ANNUAL REPORT Fiscal Year 2018-2019



And Yet, They Thrive SONICS

From **Our CEO**

Dear Friends,

There is no inherent difference in the underlying potential for a child born to parents of different means, and yet, society dictates that opportunities be unequally distributed. The circumstances in which children are raised will present opportunities or disadvantages that effect their entire future. The likelihood for college completion or even high school graduation decreases sharply for those living in many Chicago neighborhoods. Regardless of how dedicated a parent is or how hard a student works, significant barriers have been built to thwart their efforts.

For the last 28 years, Horizons for Youth has partnered with parents to enable their children to have access to opportunities missing in many neighborhoods. We work closely with families and schools to eliminate barriers to a quality education and to provide wrap-around support services that are key to achieving success. While society keeps telling us what can't be done, we pride ourselves on helping our students navigate the ways around, over, and even through the obstacles placed in their way.

While the challenges facing our students can seem insurmountable, our community of committed volunteers, donors, and staff members all work tirelessly to create opportunities that would otherwise not exist. There are overwhelming obstacles, and unfair odds placed in the path of our students' success - and yet, they thrive.

Sincerely,

Audrey George Chief Executive Officer

Horizons for Youth was created through the power of optimism. Our founders understood that despite the limitations we oftentimes view as unmoving, the potential to thrive is there. Students can find personal and academic success, despite their challenges. We have always accepted students into this program whose parents demonstrate determination. Our model makes the difference for families, allowing for students to approach of all academic abilities to achieve their potential.

What do we mean when we talk about barriers?

In the United States, only eleven percent of students school through a new lens-one of opportunity, rather from low-resource neighborhoods are expected to than barriers. By partnering together, we have demongraduate college. Here at Horizons for Youth, we break strated that the right set of supports can enable students through barriers by helping students achieve an eightyfour percent college persistence rate. By identifying why students are being left behind, we are making a difference. This starts with access to quality schools - not when they are halfway through their academic careers, Oftentimes, we are unable to see past our own experiencbut right away. Financially unavailable for far too many es. Certain opportunities or disadvantages become so enstudents, we are able to break through this crucial barrier grained in our lives, that we do not recognize how they may for our families. From there, our program has been deor may not present themselves in others' lives. The families signed to help our students thrive academically and in all we serve are made up of strong and persevering individuals. aspects of their lives.



"I always thought I was a single parent-until Horizons for Youth came along." -NICOLE, PROGRAM PARENT

However, changing the narrative is not just their burden to bear: change is everyone's responsibility. This is at the heart of Horizons for Youth. In order to break the cycle of poverty, push past the external prejudices, and bring equitable opportunities to children in our communities, we identified what opportunities are commonplace for some and not for others.

MANY STUDENTS ARE LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE SCHOOLS DO NOT HAVE DIVERSE LEARNER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

STUDENTS LOSE 2.6 MONTHS OF READING AND MATH SKILLS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS, PARTICULARLY EFFECTING LOW-RESOURCE NEIGHBOHOODS.

STUDENTS FROM LOW-RESOURCE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE 4X MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL.

FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO LEAVE SCHOOL AFTER THE 1ST YEAR.

> ONLY 11% OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GRADUATE COLLEGE.

Yet, at Horizons for Youth,

High **Schools** 36 Neighborho 703 W MONROE ST. **263 Students 33 Colle** qes Volunteers Elementary Families Schools Serveo

84% OF OUR ALMUNI HAVE GRADUATED OR ARE ENROLLED IN COLLEGE.

> 99% OF STUDENTS WHO FINISH OUR PROGRAM GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL.

OUR SUMMER ACADEMIC PROGRAM GIVES STUDENTS A CHANCE TO MAINTAIN SKILLS DURING THE SUMMER. ALMOST 90% OF PARTICIPANTS MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE THEIR MATH AND ENGLISH SKILLS.

DIVERSE LEARNERS UNDERSTAND THEIR LEARNING NEEDS THROUGH DIAGNOSTIC TESTING AND WITH RESOURCES INCLUDING TUTORING & TEACHER TRAININGS.

OUR PROGRAMS START IN ELEMENTARTY SCHOOL, GIVING STUDENTS THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS. WE HAVE PROGRAMMING ALL THE WAY THROUGH COLLEGE GRADUATION TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE SUPPORTED.

Meet Our Families: The Valero Children



One of the most powerful tools for helping students overcome barriers is a strong and dedicated parent advocating on their behalf. Teresa is one of those parents. The importance of a college education has always been a priority in her household and she has always strived to provide opportunities for her children to receive a quality education. While working hard to balance full-time work and raising her children, Teresa herself was eventually able to earn her Bachelor's degree. After her own struggle, Teresa committed to providing her children with every opportunity possible. Teresa's four children–Jose, Alexis, Marco, and Nico–are hard workers who have learned a strong work ethic from their mother. Each of the children has a different learning style, and each has needed different supports to achieve their full potential.

Jose and Alexis are strong students who had the academic foundation to be successful in college, but were unfamiliar on how to navigate the application process and college life. Their admittance into the Horizons for Youth High School Program was a turning point. This program focuses on the importance of self-advocacy and learning responsibility, while providing access to the tools that many families struggle to obtain. Both children began building their confidence as they progressed through and prepared themselves to begin their college track. Jose and Alexis were able to visit different college campuses and envision themselves succeeding at their best-fit college. With help securing financial aid and scholarships, both Jose and Alexis were able to find ways to fund college that were not otherwise considered viable. Jose is currently in his senior year at Illinois State University, while Alexis is a junior at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Teresa's advocacy on Marco's behalf is what originally led the family to Horizons for Youth, as she understood that his diverse learning needs were not being addressed through traditional school means. As a third grader, in a new school, Marco had to work harder to adjust to his new curriculum and learning environment. Horizons for Youth was able to provide Marco and his mother with some clarity through proper evaluations as to what resources Marco would benefit from academically.

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"Horizons for Youth is there to advocate for your children and present them with new opportunities and more than what any parent alone can present for them."

-TERESA, PROGRAM PARENT

Marco started understanding his learning style and gained confidence through one-on-one tutoring and time spent with his mentor. Horizons for Youth was able to place Marco in a better-fit school for his learning needs. Now Marco, a high school freshman interested in robotics and tech, is thinking about his future.

Teresa's youngest son, Nico, is a second-grader, discovering his path and interests at his school. Teresa was uncertain where Nico should begin his academic journey and allowed Horizons for Youth to help find his best-fit school as he started kindergarten. He is now following in his brother's footsteps with a growing interest in robotics and math.

Horizons for Youth has helped bring each of Teresa's four chilrdren out of their shells, building confidence in themselves and their futures with each passing year. Both Alexis and Jose still have Horizons for Youth in their corner, even away at college. Alexis has even expanded her connection to Horizons for Youth as an office intern. Marco is gearing up for the college process and Nico will continue benefitting from all of the programming offered for each stage of school. Teresa remains grateful to have a team that continues to advocate for her children alongside her tireless efforts. Working together, our students are able to break through their barriers and thrive.

Overcoming Barriers



SUMMER LEARNING LOSS EFFECTS LOW-RE-SOURCE COMMUNITIES DISPROPORTIONATELY. Josiah started struggling with reading and math towards the end of 3rd grade. While he had previously kept up with classmates, something just wasn't clicking. Luckily, Horizons for Youth was able to offer Josiah extra attention during our Summer Academic Program. During the entire month of July, Josiah attended the program, where he received one-on-one attention to practice his reading and his math skills. This built Josiah's confidence, and, by the end of the summer, he tested a full 11% higher than when he'd started the Summer Academic Program. Summer learning loss effects every student. However, students from low-resource communities are disproportionately susceptible because of institutional barriers to services that help combat this phenomenon. With the help of Horizons for Youth, Josiah started 4th grade not only caught up to his classmates, but ahead of the curve.



DIVERESE LEARNERS ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND.



ACCESS TO QUALITY SCHOOLS IS DRAMATICALLY LIMITED IN MANY NEIGHBORHOODS.

Finding a quality high school is especially challening. When Genesis was in 8th grade, she was on the cusp of starting high school and feeling unsure about this big step. Her default high school didn't seem like the right fit, and her family was unsure of how to get her into the right school on their own. With Horizons for Youth in her corner, Genesis had the opportunity to explore different high schools and make sure she would receive the right quality education. Preparing our eighth graders for high school is a large part of Horizons for Youth's mission. We are fighting for their opportunities, empowered by the knowledge that, statistically, many of our students are expected to fall through the cracks. Genesis is now a high school freshman who has found her passion for school and is achieving academic success. She is on the swim team and takes as many art classes as her schedule will allow. She is thriving.



Mentor Profile: Peter and Bryce

Bryce and Peter met six years ago when they were paired at our Back to School Picnic. Bryce was in kindergarten, just starting to learn how to develop relationships and getting to know Horizons for Youth. Peter was a new Chicago resident hoping to volunteer and make a lasting impact. Bryce and Peter started attending our group outings together and took to one another quickly. Their relationship continued to grow through their one-on-one outings, and over the years they have built an unbreakable bond. Regular visits to Al's Grill for breakfast has become their favorite activity. Peter and Bryce talk with ease, going over their days, new video games, sports stats-anything. Together, exploring the city has become an exciting past-time. Their

families have grown connected as well. Peter is close with all of Bryce's siblings and talks with his mom regularly. Bryce has also become close with Peter's wife, Ashley. In fact, Bryce and his family were special guests at Peter and Ashley's wedding last year.

As Peter explains: "Seeing Bryce grow up the last six years has profoundly changed my outlook. I am grateful to be a part of his life and to witness the tangible changes as he grows up and begins to find his place in the world." Bryce's mother, Tineshia, has tremendous praise for Peter: "I truly could not ask for a better role model and support for my son. Peter isn't just Bryce's mentor, he is part of our family!"





ACCESS

Success starts with access to quality schools. Early intervention is critical to building a strong foundation for a student's education, so we assist incoming parents with selecting the right school for their child beginning in the early elementary school years. Charter and selective-enrollment public schools provide strong options for roughly 50% of our students. For students without access to top-tier public schools, we ensure they still receive a quality education by providing 90% tuition scholarships to quality private schools, with parents paying the remaining 10%.



MENTORSHIP

Mentorship is a cornerstone of our programming, all students are matched with a one-on-one Big Sibling mentor. Research proves that strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with non-parental adults are vital to students' development. We design monthly outings for students and their Big Siblings such as service projects, fun community events, and skill building activities for older students. Our pairs spend at least two days a month together, many seeing each other weekly. Many students and their families establish deep, meaningful relationships with their mentors that last years after their schooling is completed. They evolve into life-long companions.



TUTORING AND COUNSELING

Our students have access to quality tutoring and certified counseling services based on their needs. One-on-one volunteer tutoring helps students focus on those subjects with which they need extra support. For our diverse learners, tutors certified in special education ensure that each student receives the individualized approach needed to match their learning style. Counseling is also available to students and their families. As deep personal challenges pose barriers to success, we must make sure that the emotional needs of our students are being met.



SUMMER ACADEMICS

Throughout the summer months, students lose up to two months of academic development. The "summer slide," as this phenomenon is typically called, affects low-income students disproportionately, as their access to academic resources is limited from June-August. To combat this, Horizons for Youth hosts a month-long, free Summer Academic Program. Academics, alongside plenty of physical activity, gives our students a healthy way to stay productive during the summer months.

Imagine being a student who struggles in school. You work hard every day, but you can't keep up. Some days you easily understand a concept, and other days you just can't grasp that same topic. Students who experience this discrepancy often have a special learning style that goes unidentified. Now imagine that you have been diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder. While difficult to accept at first, this knowledge ultimately unlocks the key to your success. You need to receive information visually to understand it, and you are taught how to adjust accordingly. Your teacher and your parents are coached in how to support you, and now you are keeping up and even thriving in your classes. Nearly 31% of Horizons for Youth students are diagnosed with diverse learning needs thanks to our diagnostic testing. From there, we work with schools, parents, and teachers to create Individualized Education Plans that support each child's learning needs and make school accessible

once again.

Our Model



DIVERSE LEARNERS

HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE PREP

Starting in eighth grade, students begin to hone their application, interview, and research skills by searching out their right fit high school. We also have these students apply to become part of the Horizons for Youth High School Program as an intentional message to start shifting their perspective. High school means taking charge of their own choices. We foster independence in our prep program by guiding and providing resources, but ultimately letting our students exercise their maturity. Once in high school, our college prep program is quintessential to our students' journeys. We provide the materials: the ACT prep books, the volunteer tutors who proofread essays, the mock interviews, the scholarship hunt gameplan, the campus visits—our students do the rest. Working hard, together, ensures that our students enter their best-fit college with at least 80% of their tuition covered through grants and scholarships.



This fall, we launched our Giving Societies to honor and thank our donors who have invested in the collective future of our students.



INSPIRED BY THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND OUR STU-DENTS, THE GIVING SOCIEITIES ARE NAMED FOR IMPORTANT MILE-STONES OR MOMENTOUS OCCASIONS COMPLETED BY OUR STU-DENTS THROUGHOUT THEIR ACADEMIC CAREERS AT HORIZONS FOR YOUTH. THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS FOR BELEVING IN OUR MIS-SION AND OUR STUDENTS.

2020 Vision

In the new fiscal year, Horizons for Youth is celebrating a number of milestones and looking ahead to the upcoming years for our organization. This fall marks the 20th year of our fearless leader's tenure. Audrey George joined Horizons for Youth in 1999 as our first Executive Director, later becoming the Chief Executive Officer. In her time here, she has grown the organization profoundly. Audrey has overseen the expansion of programming from an elementary school focus to include high schoolers, and then college students. We have grown from 42 students in 1999 to 263 in the past school year. Our Diverse Learners Program launched in 2016 and now serves 79 students. While originally partnered with private schools exclusively, we now have relationships with many public schools across the city as well. Twenty years of Audrey's leadership has made an incredible impact on our model, our reach, and our future.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the On Cloud Nine Gala in partnership with the Barnett family. Kent Barnett and Lauren Heath first partnered with Horizons for Youth in 2000 to honor the sudden loss of their daughter, Paige. We worked together to create On Cloud Nine, a cocktail party fundraiser that has raised over \$5 million for the programs of Horizons for Youth. Tragically, the focus of the event was expanded to also honor Lauren, who passed away from brain cancer in 2015. Lauren was a tireless advocate for equality in education, and we are proud to continue her efforts to bring better opportunities to children in low-resource neighborhoods. We will honor Paige and Lauren with a very special 20th Anniversary of On Cloud Nine on February 1, 2020.



Congratulations to the Class of 2019

Congrats to Sophia, Dejah, Xavier, Shirbriya, Moises, Krystal, and Jessica. With over \$4.6 million in college tuition scholarships secured, this bright group enrolled in the following schools: University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, University of Wisconsin-Madison, John Carroll University, and Parkland College. We wish them luck but we know they will be successful in their college careers and beyond!





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