes Patrick. “As a sponsor, I’ve gotten to know not only the student I support, but his mother and his brother as well. We celebrate their progress together; I watch them make choices they only *had* because of me. These aren’t abstract families but people I have *relationships* with. Other organizations can tell success stories, but at Horizons for Youth, I am *part* of the story.”

Campaign Co-Chair Greg Dingens crystallizes the proposition. “Here’s what the campaign will ultimately make possible: we will be able to look kids and their parents in the eye and assure them that, whatever the challenges of their daily lives, their kids are going to earn a college degree. For the first time in their life, these people have some *guarantee* – something they can take to the bank. That brings incredible peace of mind for a population that deals in insecurity and broken promises.”

Former Board Member Nancy Owen chokes up to think about Ari, who, with the help of her mentorship overcame severe dyslexia, earned both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and now designs costumes for stage and television in New York City. “West and south side families live with constant uncertainty; usually the biggest one is ‘Will my kids be okay?’ When Horizons for Youth takes that question off their plate, it frees up their financial and emotional resources so that they can build other parts of their lives...

