

# HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

## FY 2013 REPORT



Harlem Children's  
**ZONE**

## Supporting the Entire Child—and an Entire Community of Children

The Harlem Children's Zone® enjoyed another year filled with exciting achievements: 100% of our Pre-K Gems® tested school-ready; we had 841 students in college; and, in total, over 22,000 children and families in our 97-block Children's Zone® benefited from our comprehensive network of cradle-through-college supports. While these numbers speak for themselves, they hardly begin to describe the formidable challenges our youth face, the tireless devotion of our staff, or the sheer scope of our efforts to revitalize Central Harlem and give our kids a real shot at the American dream.



*Pre-K Gems Graduation Ceremony*

We are supporting the growth of the entire child and an entire community of children—12,316 in all during fiscal year 2013. The key to sustaining the unprecedented scale of our work is evaluation. We are constantly assessing the “hard” data gathered by our expert evaluation team, which tracks over 500 goals each year, as well as the “soft” data gathered by our staff on the ground, in order to ask: Are we doing enough to help our kids succeed?

Our responsiveness to whatever challenge arises, whenever it arises, is not only central to the success of our youth, but also has made us a leading model for fighting poverty, reforming education, and securing the future for all of our nation's children.



*2013 Peace March*

## Laying Down Roots in the St. Nicholas Houses

In June, we celebrated the opening of our new 135,000-square-foot Promise Academy I school building and community center in the heart of the St. Nicholas housing development. We have always been drawn to the toughest cases in the toughest neighborhoods, and St. Nick is no exception. With this facility, we are bringing the best of everything—exceptional education, health and social services, and enrichment activities—to a community that has traditionally suffered some of the greatest challenges.

We are doing all we can to ensure that families from the complex reap the benefits, in part by giving St. Nick kids priority in the Promise lottery and making the building available for community use on nights and weekends. But it is not just about helping residents be a part of HCZ. By providing 24-hour security, improving local safety, and turning the block into a through street, we also are helping to reintegrate St. Nick into the surrounding community after almost 60 years of being closed off, and thus fueling the revitalization of the whole neighborhood. What was once an insular enclave is now a microcosm of our approach throughout the Zone and a working blueprint for public housing and education nationwide.



*Future Class of 2030  
at Our New School Building*

## Geoffrey Canada's TED Talk: "Our failing schools. Enough is enough!"



Last spring, HCZ's President and CEO, Geoffrey Canada, was featured in TED's first-ever original television special alongside education luminaries such as Bill Gates and Sir Ken Robinson. Geoff's TED talk was one of his most inspired speeches to date and captured our commitment to using innovation to improve education: "This innovation issue is absolutely critical. America cannot wait another 50 years to get this right. There is an educational cliff we are walking over right this very second." At HCZ, we refuse to let our kids go over the edge. Watch the full talk at [ted.com](http://ted.com).

## 12,000 Kids, One Goal— College Graduation

Last year, our College Success Office (CSO) worked with 841 students, many of whom are the first in their families to go to college. As of June, we had a total of 136 college graduates—82 from four-year schools and 54 from 2-year schools. For many of our students, college is a struggle—but one that we know they have the talent and tenacity to overcome.

*After a difficult first semester, Natalie was dismissed from SUNY Oswego. With coaching from her CSO advisor, she appealed the dismissal and was put on probation for the spring. Refocused and armed with strategies to be successful, Natalie finished the spring semester with a 2.92 GPA. Bolstered by her achievement, Natalie is taking greater responsibility for her education. In preparation for the fall 2014 semester, she met with her academic advisor, who is also the chairperson of her department, and established benchmarks to ensure her timely graduation with a degree in Accounting.*

It is perseverance like Natalie's that is helping our youth stay the course and create a college-going culture in Harlem. Last year, 95% of our high school seniors from both Promise Academy and traditional public schools applied and were accepted to college, winning over \$20 million in scholarships and grants.



One of Our 841 College Students

## The Dual "Pipeline"—A Culture of Success

Students take one of two paths through our dual "pipeline." During FY 2013, we worked with over 7,700 K-12 students in traditional New York City public schools through our in-school and after-school programs, plus another 1,500 students in our two Promise Academy Charter Schools. No matter which path our kids take, we hold them to the same rigorous standards, carefully monitoring and supporting their academic performance and overall well-being.



## “A Superhero Strategy”—at Scale



*In Motion*



*In Thought*



*In Nature*



*In Tune*

We refer to our seamless system of in-school and after-school best-practice programs as a “conveyor belt,” ushering children through each stage of academic and personal development, from early childhood to college graduation. This term captures the consistency of our programs—once kids hop on, no matter their age, we keep them moving forward—yet it does not quite do justice to their scale or our stellar staff.

This last year, our AmeriCorps members, or “Peacemakers,” provided day and after-school support to almost 2,400 elementary school students in the seven public schools across the Zone. We served another 5,300 elementary, middle, and high school students through our after-school programs and beacon community centers.

All of our after-school programs include extensive academic support—but the hook that gets students engaged and keeps them coming back is the incredible caliber and range of our enrichment activities. Youth have the opportunity to pursue robotics, graphic design, karate, photography, cooking, and music and video production, as well as to run track, play tennis, stage plays, compete in chess tournaments, and so much more. In the process, they develop important skills, discover the rewards of commitment, gain confidence, and get exposure to potential career paths.

Derek and Angel are just two of the thousands of students who are beating the odds with the support of our unparalleled staff.

*At the beginning of his senior year, Derek was quiet and withdrawn. He struggled socially and got into several fights at school. Staff at his after-school program stepped in and, seeing his interest in music, invited him to intern in the program’s recording studio. Derek blossomed in his new role, earning greater responsibility in the studio and serving as a role model for his peers. Growing personally and socially also helped Derek improve academically. Before starting his internship, Derek was failing English and had a low “C” average. By June, he had raised his English grade to an 81 and graduated with an 82.5 GPA. When it was time for Derek to attend Tompkins Cortland Community College this fall, his program staff stepped in once again, taking him up to school because his mother is disabled and could not drive him herself.*

*Angel was one of our most at-risk youth when he began attending an HCZ after-school program in 10th grade. He belonged to a gang, had a learning disability, and routinely missed school. Nevertheless, Angel had excellent attendance in after-school, where the Student Advocate overseeing his academic case connected with him and engaged key stakeholders in his education—most importantly, his mother. With her support, Angel raised his GPA from a 55 to a 70 and made college prep a top priority. Last year was Angel’s senior year. Not only did he graduate high school, but he was accepted to college and now attends the College of Staten Island, where he continues to do well.*

## The Promise “Pipeline”

Last year, 98% of our second Promise Academy senior class was accepted to college, and several won full rides to high-ranking schools, such as Wheaton, Bowdoin, and the University of Rochester.

Across grades, we aim to foster both depth and breadth of knowledge through a well-balanced education that includes study in the arts and exposure to New York City’s vast cultural opportunities. This past year, we launched a new partnership with Jazz at Lincoln Center, significantly expanding the scope and quality of our music programming and giving our children a newfound appreciation of the history of Harlem. So far, the partnership has reached over 1,100 children from pre-school through high school.



*Promise Academy High School Graduation*

## Early Childhood Education: Starting with the Family

During the year, we worked with over 1,200 children in our early childhood programs, which form the base of our dual pipeline. 100% of our Gems—230 kids in all—were assessed to be school-ready or better. Plus, 483 parents graduated from The Baby College® (TBC), which teaches parenting skills and infant development to new and expectant parents through group workshops and home visits. To date, more than 4,000 parents have graduated from TBC.



*The Baby College*

If, as some say, the 21st-century job market calls for a 21st-century education, then we believe it has to begin with early childhood and has to include parents and caregivers, giving them the expertise and tools they need to take care of both their children and themselves.

## Anne Williams-Isom’s Shop Talk: Proving Strategies, Finding Solutions



Since joining HCZ four years ago, COO Anne Williams-Isom has introduced a number of innovative initiatives—foremost among them, HCZ Stat. Stat brings together senior leadership and front-line staff to review the most challenging of 3,000 middle and high school student cases. The roundtable format puts staff on the spot to justify the reasoning behind their decision-making and to develop concrete strategies to improve student outcomes. The discussion is difficult, but also hugely productive, ensuring that all our kids receive the support they need and fostering a deeper agency-wide understanding of the impact of our work. Stat is a pivotal tool in our internal system of checks and balances—and a shining example of the leadership, experience, and expertise Anne has brought to the organization as COO.



## Healthy Harlem

At HCZ, a staggering 44% of our kids are overweight or obese, compared to 32% of children nationwide. In order to combat this crisis, we launched an organization-wide initiative called Healthy Harlem. Last year, 2,300 students across 10 sites participated in regular exercise and nutrition education. Parents also got in on the fun, participating in fitness classes, group counseling, and monthly farmers markets. Our kitchen staff helped keep staff and students on track, preparing over 1.4 million healthy meals and snacks, 96% from scratch and all low in salt, fat, and sugar.

The Harlem Armory continued to serve over 1,000 children a week and expanded its programming, establishing intramural soccer and basketball leagues for our elementary and middle school students. We also extended our sports pipeline, creating advanced golf, tennis, and gymnastics teams. Notably, athletes in our track and field program continue to shine: six of our youth achieved national ranking, competing in the 46th USA Track & Field Junior Olympic National Championships. And this past summer, nearly 5,000 of our youth participated in our own agency-wide track and field meet, HCZ's annual Summer Games.

Poor health can derail our kids, hindering their academic achievement now and their economic productivity later. Helping them stay healthy and fit also helps keep their dreams in reach and ensure that they grow up to be successful, self-sustaining adults.



2013 Summer Games

## National Impact: Reviving the American Dream



From Reading Skills to Nutrition Education,  
We Start Early

The kids in our community have it especially tough—last year, 75% of students at Promise Academy qualified for free or reduced-price school lunch, compared with 53% of K-12 students nationwide in 2012. Yet our youth are also making incredible strides. In fighting poverty through a holistic approach to education, HCZ is proving that the American dream can still be possible for children across this great nation.

The issues we are tackling here in Harlem are shared by families and communities across the U.S. The poverty rate in the U.S. today is 15%: 46.5 million people live below the federal poverty level—and 16 million of them are children. That means that while children make up just 24% of the total population, they make up 34% of the people living in poverty. The disproportionate effects of poverty put the futures of both our children and our country at serious risk.

At HCZ, we are committed to helping others benefit from our success. During FY 2013, we continued to provide guidance to the 48 communities that have been awarded federal Promise Neighborhoods grants and routinely held workshops for visitors from around the U.S. and the world through our Practitioners Institute.



College Prep

# The Year Ahead: Helping 12,000 Children—One at a Time



President/CEO Geoffrey Canada and  
COO Anne Williams-Isom

Our focus on balancing the needs of the individual child with our extraordinary scale is what makes us unique—and the reason we have been able to effect such sweeping change. With 12,316 youth participating in our proven pipeline of programs, we have come a long way.

Yet our work is far from finished and, in fiscal year 2014, many of the numbers here will continue to grow. Healthy Harlem will engage a total of 4,000 youth, as well as 1,500 members of the local community—eventually serving 7,000 youth and 3,000 adults by 2015. We also will have a total of 954 students in college, including almost 300 new freshmen—our biggest cohort of new college students yet!

Reaching the ultimate goal of college graduation takes more than just academic ability. Indeed, educators researchers, and policymakers all have been buzzing about character and the role of non-cognitive skills in achieving long-term success. Character education is just one of the ways we are working to ensure that the many thousands of kids in our Zone—kids like Natalie, Derek, and Angel—have not only the opportunity but also the tools to realize their full potential. Moving forward, we plan to deepen our work in personal and and social development through professional training and cross-site curriculum.



No doubt the greatest measure of how our holistic, community-based approach can transform the culture of Central Harlem and communities like it across the U.S. will be the impact of our new school building and community center in the St. Nicholas Houses (pictured above). In the year ahead, we will be keen to observe the effect of HCZ's presence on the social and economic development of the St. Nick community—to watch as residents, businesses, and especially our youth begin to build on the foundation we have laid for lasting prosperity.

*Come join us in the Zone! Visit our website at [www.hcz.org](http://www.hcz.org). Follow us on Facebook, Google+, and Twitter. And to receive news and updates via email, go to [donate.hcz.org/signup](http://donate.hcz.org/signup).*