



Harlem
Children's Zone

IMPACT REPORT

2022-2024

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)
breaks the cycle of
intergenerational poverty with
on-the-ground, all-around
programming that builds up
opportunities for children, families,
and communities to thrive in
school, work, and life.



CONTENTS

- 06 Letters from Leadership
- 13 Impact by the Numbers
- 17 In Case You Missed It



19 Stories of Impact

25

Geoffrey
Canada's
40th
Anniversary



29

National Leadership

37

A Thank You to Our Donors

46

HCZ Legacy Society

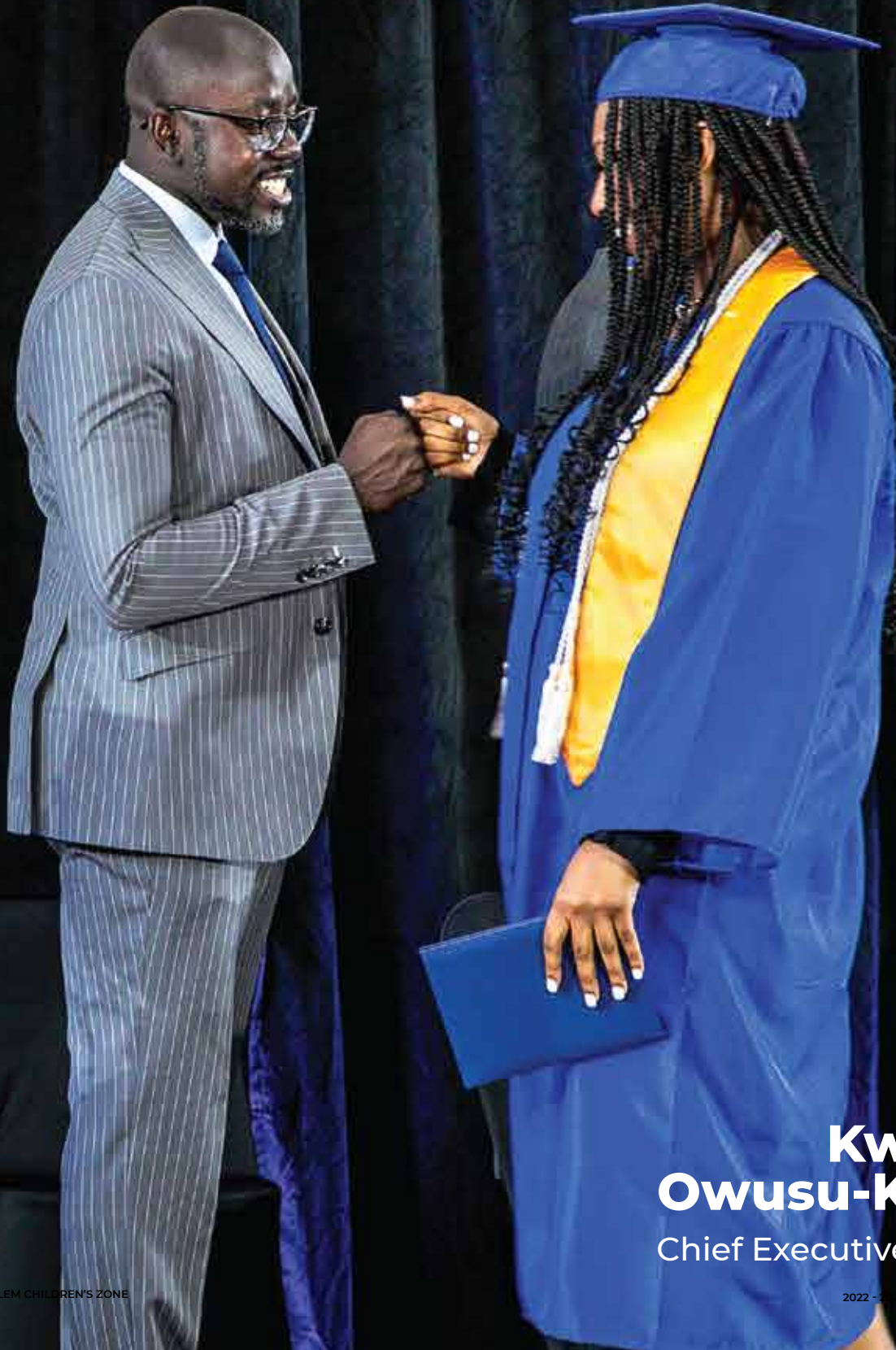
47

The Board of Trustees

48

Ways to Give

LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP



**Kwame
Owusu-Kesse**
Chief Executive Officer

For me, being the CEO of Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is much more than a job. This work is deeply personal. It's because I see myself in the young people we serve. Growing up in Worcester, Mass., I encountered many of the same challenges they face — challenges that can define a young person's path in life.

Fortunately, I was put on a different trajectory. I had adults in my life who were willing to invest in me and my future. That investment paid off: I went to Harvard University where I earned three degrees, worked on Wall Street where I built a fruitful career, and now I am at HCZ, where I proudly serve as CEO.

In my role as CEO of this amazing organization, I get to witness our young people overcome their challenges and realize their potential.

As I told our scholars at their high school graduation in 2024: Each and every one of them are worthy of investment.

“ I told our scholars at their high school graduation in 2024: Each and every one of them are worthy of investment.”

That's why HCZ was created: to connect our young people with the opportunities and resources needed to succeed. Each year, hundreds of our scholars graduate from high school, hundreds more earn their college degrees, and build fruitful careers. We've proven that investments in our young people pay off.

However, even with the support we provide, no scholar's success is a sure bet. They continue to face barriers to opportunities: namely, a lack of access to social and financial capital.

Helping our scholars get into college is critical to our mission to end intergenerational poverty. Just as critical: helping them persist through college, build their careers, and reach their financial goals.

To advance these priorities, we were proud to launch Wealth Builds. Through this bold new initiative, we aim to close the wealth gap in the places we serve and open pathways to social and economic mobility for all our young people. We were also excited to relaunch our College Success Office, our program that empowers our scholars to push through college and earn their degrees.



As part of one of our Wealth Builds pillars, Youth Opportunity Fund, I was thrilled to announce our initial investment of \$10,000 in each scholar of the HCZ Promise Academy classes of 2023 and 2024. This investment, which has the potential to grow over time, can be used by scholars for wealth generating activities, such as paying for post-secondary programs, buying their first home, or starting a business. At the time, I stressed to scholars that these investments are not guaranteed. They will have to meet certain milestones to receive them. Dreams take work — a fact of which our scholars and families are well aware.

Wealth Builds is much more than investments. It is a continuum of programs and services, including robust financial literacy classes and workshops, career support services, and entrepreneurship and employment programming. Through this programming, our scholars will be better prepared to navigate financial responsibilities. After all, what's the point of investments if our scholars don't have the tools to manage them?



At first, Wealth Builds will focus on New York City and select cities. Over time, it will cover the entire country, providing the evidence base for organizations — in cities and small towns — to adopt this approach. We know this can work, and not only in places like Harlem. Over our 20-plus year history, our model has been replicated in communities across the country where young people are impacted by poverty.



Ending the wealth gap is audacious. But when have we done things any differently at HCZ?

I know if we invest in our scholars just as the adults in my life invested in me, there's no limit to what they can achieve. I know that our scholars won't only go on to college. I know they will achieve their dreams, however they define them.



It's not often you get the opportunity to make history. But at HCZ, I am proud to say that, together, we are doing just that.



Kwame Owusu-Kesse
Chief Executive Officer

EMPOWERING SCHOLARS NATIONWIDE



Where are you going to college?

NEW YORK STATE

Finger Lakes

Central New York

Mohawk Valley

Capital District

Western New York

Southern Tier

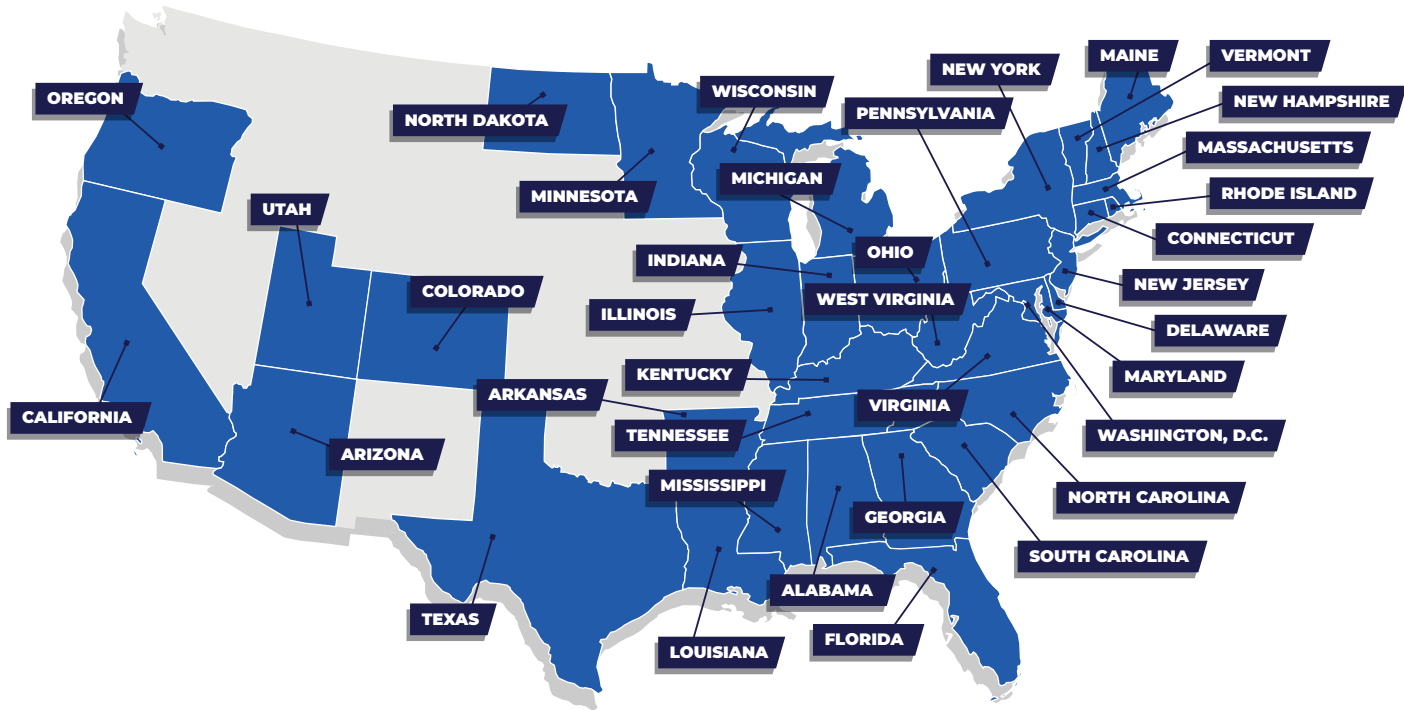
Hudson Valley

New York City

Long Island

Urban Children's Zone

HCZ National Graduate University and College Enrollment



How We Make a Difference

1,802

college graduates since FY11

330+

colleges represented

980+

scholars currently enrolled in college

Over

400

scholarships awarded from FY22-FY24, totaling nearly \$4M

As of FY24

ALABAMA

Oakwood University
Tuskegee University
University of West Alabama

ARIZONA

Arizona State University
Grand Canyon University

ARKANSAS

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

CALIFORNIA

California State University
Merced College
New York Film Academy
Occidental College
Pitzer College
Pomona College
University of Southern California

COLORADO

Metropolitan State University of Denver
University of Northern Colorado

CONNECTICUT

Albertus Magnus College
Central Connecticut State University
Connecticut College
Fairfield University
Mitchell College
Post University
Quinnipiac University
Sacred Heart University
Trinity College
University of Bridgeport
University of Connecticut
University of Hartford
University of New Haven
University of Saint Joseph
Wesleyan University
Yale University

DELAWARE

Delaware State University
Wesley College

FLORIDA

Barry University
Bethune-Cookman University
Edward Waters University
Florida International University
Florida Memorial University
Franklin & Marshall College
Full Sail University
Lynn University
Nova Southeastern University

GEORGIA

Albany State University
Clark Atlanta University
Emory University
Georgia College
Georgia State University
Morehouse College
Spelman College

ILLINOIS

Columbia College Chicago
Northwestern University

INDIANA

DePauw University
Indiana Institute of Technology
Indiana University
Ivy Tech Community College
Purdue University

KENTUCKY

Berea College

LOUISIANA

Tulane University
Xavier University of Louisiana

MAINE

Bates College
Bowdoin College

MARYLAND

Bowie State University
Coppin State University
John Hopkins University
McDaniel College
Morgan State University
Stevenson University
University of Maryland Eastern Shore

MASSACHUSETTS

American International College
Babson College
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Bentley University
Boston College
Boston Conservatory at Berklee
Boston University
Brandeis University
College of the Holy Cross
Columbus State Community College
Curry College
Emerson College
Fitchburg State University
Hampshire College
Lasell College
Massachusetts College Of Liberal Arts
Mount Holyoke College
Northeastern University
Pine Manor College
Simmons University
Smith College
Tufts University
Wellesley College
Wheaton College
Williams College

MICHIGAN

Andrews University
University of Michigan–Ann Arbor

MINNESOTA

Capella University
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
St. Olaf College

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dartmouth College
New England College
Southern New Hampshire University

NEW JERSEY

Bloomfield College
Drew University
Essex County College
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Hudson County Community College
Kean University
Middlesex College
Montclair State University
Rider University
Rutgers University
Saint Peter's University
Seton Hall University
Stockton University
Strayer University

NEW YORK

Over 140 schools!

NORTH CAROLINA

Davidson College
Johnson C. Smith University
North Carolina A&T
North Carolina Central University
North Carolina State University
Saint Augustine College
Salem College
University of North Carolina
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina Greensboro
Vance Granville Community College
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem State University

NORTH DAKOTA

Minot State University

OHIO

Central State University
Eastern Gateway Community College
Lake Erie College
Xavier University

OREGON

Reed College

PENNSYLVANIA

Albright College
Allegheny College
Arcadia University
Bucknell University
Carnegie Mellon University
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
Drexel University
East Stroudsburg University
Gettysburg College
Keystone College
Lafayette College
Lehigh University
Lincoln University
Lycoming College
Mansfield University of Pennsylvania
Moravian University
Pennsylvania State University
Point Park University
Rosemont College
Swarthmore College
Temple University
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
Villanova University
YTI Career Institute

RHODE ISLAND

Brown University
Johnson & Wales University
Providence College

SOUTH CAROLINA

Benedict College
Claflin University
South Carolina State University
University of South Carolina

TENNESSEE

Fisk University
Lane College
Southern Adventist University
Vanderbilt University

TEXAS

Grayson Community College
Paris Junior College
Rice University
Southwestern University

UTAH

Brigham Young University
Western Governors University

VERMONT

Middlebury College
Southern Vermont College
University of Vermont

VIRGINIA

Hampton University
Liberty University
Norfolk State University
University of Richmond
University of Virginia
Virginia State University
Virginia Union University

WASHINGTON, D.C.

American University
The George Washington University
Georgetown University
Howard University
University of the District of Columbia

WEST VIRGINIA

American Public University
Fairmont State University
Marshall University
West Virginia University

WISCONSIN

University of Wisconsin–Madison

INTERNATIONAL

Sungkyunkwan University (South Korea)

LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP

Keith Meister
Chair



When I first joined HCZ, I was impressed by its innovative, strategic, and data-informed approach to ending the cycle of intergenerational poverty. To me, the unparalleled success of the HCZ model spoke volumes. It was evident from the outset that this was an organization with ambitious goals and the unwavering determination to achieve them.

Yet, when Kwame unveiled his vision for an audacious initiative aimed at addressing the wealth gap in our country, I'll admit, I had reservations. However, Kwame's remarkable ability to raise funding, garner widespread support, and catalyze this bold new effort was truly inspiring.

"I am more confident than ever that HCZ, more than any other organization, can tackle such a formidable challenge."

With Wealth Builds now successfully launched, its impact has been immediate and clear. Our scholars, from our little ones all the way to our high school graduates, are being empowered with financial education and resources to build successful financial futures. Witnessing the dedication and ingenuity of our team in action, I am more confident than ever that HCZ, more than any other organization, can tackle such a formidable challenge.

As we embark on the Wealth Builds initiative, my fellow trustees and I remain inspired by Kwame's ambitious plans for the future and optimistic about the journey ahead. Wealth Builds embodies our organization's core values and represents significant strides toward our mission to end intergenerational poverty and advance opportunities for our communities. This initiative holds the potential to transform what once seemed like a distant dream into a tangible reality for millions of young people across the nation.

This is a pivotal moment for HCZ. I am eager to see the impact we will make in the communities we serve in Harlem and beyond. As Chair of the Board, I am privileged to play a role in making history alongside our best-in-class team, community partners, and you, our supporters.



I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you. Your commitment is the bedrock of our organization's success. Achieving our vision to execute, at scale, will require the support of many individuals who believe in this work. We are deeply grateful that you share our belief in the unlimited potential of our scholars and families, and we invite you to continue this journey with us. Together, we are effecting change that will resonate for generations to come.

Keith Meister

Keith Meister
Chair



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

*as of 2024

155

scholars earned college degrees in FY24

980+

scholars currently enrolled in college

7,990+

graduates of The Baby College® since 2000

2,600+

Harlem Gems Pre-K scholars have graduated since 2007

7,646

participants in Healthy Harlem in FY24

\$77M+

in tax refunds returned to our community over the past 20+ years



1,802

**college graduates
since FY11**



22,052

**scholars and adults served
in FY24**



30+

**place-based
partners
through
William Julius
Wilson Institute**

600+

**entities have
visited HCZ
through
Practitioners
Institute since
2003**

Scholarship award recipients at the 2023 Friend of the Children Award Dinner





Harlem Children's Zone
K-12

ELIJAH
FULL FINANCIAL NEED

2023 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED



Harlem
Children's Zone

Scholars recite the HCZ Promise Academy Creed at the opening celebration of HCZ Promise Academy II Elementary School.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

JULY 2022 - JUNE 2024

FEB

Scholars Participate in Financial Literacy Town Halls

Scholars heard from our CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse, who shared his personal financial journey and critical insights to help them achieve financial empowerment.

APR

HCZ Hosts Friend of the Children Award Dinner

We hosted our annual benefit dinner honoring Sam Reeves, President and Founder, Pinnacle Trading LLC.

MAY

HCZ Celebrates National College Signing Day

Our HCZ Promise Academy and Zone Programs high school seniors celebrated their college choices at our annual event in 2023 and 2024.

NOV

2024

Geoffrey Canada Marks 40th Anniversary

Our community and supporters celebrated HCZ Founder and President Geoffrey Canada for his 40-year commitment to our organization.

MAR

Harlem Rising Premieres at SXSW EDU in Austin

Our CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse and Founder and President Geoffrey Canada hosted the world premiere screening of *Harlem Rising*, a documentary about HCZ.

APR

HCZ Hosts Friend of the Children Award Dinner

We hosted our annual benefit dinner honoring Aneel Bhusri, Co-Founder and Executive Chair, Workday and Oakland's Eat. Learn. Play. foundation.

2022

JUL

■ Summer Games Returns in Person

After a three-year absence, our scholars and staff returned for Summer Games, an Olympics-inspired track and field event at the Nike Armory, in 2022 and 2023.

SEPT

■ The Baby College Celebrates 100th Cycle

The Baby College, our signature program for new and expectant parents and caregivers, completed its 100th cycle.

OCT

■ Kwame Owusu-Kesse in Nonprofit Power 100

Our CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesee was featured on City and State NY's Nonprofit 100 list in 2022 and 2023 in recognition of his impactful leadership.

2023

JAN

■ Promise Academy II Elementary School Opens

Our new school at 70 E. 112th Street opened with more space for scholars and expanded our services across our growing Zone.

JUL

■ Summer Institute Brings Leaders Together at Harvard

William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI) and Harvard University's EdRedesign Lab co-hosted this three-day event in 2022 and 2023, accelerating place-based work.

AUG

■ March for Peace Goes Back to the Streets

For the first time since 2019, our scholars, staff, and community members marched through Central Harlem to demand an end to gun violence.

OCT

■ WJWI Hosts Power of Place in New Orleans

WJWI hosted its Power of Place convening in New Orleans, building a movement dedicated to driving social and economic mobility for children and families across the country.

APR

■ Wealth Builds Featured in NYTimes

The publication featured HCZ's bold initiative to end intergenerational poverty and close the wealth gap by empowering young people and families to build successful financial futures.

MAY

■ WJWI Joins ENOUGH Act Signing in Maryland

Members of our WJWI team stood alongside Maryland Gov. Wes Moore for the signing of the ENOUGH Act to advance state-led solutions to childhood poverty in the state.

JUN

■ HCZ Celebrates Graduation Week

We celebrated all our scholars on their graduations and moving up ceremonies, awarding millions in investments and scholarships through Wealth Builds.

STORY OF IMPACT

BRANDON
SYDNOR AND
HOUSAINATOU
BALDE



Scan for a bonus video!

Scholars Get College and Career Support To Earn Degrees — and Achieve Their Dreams

Brandon Sydnor and Housainatou Balde, HCZ scholars attending the University at Albany, have big dreams. Brandon wants to be a leader in the sports management field; Housainatou wants to own a successful business. But dreams don't come easy: they take hard work, resilience, and often, the support of your community.

Now in college, Brandon and Housainatou are getting that support from programs in our comprehensive, cradle-to-career pathway of services: Wealth Builds and College Success Office (CSO).

As we always say at HCZ, you may leave the Zone, but the Zone never leaves you. As they transition into and push through their post-secondary journeys, our scholars have the backing of CSO, which helps them to get into college and earn their degrees, and Wealth Builds, which helps them build successful financial futures and bright careers.

Support Persisting Through College

When Brandon graduated from HCZ Promise Academy, he felt confident that his time at our premier K-12 charter school prepared him to take on the challenges of college. But as he applied to and later started college, he faced a few curveballs. As a high school senior, he had to navigate the tricky application process; in college, he struggled to balance study time and his busy class schedule. He had difficulties holding himself accountable. CSO helped him every step of the way.

Now in college, Brandon is getting guidance from his CSO counselor. This includes one-on-one coaching, academic and emotional support, and even in-person visits to campus.

“Coming into college is a big shocker,” Brandon says. “It was a learning experience for sure. But my counselor was there for me. I talk to CSO almost every week now. They're like a second family.”

“I talk to CSO almost every week now. They're like a second family.”

Housainatou's sophomore year was especially challenging. After a promising freshman year, she saw her grades slip and her focus falter, as the newness of college wore off and the reality of hard work set in. She started losing confidence in herself. That's when her CSO counselor helped her push past her self-doubt and reminded her: this is where she belongs.

“My counselor helped me become the person I am now: more persistent and consistent,” says Housainatou, who attended Employment and Technology Center, one of our Zone After School Programs. “Even in my senior year, I still reach out to her for advice.”

“Investments in us and our futures”

Our support doesn't end with getting our scholars to and through college: We also help them figure out how to pay for college. As a high school senior, Brandon took financial literacy courses and workshops. These opportunities, offered by Wealth Builds, help our scholars hone their financial management skills so they are better prepared to finance their post-secondary education and future goals.



“I was able to pay for a large portion of my tuition through a scholarship from HCZ. Opportunities like these show they believe in us.”

“I appreciate how HCZ makes investments in us and our futures,” Brandon says. “Before graduating from HCZ Promise Academy, Wealth Builds helped me understand how to properly handle my finances and manage my money, budget for the future, and avoid going into debt.”

Through Wealth Builds, scholars also have the opportunity to earn investment opportunities and college scholarships.

“I was able to pay for a large portion of my tuition through a scholarship from HCZ,” Housainatou says. “Opportunities like these show they believe in us and our potential.”

Building careers, achieving dreams

Leading up to and after graduation from college, Wealth Builds will help Brandon and Housainatou launch their careers. They will get help crafting resumes and cover letters, applying for and getting jobs, and attending professional development workshops.

From the moment they are born to the time they get their first jobs, we encourage our scholars to dream big. We’re cheering them on every step of the way.

“I have a lot of dreams,” Brandon says. “I want to work in sports, and I know I’m going to be something someday because I’ve had people motivating me to succeed.”

Says Housainatou: “HCZ believed in me, and now I believe in myself.”

STORY OF IMPACT



**DENILEE AND
REGINALD PEROZA**



“HCZ is All About Empowering Families”: HCZ Mom and Son Get Support From Cradle to Career

When DeniLee Peroza’s son, Reginald, enrolled at HCZ Promise Academy, he wasn’t the only one who joined the Promise community. His family joined, too.

Reginald, a first grader, benefits from our high-quality curriculum, social-emotional learning, and after-school programs. At the same time, he and DeniLee attend family events together at our West Side Community Center, and they learn about health and wellness through Healthy Harlem.

When the family was going through tough times, HCZ Promise Academy was by their side.

“My dad was very sick, and HCZ provided counseling to us,” DeniLee says. “They reached out to ask, ‘Is everything OK? Is there anything extra we can do? Let us know.’ No other school I know of provides that kind of support.”

At HCZ, we’re committed to empowering our scholars — and their families — to succeed.

Everything Our Scholars Need to Be Their Best at School

DeniLee beams with pride when she sees Reginald thriving at HCZ Promise Academy. She’s always known her son was smart and talented. But with access to resources and opportunities, he is able to realize his full potential.

In addition to our rigorous curriculum and after-school activities, we provide everything scholars like Reginald need to succeed in school.

In his classes, Reginald uses top-of-the-line learning technology such as science equipment, musical instruments, and media and broadcasting tools. He enjoys chef-prepared healthy meals every day.

But for DeniLee, our most valuable resource is our caring and passionate teachers.

“Each of Reginald’s teachers has made it a point to get to know my son,” DeniLee says. “They know what he’s capable of and where to push him, to make him great and help him succeed. They know how to make learning fun.”

Breaking Barriers to College through Scholarships

As an HCZ Promise Academy scholar, Reginald won’t only get help making it to and through college — he has the opportunity to get help paying for it, too.

Through Wealth Builds, scholars can earn college scholarships from HCZ. This can empower them to avoid debt and build wealth as they transition from college into their careers.

“With this support, I see my scholar being successful in the future,” DeniLee says.

On the Path to a Bright Future

Our support for Reginald continues when he enters middle and high school. HCZ Promise Academy and our College Success Office will help him apply to college and secure financial aid, while Wealth Builds will provide financial literacy classes that will equip him with the knowledge and resources to manage his finances.

“I know I made the best choice for my scholar by sending him to HCZ Promise Academy because they invest in and believe in him,” DeniLee says of her son. “They will help him achieve all their dreams in life, no matter what. And that’s my dream for my children.”



“I know I made the best choice for my scholar by sending him to HCZ Promise Academy because they invest in and believe in them.”



LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP

Geoffrey Canada

Founder and President,
Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and
Founder, William Julius Wilson
Institute at HCZ



Harlem
Children's Zone

Geoffrey Canada: Reflecting on 40 Years of Leadership

When I became education director of Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families 40 years ago, and later, its president, my mission, above all else, was to keep my kids alive.

It was a tough time to be a young person in Harlem. Our neighborhood was suffering under the plagues of guns, drugs, and poverty. Our young people were caught right in the middle of it.

But just staying alive is no way to live. I wanted our young people to thrive.

I knew firsthand what our kids were going through. I grew up with three brothers in a single-parent household in the South Bronx. Forget about getting a good education or going to college. Getting to school safely was hard enough. By the time I joined Rheedlen, the times had changed, but the problems hadn't: kids in Harlem were dealing with many of the same struggles my brothers and I had endured as kids.



“I believe in all of you, and above all else, I believe in our young people and their potential.”

What a difference 40 years makes.

Since we began planning for the HCZ project in 1997, the odds for our young people in Harlem have changed dramatically. Our scholars have redefined what's possible for young people like them — and for communities like ours all over the nation.

The entire country has taken notice of what we're doing here in Harlem. Most notably, the Federal Government took inspiration from HCZ's place-based, cradle-to-career model in implementing its Promise Neighborhoods Initiative. Now, under Kwame's leadership, we are being more intentional in scaling our impact through William Julius Wilson Institute and Wealth Builds. Leaders from place-based organizations from Atlanta to Minneapolis to Oakland are looking to us for guidance on how to do this work, and to do it effectively. Together, we are changing odds for millions of young people and families in their communities.



Meanwhile, in more affluent communities, the environment was much different. Safety, a good education, dreams of a college degree — all of that was a given. So was a solid shot at the American Dream. But I always wondered: didn't our young people deserve the same shot? They have so much potential. All that's missing was opportunity.



One of the most important things I've learned in my 40 years at HCZ is you can't do this work alone. To our donors: your support is more critical now than ever before. COVID-19 exposed and amplified long-standing issues impacting our communities. Learning loss, falling test grades, and a growing mental health crisis — never in my four-decade career has this work been so urgent. There's no time for excuses. It's up to all of us to roll up our sleeves and fundamentally change the trajectory of our young people and families once and for all. We simply cannot afford to fail.

Kwame managed to pull me out of retirement. But I won't be doing this work forever. It's going to be up to all of you to push the field forward, to continue scaling our impact, and to transform the lives of millions of young people and families across the country.

Despite the challenges in front of us, I have every confidence we can achieve this goal. It's because of all the progress I've seen over these past 40 years and the progress I continue to see today. I believe in our communities, I believe in all of you, and above all else, I believe in our young people and their potential. Together, we can help them achieve the American Dream.

Geoffrey Canada
Founder and President,
Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and
Founder, William Julius Wilson
Institute at HCZ

Geoffrey Canada Celebrates 40 Years at Harlem Children's Zone

Four decades ago, Geoffrey Canada came to Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families with nothing but a dream — a dream to transform a neighborhood and change the odds for young people living there.

Today, that dream has become a reality. Through the work of Mr. Canada and Harlem Children's Zone (formerly Rheedlen Centers), the organization he founded, thousands of children in Harlem — and across the country — are building bright futures for themselves and their families.

We were thrilled to honor Mr. Canada for his 40 years at HCZ with a celebration at our Geoffrey Canada Community Center. Hosted by our CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse, the festivities brought together hundreds of Mr. Canada's family, friends, and colleagues. They included Pharrell Williams, the Grammy Award-winning musician and entrepreneur, Mr. Canada's wife, Yvonne, his four children, and HCZ Board members, alumni, and staff.



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Learn to
Change
the World

William Julius Wilson
Institute and Harvard
University's EdRedesign Lab
host Summer Institute:
Transforming Place Through
Neighborhood Leadership.

MONROE G. GUTMAN LIBRARY





William Julius Wilson Institute

Through our national leadership initiatives, William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI) and Wealth Builds, we are scaling our impact all over the country. The following are highlights of our work:

Power of Place: The Heart and Science of Cradle to Career

In October 2023, WJWI hosted its second annual convening, Power of Place: The Heart and Science of Cradle to Career, in New Orleans. The convening brought together over 500 leaders, practitioners, and policy makers in the field of place-based, cradle-to-career partnerships for inspiring conversations and community building. Through Power of Place, we are building a movement to change the odds for millions of young people across our nation.

Passing the ENOUGH Act and Supporting its Implementation in Maryland

In November 2022, WJWI entered into discussions with Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, his policy teams, and members of the Maryland General Assembly to craft the contours of the ENOUGH Act — first-in-the-nation statewide neighborhood-based legislation designed to end child poverty.

After several months of planning and spirited legislative debate, the Act was passed by the Maryland legislature in early April and signed into law on May 9, 2024. WJWI provided key support throughout the process, from the bill's inception to passage.



Scan for a video
from Power of Place!

WJWI National Impact Locations



Deep-diving on Neighborhood-based, Cradle-to-Career Partnerships with District Leaders

Creating economic mobility for underserved communities begins with a strong K-12 education foundation. To enhance cradle-to-career support, WJWI launched the inaugural Education Leaders Design Fellowship (ELDF), a national initiative uniting superintendents and district leaders from 23 districts across 14 states, serving more than 1.4 million students. The fellowship kicked off with a two-day session at HCZ focused on community-building and place-based strategies. Participants then traveled to Oakland, California to learn from partnerships at Oakland Promise and Mission Economic Development Agency, focusing on integrating schools with wrap-around support.

They also attended the Summer Institute: Transforming Place through Neighborhood Leadership, hosted by WJWI and Harvard University's EdRedesign Lab which featured a separate track for these district leaders.

Supporting Communities Across the Country

WJWI serves as a resource to organizations across the country on the front lines of place-based cradle-to-career work. It offers research-driven, comprehensive solutions to leaders and practitioners working to root out generational poverty in their communities. WJWI's north star: connect one million young people with opportunities that put them on the pathway to social and economic mobility. Over the past year, WJWI has partnered with 34 communities and counting.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP



Wealth Builds

Wealth Builds is our bold initiative to close the wealth gap and end intergenerational poverty by empowering our young people, families, and communities to build successful financial futures.

Through this audacious initiative, scholars participate in financial literacy classes and workshops, earn scholarship and financial investment opportunities from birth to career, and access our pathway of holistic, cradle-to-career services. Once they graduate from high school, they are better prepared to pay for college or other post-secondary programs, buy their first home, or start a business — pathways to achieving life-changing social and economic mobility.

Wealth Builds addresses the wealth gap through the following nine research-backed pillars:



Nine Pillars of Wealth

Family Empowerment

A select pilot of new parents and caregivers receive small investments to empower them to establish a critical financial foundation and support their young ones.

College Savings Accounts

Scholars receive seeded college savings accounts (CSAs) to increase savings for college tuition and expenses.

Youth Opportunity Fund

Scholars can earn access to a \$10,000 allocation in our investment fund that may be withdrawn in adulthood for activities that catalyze wealth generation (i.e. buying a home, entrepreneurial expenses, and more) upon the completion of key milestones.

Financial Literacy

Scholars benefit from courses and after-school programs to hone financial management skills and promote financial well-being.

Entrepreneurship & Employment

Scholars have access to skill-building resources to support their career and entrepreneurial success.

Scholarships & Loan Assistance

Scholars receive college scholarships and student loan repayment assistance to reduce their debt burden and support wealth building.

Retirement Savings


Scholars benefit from savings and incentives alongside financial planning to help them save for retirement.

Financial Inclusion

Through workshops and information sessions, community members learn skills to realize their financial goals.

Policy & Advocacy

HCZ influences state and federal policies that address economic inequity and unlock private and public capital.



**“Ending the wealth gap
is audacious. But when
have we done things
any differently at HCZ?”**

Kwame Owusu-Kesse

The following are highlights of our Wealth Builds work:

Launching a Financial Literacy Curriculum and Workshops

Our new Financial Literacy curriculum is designed to equip our scholars with the tools and knowledge to manage their finances and build successful financial futures. The initiative kicked off with Financial Literacy Town Halls led by our CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse, who shared his own personal finance journey and insights on how financial literacy can help scholars achieve their goals.

Exploring Professional Paths at Wealth Builds Career Fairs

Wealth Builds hosted a series of career days in 2023 and 2024. Middle school scholars from HCZ Promise Academy, A Cut Above, and Peacemakers explored career opportunities and learned from industry professionals while our HCZ Promise Academy and Zone Programs seniors connected with professionals from fields such as education, law, entrepreneurship, and software development.

Opening College Savings Accounts for our Youngest Scholars

Wealth Builds launched this program, providing an initial \$500 investment in NY 529 College Savings Plans for participants in two cycles of The Baby College. Upon graduation, scholars will be able to use these funds to finance their college education and other post-secondary programs. Alongside the CSAs, Wealth Builds offered workshops on financial planning, college preparation, and securing financial aid.



A THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Thank You.

We are so grateful to our donors. Without your contribution, HCZ would only exist as a vision and a dream. Thanks to your support, it's a reality — one that you have helped us make so successful that it's become a model replicated all over the world.

Every donation counts. Big, small, or something in between. Your contribution makes a difference — a real difference — in the lives of real people, of all ages, in Harlem and beyond.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

The HCZ Team



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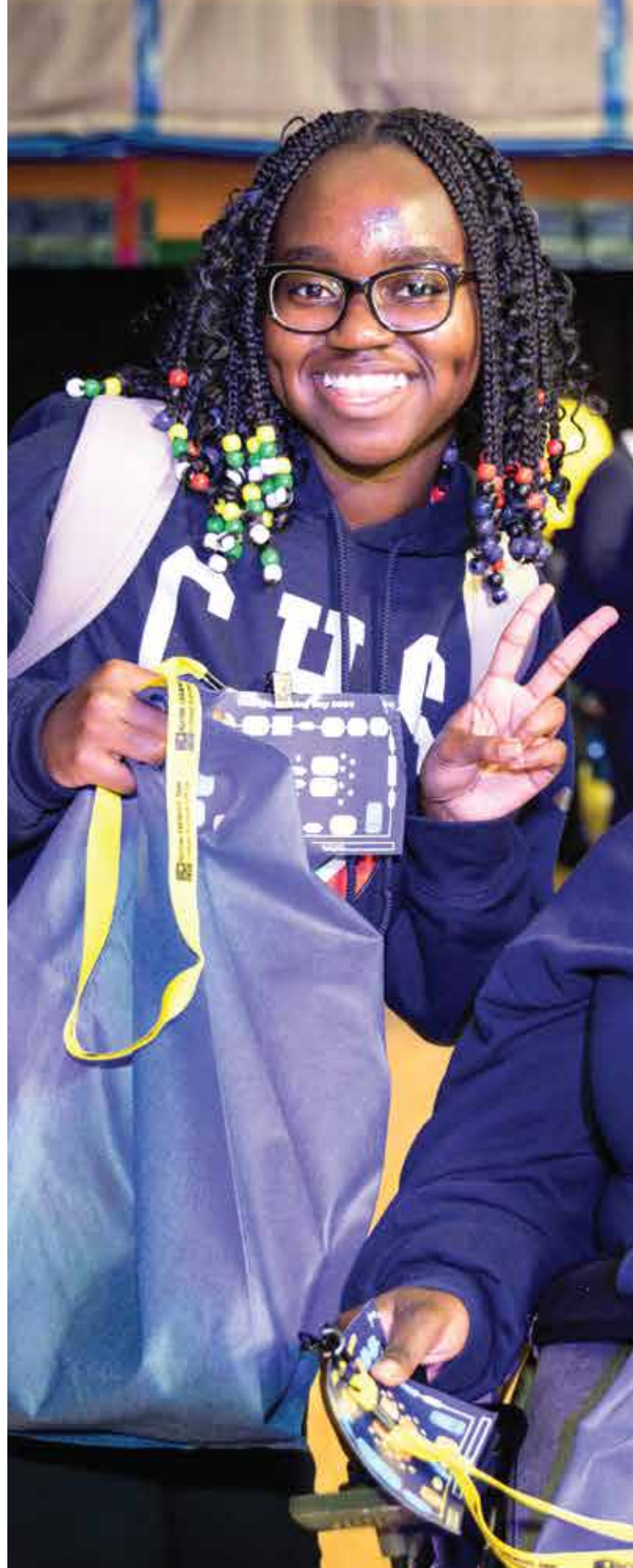
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