

# SERVICE

# EXCELLENCE

# COMMUNITY

G R O W T H



Annual Report | July 2019-June 2020

#### Dear Friends,

Early this spring the world changed dramatically with the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the nationwide resurgence of civil unrest and social and racial justice movements. This challenging environment surfaced just as the Horizons for Youth community was anticipating the end of the school year, the final countdown to our 9th annual No Ordinary Evening Gala, the celebration of our largest class of graduating seniors, and the announcement that our esteemed leader of 20 years, Audrey George, would be leaving the organization to begin a new chapter in her professional career.

Prior to the seismic events of this spring, the year was rolling along successfully. Internally, a generous grant from the Boler Family Foundation established Shalanda's Scholars—a stalwart program dedicated to meeting the unique needs of Horizons for Youth's 70+ diverse learners. Ms. Chanita Jones—Howard was recruited as the Director of Academic Support Services responsible for growing and enriching this vital program. Ms. Jones—Howard brings 15 years as a leading educator of diverse learning students and is, coincidentally, a Horizons for Youth alumnus (Class of 2004!). Of special note, we celebrated our 20th annual On Cloud Nine event in February. Looking back, we did not know this OC9 would be the last time the Horizons for Youth community would be physically together for many months, making the memories of the evening that much more special.

While the global pandemic touched every facet of our lives as individuals, as an organization, and as a community, all of the Horizons for Youth-staff, students and families, mentors, schools, volunteers, and donors-immediately pulled together to chart our path forward under these unprecedented circumstances. We focused on transitioning our students and families to the highly challenging world of remote learning, maintaining our now-remote tutoring program, and completing the school year. Our plans for the No Ordinary Evening gala, our scholarly End of the Year Celebration, and our graduating senior class' Annual Senior Dinner we also quickly adopted to the virtual world, successfully celebrating these momentous occasions. As July approached, we re-engineered the 2020 Horizons for Youth Summer Academic Program for the virtual world, creating a unique remote model which has proved to be an effective tool for all of our current programming. And, importantly, we conducted a rigorous search to find Horizons for Youth's next Executive Director, ultimately leading to the hiring of Greg Borkowski to succeed Audrey George.

In a year marked by historic societal challenges, Horizons for Youth remained steadfast in proving that our mission is essential now, more than ever before. We communicated openly—individually and collectively—to help better understand the perpetual challenges faced by many in our community. When faced with the grave reminder that our society continues inequitable approaches to individual rights, we continued united around the common goal of breaking barriers to education and helping others reach their full potential. The Horizons for Youth community demonstrated, yet again, our incomparable commitment to supporting our students and families even in the face of tremendous adversity and uncertainty. As we begin our 30th year in 2021, we are deeply grateful to our long-time sponsors and supporters, very proud of the strong foundation we have built, and look forward to serving the children and families of Chicago for decades to come.

Sincerely,
The Horizons for Youth Board of Directors

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## TAKING STOCK

Horizons for Youth has enabled students from Chicago's most under-resourced areas for 29 years. Having started as an idea among friends serving five students in its freshman year, it has grown to serve roughly 253 students and their families in our 2019-2020 year in over 36 Chicago neighborhoods. We are confident in the model that we've developed over the years, as we have always stayed true to the idea that students are only as set up for success as the sum of their many parts are nourished. Thus, Horizons for Youth has taken a wholly rounded, individualized approach to helping students throughout their academic careers and into adulthood.

This year, we chose to revisit and redefine our values during a rare chance for self-reflection that was brought on by the extraordinary circumstances that developed all around us. The chance to examine our mission and our progress led to the affirmation that we are pressing forward, in the right direction, championing those we serve. The priorities that we laid out 29 years ago still remain relevant and hold steadfast. We also had the chance to reiterate the importance of our partnerships. In light of the COVID-19 crisis—which hit our community harder than most—the ability to come together kept our families secure through this time. It is the privilege of forging both long-term and new partnerships that allowed us to make the most impact possible for our students and families. Thank you to each of our partners who recognized the good we could achieve by teaming up.

Our community has grown in trust, strength, and genuine empathy for our fellow human. It is through this sort of impenetrable dedication that Horizons for Youth will continue thriving for decades to come.



**WE ARE IN** 

36 Chicago neighborhoods,

25 elementary schools,

30 high schools,

& 25 colleges across the United States.

1991-





#### **OUR STUDENTS ARE**

52% elementary-aged 24% high schoolers 24% college students,

50% African-American 41% Latino 9% Biracial/other,

with 96% performing at or above grade level.



#### **SERVICE**

Our work exists to help correct inequalities in society through fierce advocacy and commitment to the upward mobility of our families and students.

#### **EXCELLENCE**



To honor our mission, we strive to serve with integrity and passion, holding space for accountability, reflection, and innovation.





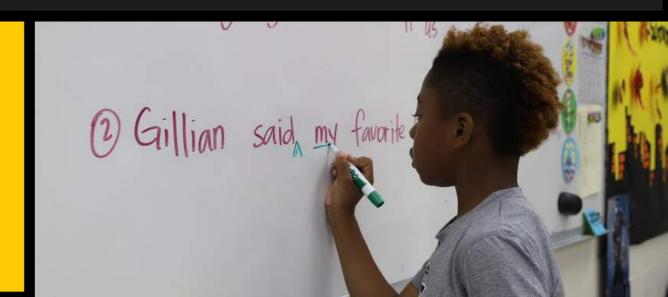
#### **COMMUNITY**

In our partnerships with our families, donors, schools, volunteers, and each other, we emphasize mutual connection, and respect, while nurturing the community that allows us all to thrive.





Individually and collectively, we will continue to learn and explore, growing our reach and understanding of our work, our communities, and ourselves.



#### **Our Mission:**

We are a community committed to helping children recognize and achieve their full potential. We are dedicated to understanding each individual student's need and filling that gap. Through a series of highly coordinated, targeted support services, we create spaces for youth of all ages and academic ability levels to succeed.

Our commitment to serving the individuals with whom we work with every day is at the forefront of our mission and all that we do. From our staff, our Board of Directors, Young Professionals Board, robust group of mentors, tutors, and volunteers, to our individual, corporate, and foundation donor partners, we are all here united under the common purpose of service. In each aspect of our programming, we keep service at the forefront.

Our 2019-2020 programs consisted of our Scholarship Program which brings access to quality education for students whose best-fit school is private; our Tutoring and Counselling program which individualizes students' learning and socio-emotional needs, pairing them with a respective tutor or counselor as needed for the year; our Diverse Learners' Program, which is a highly specialized approach to diagnosing and fulfilling students' unique learning needs; the Summer Academic Program, a month-long summer school program to combat summer learning loss in students; our Big Sibling Mentorship program, which pairs students with 1:1 long-term mentor matches; our community outings, which help students get out and connect with their communities,

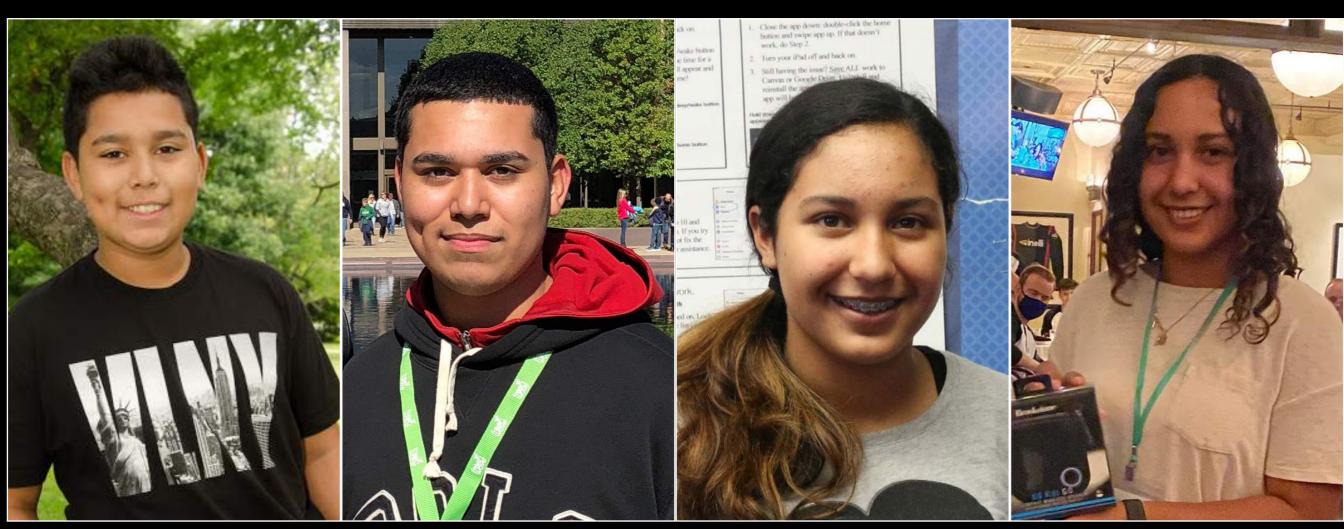
skill-building opportunities, and our High School and College Programs, which are comprehensive support programs for students in those grades, helping them through applications and standardized test prep.

Each program is run by staff members. However, our incredible, vast base of volunteers is at the heart of our success. Our tutors dedicate countless of evenings each year, meeting with their student twice a week throughout the school year. Our outings are accompanied by volunteers to help organize and staff the events. Our Big Siblings dedicate years to their particular 'Little Sib,' often times becoming just as much a member of their family as any other Horizons for Youth community member. These relationships are vital to not only our commitment to service, but to our students themselves. In the 2019-2020 school year, we had 282 active volunteers, including 181 Big Sibling Mentors, join us at various times throughout the year in different capacities. Whether they were helping set up our On Cloud Nine gala, tuning into a May Fitness Month Challenge Zoom yoga class, setting up shop in our Tutoring Center for another week of math and reading drills, their service made our work that much as well as offers career-exploration and better. We are so grateful for all they do!



# EXCELLENCE

In spite of the difficulties that we all experienced throughout the latter part of the 2019-20 school year, our seniors persevered with grace and excellence. The Class of 2020 was 18 strong, all of whom earned their spot on their virtual graduation stage by working hard and never giving up on themselves. Graduates Destiny and Hector are shining examples of the merit of Horizons for Youth alumni. Destiny started with Horizons for Youth in 2012 when she was in 5th grade. In the eight years she's been a part of our program, we have seen her grow tremendously. Having had years of support already, Destiny was able to enter high school with confidence and determination. This spring, she graduated from Northside College Prep High School with honors. Her college journey has begun at Northwestern University, where she earned the privilege of being an Evans Scholar and will be majoring in Engineering. There isn't anything that she has let hold her back before, and we predict that an unusual start to the fall semester due to COVID-19 precautions will be no different. In the same vein, Hector graduated from DePaul College Prep High School this spring. Hector joined us in the fall of 2014 as a 7th grader. He needed a more individualized approach to his classroom work which Horizons for Youth was able to provide his own learning style and were able to provide him with specialized services which would help him thrive. Hector has made many friends here throughout the years and continues his strong relationship with his mentor, Shane. Now that he is in college, he will continue being a part of our community through our College Program, which will help support him during his years at Arrupe College of Loyola. Our college students continue being part of our program in a unique way that perpetuates our belief that they will achieve excellence thanks to the years of hard work they've put in up to this point. We have no doubt that both Hector and Destiny—as well as all of our 2020 graduates who are attending different colleges aroun





#### **Digital Divide**

The Digital Divide refers to a blatant difference in access to technology that exists almost exclusively along the income gap line. Many Horizons for Youth students and their families found themselves in a new disadvantage when the COVID-19 crisis hit—suddenly the lack of computers or tablets per student in their homes meant the difference between their students' success or failure at school. We knew that we would have to do all that we could to address this blatant roadblock. Thanks to the quick work of staff and the incredible generosity of our individual donor network, we were able to secure 30 laptops which were then donated to the families who needed them most. In addition, we are expecting another 30 laptops thanks to the generosity of the Service Club of Chicago that will live in our Tutoring Center but will be loaned to families as needed during virtual schooling to ensure that each household student is able to login and succeed.

#### **Family Funds**

As COVID-19 ravaged the global, national, and local economy, the Horizons for Youth community also felt its harsh consequences. Our families, in one of the most vulnerable socioeconomic strata experienced unprecedented furloughs, layoffs, and wage loss, resulting in a moment of unprecedented need. Suddenly, families were worrying not about how their student would finish up the school year, but about how their student would continue having a roof over their head through the end of the month. Our team took swift action in emphasizing our Emergency Family Fund. While this is a service we have always offered, we recognized the unique moment we found ourselves in and pivoted our fundraising strategy to accommodate this reality. With the help of many generous donors, including A Better Chicago, we were able to distribute multiple rounds of direct relief to families in the form of Visa and Target gift cards. These were put to good use, ensuring that families were taken care of in their need to secure rent, utilities, food, and hygiene necessities.

#### **Sunday Meals**

In the same vein as our Emergency Family Fund, our incredible donors realized early on during the COV-ID-19 crisis that our families would have unique challenges due to the economic fallout. Thus, the Sunday meal delivery service was born. Through our network of volunteers, we were able to meet the immediate needs of our families by delivering ready-made meals each Sunday during the early months of COV-ID-19. With safety being at the forefront of our priorities, we were able to collect warm meals from donors through contactless pickups and deliver these meals to the families that needed them most. Over 30 volunteers hand-delivered 157 multi-serving meals over the course of 16 weeks. This helped feed our 122 families and 253 students. When our families needed help most this year, the community that makes up Horizons for Youth answered with incredible grace and generosity. We continued uplifting one another in these moments.











In a year marked with such unique challenges, Horizons for Youth had the opportunity to grow our mission and our vision for the future. This came, in part, by the announcement of the departure of our Chief Executive Officer, Audrey George. With 20 years of service and dedication to the organization, Audrey decided to set out on her next professional endeavor. Consequently, we were happy to announce Greg Borkowski as our new Executive Director. With a long career in non-profits and fundraising, Greg's background and skills will lay the groundwork for the next chapter of Horizons for Youth's story. We set our sights on the 30th anniversary of our organization coming in 2021. In three decades, we have been able to grow from a handful of kindergarteners' tuition support, to a full-fledged, full-service educational community for over 250 students. Our program expanded to include high schoolers in the early 2000s, college students shortly thereafter, and specified separate supports for diverse learners throughout this time. In looking towards the next step in our expansion, we will continue to offer all of our programming, while adapting for a substantially different world from which we emerged following last year. We are excited to forge new partnerships with corporate and foundation partners and continue the important conversation of where and how our impact is greatest with our families and donors.

In the spirit of continuing the conversation, we've taken many steps this past year to continue involving stakeholders in our plans. With the COV-ID-19 crisis, and the subsequent pivots our programs took, we involved parents, volunteers, and students every step of the way. Notably, we hosted a series of Parent Cafés to bring our community closer together. While this has always been a practice, the circumstances called for more frequent participation as we planned for the remaining months of virtual schooling, virtual tutoring, and virtual gathering. Parents were also invited to participate in the tough conversations that have dominated the national dialogue in the past six months. Each virtual meeting served as a safe space for parents, staff, and sometimes mentors to come together and talk through issues of race inequity and inequality as they come up in our everyday lives, in our work, and beyond. With high turnout and participation, we felt proud of a community that is willing to have this kind of open dialogue, no matter how difficult it may be

These are the kind of moments in which we are actively investing in our future as a whole. The entire community of Horizons for Youth continues to help plan for our next chapter while holding space for the conversations and adjustments that may come along the way. We will enter our 30th year ever-united and ever-evolving to fulfill the mission that our founders envisioned.

# RESULTS AND

of Horizons for Youth alumni graduate from college.

2020 high school seniors received 154 college acceptances and over \$1.2 million in scholarship offers

of Horizons for Youth alumni graduate from high school.

of their college cost is secured by our graduating high school seniors.

of our students, aged K-12, performed at or above grade level in the 2019-2020 school year.

of our students were matched during the 2019-2020 school year with a Big Sibling Mentor. **253** 

K-College **Students** 

**282 Active Volunteers** 

Full-Time, **Dedicated Staff**  Corporate Donors, \$100+

Foundation Donors,

Individual Donors, \$100+

in-Kind Donors

SOURCE BX

16%

34%

**50%** 

\$100+ INDIVIDUALS **SPECIAL EVENTS** REVENUE



### PARTY ON!

#### TWENTY YEARS OF ON CLOUD NINE!

The annual On Cloud Nine gala raised over a record-breaking \$815,000 in its 20th year. We gathered with over another record-breaking 800 guests to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Paige Barnett and Lauren Heath. This also marked the very first Audrey George Award, which will highlight Audrey's incredible legacy with Horizons for Youth by honoring an individual with the same passion for hard work in the sake of the greater good. A special thank you to the Barnett family and the OC9 event committee, especially our Co-Chairs, Ron and Kim Lemar, for making this event possible. During a night filled with old friends catching up, unmatched generosity, and dancing 'til the lights came on, we were reminded that, together, we can achieve amazing things.

#### **VIRTUAL SUCCESS FOR NO ORDINARY EVENING!**

Even with the misfortune of having to cancel our 9th in-person No Ordinary Evening gala, this amazing community was still able to pull together to honor Declan Drumm Sullivan's legacy. We are eternally grateful for the hard work that Barry, Alison, Wynn, and Mac Sullvan put into making No Ordinary Appeal such a success! We raised over \$540,000 throughout this campaign and were still able to gather virtually, raising a glass in honor of Declan and Declan's Class. Declan's Class of students reached 100 this year, thanks to the generosity of our supporters. Even under these unique circumstances, the No Ordinary Evening community knows how to show up and throw a celebration honoring this incredble legacy.

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