

2006-2007

spirit of giving

A GUIDE TO INVESTING IN OUR REGION'S MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS



**THE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
for the National Capital Region

2006-2007

spirit of giving

A GUIDE TO INVESTING IN OUR REGION'S MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS

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WHEN WE BELIEVE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH, THEY ARE FREE TO

believe in their dreams.

The 15 organizations featured in this year's *Spirit of Giving* believe in middle school youth — in their potential and promise, in their abilities and aspirations. They believe that every child should have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

Use this guide to learn more about why middle school matters. Then, join The Community Foundation in supporting these exciting, effective groups. Together, we can show middle school youth across the region — in every school, in every neighborhood — that our community believes in them.



believe in change

YOUR TOOL FOR GIVING

Each year, the *Spirit of Giving* focuses on a critical issue facing residents in the metropolitan Washington region and highlights smaller nonprofit organizations that are doing exemplary work to address that issue.

This guide is designed to provide donors and others who are committed to philanthropy with a tool for giving that offers information as well as inspiration. Since its inception four years ago, the *Spirit of Giving* has directed more than \$1 million in cash and in-kind contributions to featured organizations.

This year's *Spirit of Giving* examines ways of improving the academic achievement and social development of middle school youth. It features 15 nonprofit programs that are opening doors of opportunity for young people across our region.

WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS

The middle school years are a time of incredible social and intellectual development. These critical years — ages 10 to 14 — present unique challenges and powerful opportunities. Yet middle school students are often subjected to a “sink or swim” mentality — with too many students barely staying afloat.

Anyone who has been a parent of a child this age knows first-hand that the middle school years are tumultuous, marked by internal and external transformations that even the best of students can find challenging. However, you don't have to be the parent of school-aged children — or be a parent at all — to understand the importance of middle school. The academic achievement and social development of middle school youth is a vital concern to everyone who cares about our region's future.



The middle school years lay the foundation for academic success in high school, college and beyond. What happens with today's middle school youth will affect our region in the decades ahead. We need an educated workforce. We need students with the skills and desire to succeed in high school and in life, so that they can contribute to and benefit from our region's prosperity. Most of all, we need students to connect with their community so that they grow up to be engaged, caring adults. Today's youth are tomorrow's taxpayers, voters, community leaders and parents.

YOUR GIVING CAN CREATE CHANGE

Nonprofit organizations play a powerful role in addressing the needs of middle school youth. Your support of the 15 groups featured in this guide will have a tangible and lasting impact on middle school youth in our community.

These groups were selected because they employ promising practices and research-based strategies designed to ensure good outcomes. While most are small, they represent a range of organizational development, from young nonprofits that have demonstrated early success and now need greater support to expand their impact, to more seasoned groups whose successful, effective approaches could reach even more youth if more resources were available.

Whatever your interests and giving goals — and whether you prefer to support start-ups or more established programs — we hope that you will be inspired to invest in the nonprofit organizations featured in this guide. You can do so directly, through The Community Foundation, or by donating online through www.TouchDC.org.

You also can make a difference by giving to the Community Leadership Fund, which will support The Community Foundation's efforts over the next few years to make a lasting impact on middle schools and middle school youth.

For more information on how to give to the organizations in this guide, see page 32.

For more in-depth information about why the middle school years matter, turn to page 22.



OUR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOCUS

The social development and academic achievement of middle school youth is the focus of a multi-year initiative at The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. The 15 organizations featured in this year's Spirit of Giving address the key areas we have identified for investment, leadership and advocacy:

- *A challenging curriculum aligned to high standards*
- *Quality of teaching and school leadership*
- *Parent leadership and participation*
- *Career planning and exposure to educational paths*
- *Positive youth development and out-of-school programs*
- *Systems reform*

To learn more about this initiative, contact Tom Kam, Vice President for Community Investment, at tkam@cfncr.org or 202-263-4766.

12 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH

The issues that affect middle school youth must be addressed from multiple perspectives by a wide range of stakeholders. That's why these six key areas have been identified for investment, leadership and advocacy.

This circle shows several targeted ways to create impact in each of the six key areas. Your efforts in one area will combine with the efforts of others in our community to provide "360° support" for middle school youth.

For information on how to make a gift to any of the featured organizations or to The Community Foundation, see page 32.



believe in action

2006-2007

nonprofit profiles

believe in youth

THE SELECTION PROCESS

SELECTION COMMITTEE

Bea Birman, American
Institutes for Research

Anne Henderson, Community
Foundation Donor

Missy Horning-Young,
Community Foundation Donor

Martha Johnston, Coalition of
Community Foundations for Youth

Sarah Kestner, MCCF Donor

Mike Kimsey, Kimsey Foundation

Carmen James Lane, Eugene
and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation

Herbert and Marcia Marks,
Community Foundation Donors

**Amanda Marshall and Rachael
Coleman-Gibson**, Fair Chance DC

William Miles, Public Education
Network

Bonnie Politz, Academy for
Educational Development

Tobi Printz-Platnick, The Morris
and Gwendolyn Cafritz
Foundation

Greg Roberts, DC Children and
Youth Investment Trust
Corporation

Phyllis Rumbarger, Commonweal
Foundation

Jonelle Stachura Wallmeyer,
Alexandria Community Trust

Rosetta Thurman, Nonprofit
Roundtable of Greater
Washington

Charlotte Underwood, Council
of Prince George's County PTAs

Karim Zia, Community
Foundation Donor

Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

Sharon Hutchison, Bomani
Johnson, Ben Murphy, Lee
Christian Parker, Kristin
Scotchmer, Silvana Straw
and Tom Kam

The organizations highlighted in this year's *Spirit of Giving* were selected by an advisory committee of individuals committed to education, including researchers, representatives of local foundations and non-profit organizations, and donors to The Community Foundation.

These individuals generously gave their time and expertise to identify small- to medium-sized nonprofits doing effective work. We emphasize small organizations because this guide is intended to support groups without the resources to do extensive promotion on their own. Without this guide, most of their stories might not make it to your desk or kitchen table. The *Spirit of Giving* is a way for these organizations to connect with you.

The advisory committee carefully reviewed applications and selected these 15 organizations based on their capacity, financial standing, strong leadership and demonstrated outcomes. The selected groups operate across the region, represent a broad range of approaches, work in a variety of sectors and meet the needs of diverse populations, and focus on one or more of six key areas that The Community Foundation has identified for investment, leadership and advocacy with respect to middle school youth: a challenging curriculum aligned to high standards; quality of teaching and school leadership; parent leadership and participation; career planning and exposure to educational paths; positive youth development and out-of-school programs; and systems reform.



DC VOICE GATHERS KEY DATA TO SUPPORT SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DC VOICE

DC VOICE is a citywide collaborative of individuals and organizations that works to strengthen the public's involvement in public education. It holds local public schools, the school system, city leaders and the community accountable for academic gains by all students, and it fulfills an important community intermediary role as convener and catalyst to create systemic change. Furthermore, it gathers and analyzes an impressive range of data about schools and students in the District — the kind of hard-to-get information that proves invaluable when it comes to assessing problems and finding solutions.

DC VOICE was founded in 1998, and its flagship programs include advocating for increased supports for high quality teaching and issuing a yearly report card evaluating the readiness of D.C. schools to begin the school year equipped with trained teachers, appropriate textbooks and facilities in good condition. It also conducts site visits to schools with community members to observe effective educational practices and raise parents' expectations for their own children. Beginning in 2007, DC VOICE will help launch and then collaborate with an advocacy group for middle school parents. This effort coincides with the focus on middle school improvement in the new Master Education Plan for District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), created by Superintendent Clifford Janey, which details his vision for repairing the District's ailing school system. While DCPS has historically included both middle schools and junior high schools, all students in grades 6–8 will soon attend middle schools, and all 9th graders will enroll in high school.

This system-wide change will allow DC VOICE and its collaborators to more effectively focus on the needs of middle school students. "Teachers and administrators must feel that the school system is helping them nurture and support students during the critical middle school years," says Carmella Mazzotta, executive director of DC VOICE. "With these grade reconfigurations, we will have new opportunities to engage more parents, guardians and concerned community members to improve the quality of education for middle school youth."

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Cultivate a more powerful, informed and active citizen cadre to hold the school system and schools accountable for teaching and learning conditions; promote higher achievement for middle school youth.

TIME: Parents/guardians and activists needed as volunteers for community action research on progress of school system, and to advocate for high quality education for middle school youth in every ward.

GOODS: In-kind donations of printing, copying, mailing or delivery for community newspapers and flyers/reports.

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cmazzotta@dcvoice.org
www.dcvoice.org

Operating budget:
\$489,000

believe in leadership

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Expansion of Gaithersburg site by building a new classroom-type space to serve approximately 250 youth and their families; meeting emergency needs of families, including health care and housing assistance.

TIME: Program volunteers; administrative, strategic, and development volunteers.

GOODS: Refreshments for youth programs; small bus to carry youth to and from activities. Limited capacity to pick up donations.

CONTACT

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Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-963-5900 x22
www.identity.ws

Operating budget:
\$2,510,000



IDENTITY, INC. BRINGS LATINO PARENTS TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS

IDENTITY, INC.

"We treat parents and youth with respect," said Diego Uriburu, co-founder and deputy executive director of Identity, Inc., which helps Latino parents in Montgomery County advocate for their children's academic success and works with young people to help them thrive in a challenging environment. "Unfortunately, most institutions don't treat them like that. We take time to listen to them, understand them, make them feel they are important and that we're here to serve them."

Founded in 1998, Identity, Inc. currently operates in 10 schools, including five middle schools. Its programs include after-school academic assistance for middle and high school students, parent education and support, crisis intervention, case management, and referrals. In particular, Identity has been at the forefront of efforts to bring parents from largely Latino neighborhoods into the schools to advocate for their children. Parents learn how important it is to pay attention to their children's school experience, as well as how to talk to their children about drugs, sex, violence and other important issues — many of which are taboo to discuss in their native countries — before their children are tempted by trouble. Because it has a reputation for success, Identity, Inc. receives requests for programming from twice as many schools than it can currently serve. However, the organization is intent on growing organically so that it can maintain high quality programs.

This insistence on quality reflects Identity, Inc.'s commitment to working with young people and families to resolve problems and provide support, no matter what. The staff understands why some Latino children have difficulty in school and are lured into gang membership. Because of their families' struggles, many Latino youth have to mature very quickly. They may not receive the attention and guidance they need. Many have witnessed violence — or have been victims themselves. Most have had to struggle to survive. "When youth come to us they've experienced unfulfilled promises and a lot of loss," Uriburu explains. "That's why we don't give up."

believe in vision

NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

Want to turn a lackluster, low-performing school into an inspired, high-achieving school? Start with an inspired, high-achieving principal. But why stop there? What works for one school can work for many, and the combined efforts of dozens of like-minded principals can transform an entire school system. That's exactly the approach New Leaders for New Schools is taking in the District of Columbia. Established in 2003 as an affiliate of the national organization of the same name, New Leaders is the only leadership-training program operating locally to support principals. In just three years, it has placed 68 principals in the District of Columbia's public schools, and it has quickly become the primary source from which DCPS and the District's charter schools recruit new principals.

In the current school year, New Leaders has six principals, five principals in training and one assistant principal in D.C. middle schools, as well as two more middle school leaders planning a school that will open in fall 2007. With these numbers, New Leaders will serve roughly 1/3 of the children in D.C.'s public middle schools. Furthermore, these middle school leaders are exceptionally well qualified. To begin with, the selection process is stringent, with only 6 percent of applicants admitted into the program. Potential New Leaders must be excellent problem solvers who are prepared to engage in the systemic work required to turn schools around. Above all else, they must be fully committed to creating a school climate that is conducive to learning and achievement.

Participants in the program undergo an intensive training process. One of the hallmarks of the New Leaders approach is its residency program. Much like medical school residents, principals in training participate in a full-time, year-long residency that exposes them to everything involved in the day-to-day running of a school. New Leaders also benefit from intensive multi-year coaching. This ongoing support, combined with the hands-on experience they acquire during their residency, insures that New Leaders are prepared to have a positive impact on students, parents and teachers.



INTENSIVE COACHING FROM SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALS HELPS NEW LEADERS LEARN THE ROPES

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: More training opportunities for principals; ability to recruit and train a greater number of school leaders for D.C. public middle schools.

TIME: Volunteers needed for recruiting campaigns and research projects at NLNS, as well as for school beautification projects, tutoring programs, and Saturday academies at individual schools.

GOODS: At NLNS: computers, meeting/training space, catering (for meetings and trainings). At individual schools: computers, school supplies, books, sports equipment, gift certificates (for teacher/student rewards), and uniforms. NLNS is able to pick up items.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$1,400,000

TENANTS AND WORKERS UNITED

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Expand academic and educational opportunities for youth participants; buy supplies for youth in tutoring program; reach a wider group of middle school youth.

TIME: Organize clothing, food or school supplies drives for the children of members; assist children with schoolwork.

GOODS: Donations considered on a case-by-case basis; drop-offs must be prearranged.

CONTACTS

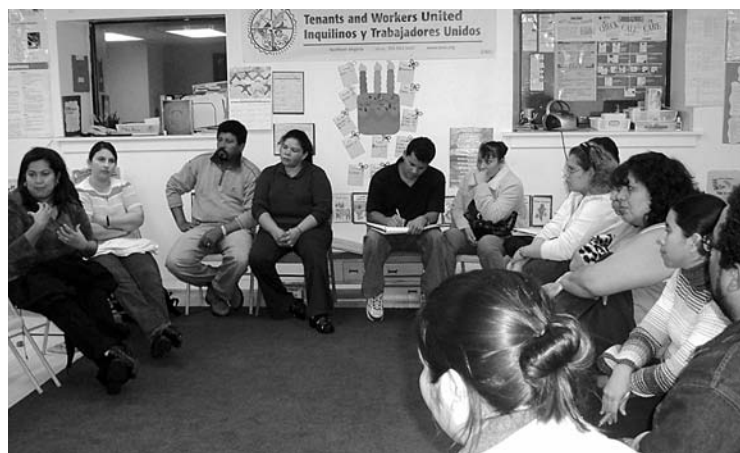
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www.tenantsworkers.org

Operating budget:
\$849,000

Who feels more powerless than a 13-year-old girl? How about a 13-year-old girl living in a low-income household where it's often up to her to conduct business on her parents' behalf because they don't speak English. In Alexandria, young people and families struggling with these types of challenges benefit from efforts of Tenants and Workers United (TWU), which has helped build the power of low-income people of color — including tenants, workers and women — for 20 years.

TWU has been highly successful in cultivating and promoting the leadership skills of its 900 members, most of whom are low-income women and girls. One way TWU impacts middle school youth is through its Education Project for Democratic Parent Participation. This program has connected hundreds of Latino and African American parents with principals, school board members and superintendents for Alexandria City Public Schools. TWU parents frequently attend hearings, testify before the school board, participate in PTA meetings and community forums, and collaborate to address issues involved in their children's education. As a result of this high level of parent activism, the school system has made meaningful changes, such as hiring school-based, bilingual parent liaisons and counselors, creating a district-wide Parent Liaison position, and overhauling the school system's disciplinary policies, including a new long-term suspension center that provides appropriate schooling when youth are suspended from school.

In addition to its intensive work with parents, TWU works with young people directly, and one-third of its youth activists are in middle school. Alexandria United Teens, another of TWU's core programs, engages 75 young women (and a few young men) after school and during the summer in problem-solving, intercultural collaboration and youth-led community improvement. Teens receive training on social issues, conduct research and determine what community problems they want to try to solve. And because young people need to succeed academically if they want to be effective advocates, TWU also offers twice weekly tutoring, along with computer classes and a technology lab for student use.



AT TENANTS AND WORKERS UNITED, PARENTS AND YOUTH LEARN HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR BETTER EDUCATION



KIPP DC'S RIGOROUS COLLEGE-PREP CURRICULUM INCLUDES FOUR YEARS OF ORCHESTRA

KIPP DC

KIPP DC is part of the nationally acclaimed KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) network of 52 schools across the nation. KIPP DC's school system includes three middle schools: KEY Academy, founded in 2001; AIM Academy, launched in 2005; and WILL Academy, which opened in 2006. These three schools are currently serving nearly 600 middle grade students, and KEY Academy has been the highest performing public middle school in the District for the past several years. KIPP DC believes that all students can learn regardless of their life circumstances or difficult backgrounds, and it has an outstanding track record of helping under-served students succeed and thrive beyond all expectations.

At KIPP DC, there are no shortcuts, only outstanding educators, more time in school, a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, and a strong culture of achievement and support. The success of this approach is evident in the tremendous progress students make, even in just one year. After their first year at KIPP DC, 2004–2005 5th graders went from the 31st to the 89th percentile in math, and from the 22nd to 55th percentile in reading. By the time students finish 8th grade, students are prepared to succeed at some of the best college preparatory high schools in the area, including Andover, Banneker, Deerfield, Duke Ellington, Madeira, Sidwell Friends and St. Albans.

KIPP DC plans to open its first elementary school, LEAP Academy, in July 2007 and a high school in 2009, with a goal of enrolling 2,500 students by 2013. This momentum is tempered by an emphasis on excellence: new KIPP DC schools grow slowly and deliberately, grade by grade, so that the highest standards of achievement can be maintained. "Our aim is to provide the highest quality school system for the underserved, and we never want to sacrifice quality for growth," says Susan Schaeffler, executive director of KIPP DC. "On a larger scale, we believe our commitment and success will encourage the community not to accept anything less from its neighborhood schools."

believe in progress

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Provide high quality education to more children in underserved communities in Washington, D.C.

TIME: Volunteers needed for one-on-one tutoring, field trip chaperones, mentoring, school beautification projects, internship program, and high school placement program.

GOODS: None at this time.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$9,042,836

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Add music and arts components to after-school and summer programs in order to enhance the academic, emotional and social development of students.

TIME: Supervise a small group of students one night a week during evening study hall/tutorial.

GOODS: Library shelves, sports team uniforms, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionaries, Borders gift cards (for teacher purchases and rewards for students), exercise equipment (treadmills, stationary bikes, medicine balls, jump ropes, etc.), flat screen TV and DVD player, board games for the counselor's program.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$2,079,592



AT WASHINGTON JESUIT ACADEMY, INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION HELPS ENSURE EVERY BOY'S SUCCESS

WASHINGTON JESUIT ACADEMY

Only 49.5 percent of black males in the District of Columbia graduate from high school, compared to an overall graduation rate of 65.2 percent. Failure to graduate has a high cost for young black men and their communities: nationally, 72 percent of black males who drop out of high school are unemployed. Washington Jesuit Academy, a tuition-free middle school located in the Brookland neighborhood of D.C., is breaking the cycles of poverty and failure and helping boys grow up to be contributing members of society and cornerstones of their communities.

Washington Jesuit Academy, which opened to its first class of 6th graders in 2002, serves low-income boys from throughout the metropolitan area, with a student body that is 94 percent African American and 6 percent Latino. The school is small — just over 70 students — and offers small classes and a rigorous extended-day, extended year program. Boys spend 12 hours a day on campus, including two hours of supervised study time in the evenings, and an extended year keeps students focused on academic achievement 11 months of the year. In addition, the school also provides an intensive parent support program, including counseling for boys and their families.

The school's rigorous, comprehensive approach allows boys to overcome a host of life challenges and focus on their academic success — and succeed they do. For instance, in fall 2003, 15 of 21 entering 6th graders could not read standard elementary school material, and only two students were reading at grade level. By the time they graduated, 17 of 19 were reading at or above the middle school level. And when students graduate from Washington Jesuit Academy, they learn firsthand how hard work and academic achievement can open the doors of opportunity. So far, 38 graduating 8th graders are attending 18 different college preparatory high schools throughout the area — including Georgetown Prep, Woodberry Forest, Gonzaga and St. Andrew's Episcopal — receiving more than \$650,000 in financial aid offers.

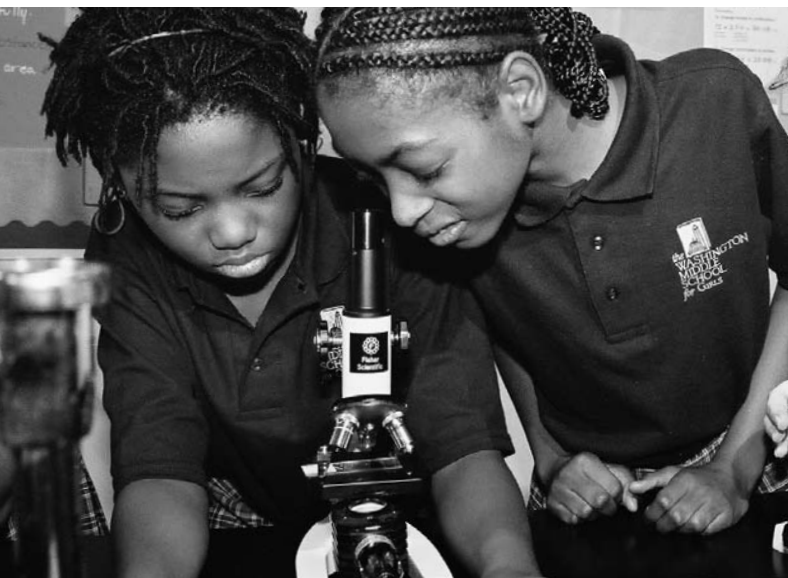
believe in tomorrow

WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

“Our children must never lose their zeal for building a better world. They must not be discouraged from aspiring toward greatness, for they are to be the leaders of tomorrow.” These are the words of the great educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune, and they capture the spirit of the Washington Middle School for Girls (WMSG), which strives to help girls to grow into competent, compassionate young women who have a commitment to leadership. Founded in 1997, WMSG provides a protective, familial environment for girls in Anacostia who are at risk of not completing their education. All are African American, and most come from single-parent households.

At WMSG, academic achievement is supported through an extended-day schedule with small class sizes, a strong emphasis on reading skills, and after-school and Saturday tutoring. The school also develops strong relationships with families to ensure each girl’s success, including providing counseling and referrals to girls and their parents. Grades 4–5 meet at the school’s Washington View Campus, and grades 6–8 convene at its campus at THEARC, which allows WMSG to partner with the wide range of nonprofits located there. For instance, girls take music lessons from the Levine School of Music, dance lessons from the Washington Ballet, and art lessons from the Corcoran School of Art.

The girls who attend WMSG often lack role models in their families and neighborhoods of women who have completed high school, let alone attended college — but the school is cultivating a generation of future role models. Every graduate is either still in school or has graduated and moved on to college or other advanced education or training. “The middle grades are a turning point when girls are making decisions that will carry them into the future,” says Sr. Mary Bourdon, the school’s co-founder and director. “We believe in the gifts, talents and potential of every girl — and we do everything we can do to broaden their education and experience of the world.”



WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS OPENS DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR GIRLS IN ANACOSTIA

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Increase teacher salaries and benefits; strengthen Graduate Support Program; support professional development and staff retreats; offer more field trips and enrichment activities for students; hire a curriculum expert.

TIME: After-school and Saturday Academy tutors; library aide during weekday hours; tutors and other volunteers at the 4th & 5th grade campus during pre-arranged weekday hours.

GOODS: Library books, computer equipment, toiletries suitable for young girls, equipment/aids for health and physical education. Pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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schoolforgirls.org
www.washingtonmiddleschool
forgirls.org

Operating budget:
\$1,275,430

ASIAN AMERICAN LEAD

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Provide more academic field trips for students; offer stipends for volunteer tutors to offset transportation costs; expand after-school program to larger sites in order to serve 50 more children; provide more staff training.

TIME: Mentor a student 6–8 hours per month (minimum one-year commitment); tutor student in math or reading 2 hours per week; assist with program administration by creating interactive learning games and materials or administering tests; assist in after-school classrooms; help clean and organize community center basement.

GOODS: AA Batteries, art supplies, chess boards and other learning games, children's books and text books for grades pre-K through 7, educational DVDs, coloring and activity books, file cabinet. Pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$1,677,442

Imagine an 8th-grader who has recently-arrived from Hong Kong and barely speaks a word of English. His parents are working two jobs each to make ends meet, and he is supervised by an older cousin every afternoon. He has no one around to help him understand his homework — or think about someday going to college. Then a neighbor tells his mother about the after-school program at Asian American Leadership and Development (AALEAD). There, the boy meets other Chinese American children. He makes friends, gains confidence and soon loves going to school. This is a typical success story for AALEAD, which provides linguistically appropriate enrichment and support to low-income Asian American and Amerasian (mixed race) youth in D.C. and Maryland.

Middle school youth participate in AALEAD's initiative, which provides after-school tutoring and intensive mentoring to more than 200 students age 6 to 18, including leadership and college-prep programs for middle and high school students. Academic success is reinforced through long-lasting mentoring relationships, and youth in AALEAD's programs demonstrate impressive progress, with 100 percent of seniors graduating from high school and at least 88 percent enrolling in college. As part of its holistic approach to student success, AALEAD also works closely with parents — many of whom speak little English and received limited education in their native countries — to help them understand and support their children's educational needs and goals.

Founded in 1998 by Sandy Dang, a Vietnamese immigrant who cared for her younger siblings in a refugee camp en route to the United States, AALEAD originally focused on the needs of Vietnamese American and Amerasian youth in D.C.'s Ward 1. As gentrification in D.C. forced many of its clients to move to Maryland, AALEAD responded by opening a second location in Montgomery County. In addition, economic development drove many social service organizations from Chinatown, resulting in more low-income Chinese Americans seeking assistance from AALEAD. A new five-year strategic plan is helping ensure that AALEAD will continue to respond to demographic shifts and emerging needs.



ASIAN AMERICAN LEAD GIVES YOUTH THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUPPORT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

believe in dreams



COMMUNITY BRIDGES EMPOWERS LATINA AND IMMIGRANT GIRLS TO BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS

COMMUNITY BRIDGES, INC.

Since 1997, Community Bridges has empowered hundreds of young Latinas and other immigrants in East Silver Spring and Takoma Park, Maryland, to bridge two cultures and find their place in the world by pursuing positive, life-affirming roles: *Successful student. College graduate. Community leader.* Community Bridges taps into the potential of girls who are in danger of falling into very different roles, such as gang member — there are now more than 200 gangs in Montgomery County. Or high school dropout — nationwide, Latinas have the lowest high school graduation rates and chances of earning a bachelor’s degree. Or teenage mother — more than half of Latina girls in the U.S. will be pregnant by age 20.

Last year, Community Bridges worked with 120 girls, and this year it hopes to serve 150. Two-thirds of the girls are in middle school, and the majority come from low-income and immigrant families. Programs help girls ages 8 to 15 build confidence, become role models and community leaders, improve their academic success and expand their horizons. Executive Director Ana Lopez, a native of the community, has spent her career working with Latino immigrant families, and her perspective informs the organization’s approach to the many challenges faced by young Latinas.

Jump Start Girls! Adelante Niñas!, Community Bridges’ signature initiative, uses team-building, the arts, outdoor adventures and community involvement to help build critical thinking, self-esteem, self-expression and healthy lifestyles. Another program, LUNA (Luchando Unidas con Nuestras Amigas), encourages recent immigrant girls to develop leadership skills as they transition into their new communities by celebrating their cultural identity and bilingualism. A third project, the Dream Catchers Mentoring Program was created by Community Bridges participants who asked the organization for a program pairing them with adult women from the community. The results are impressive: last year, 76 percent of girls in the mentoring program improved their grades and critical thinking skills. To complement all these initiatives, Community Bridges sponsors a summer camp and a family program that helps parents support their daughters’ development.

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Provide services to more girls by hiring additional staff, increasing salary and benefits to retain staff, and expanding office space.

TIME: Mentor girls in the Dream Catchers program; serve as a program intern; coach a sports team.

GOODS: Desks and kitchen equipment to furnish new office space; dinner donations for Dream Catchers mentoring program. Drop-offs preferred, but pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$394,989

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Hire part- or full-time writers-in-residence; hire part-time program assistants to reduce staff-student ratio; hire full-time program staff for an after-school program at Ballou High School; provide transportation for field trips to museums and performances.

TIME: Energetic adults and university students to serve as after-school mentors; audience members to attend student readings and plays.

GOODS: Gift cards to bookstores, laptop computer (Pentium III or higher), 3-in-1 color printer (print-scan-copy), digital camera, fine art books, art supplies for bookmaking, printmaking, collage, and textile painting. Pick-up for smaller goods can be arranged.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$162,159



YOUNG WORDSMITHS UNLOCK THEIR TALENT AND CREATIVITY AT D.C. CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

D.C. CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

At a time when the arts are disappearing from curricula across the country, fiction, poetry and drama are flourishing among Hart Middle School students in Southeast Washington. Six years ago, Nancy Schwalb, a writer whose work has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, founded the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop in order to extend students' passion for the written word beyond the boundaries of school walls and school hours.

In D.C. Creative Writing Workshop's after-school fiction and poetry program, experienced writers-in-residence lead classes at Hart three times a week. The publication of a literary magazine, *hArtworks*, gives all of the students an opportunity to see their work in print, and it is a rare opportunity indeed: *hArtworks* is the only magazine of its kind in the country. Each issue is celebrated with student readings at partner bookstores Borders, Barnes & Noble and Karibu Books. In the after-school drama program, students work together to write an adaptation of a classical Greek play, applying the work's enduring themes to their own time and concerns. A professional director guides rehearsals and teaches acting skills. Students also attend at least six productions at Arena Stage and the Shakespeare Theatre — an entirely new experience for most participants, who largely come from low-income households.

Last year, 217 African American youth at Hart Middle School took part in Workshop programs, which also have expanded to serve Hart's feeder schools, Simon Elementary and Ballou Senior High. Each year's enrollment pointedly includes students who have lost family members to violence. "It is very important to us that students connect to writing and use it as a means of reflecting on their own lives," says Executive Director Jamila Wade. A recent survey conducted by the program indicates an achievement beyond this high goal: more than 70 percent of students reported that they had sometimes turned to writing to "relieve stress" or to avoid negative activities.

believe in hard

GAPBUSTER LEARNING CENTER, INC.

“I believe all children are gifted — that’s my philosophy,” says Yvette Butler, MD, executive director of GapBuster Learning Center, Inc. in Silver Spring. “Our goal is to provide the children with a good foundation, the support they need, and let them know they’re gifted — and then they can do wonders.” At GapBuster, staff and volunteers put this philosophy into practice, giving hundreds of low-income African American and Latino youth the support they need to succeed in school.

African American and Latino youth consistently lag behind White peers on standardized tests and other measures of academic achievement. This is the “gap” that GapBuster targets in its work with students from kindergarten through senior high, with an emphasis on the critical transition period of middle school. Last year, GapBuster programs served 163 middle school youth in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties. All middle school students who participate in GapBuster’s after-school program learn from the Montgomery County Public Schools’ curriculum for the gifted and talented. For youth to succeed, they need to form strong, lasting relationships with caring adults, so GapBuster matches students with mentors. Students also take part in a host of extra activities that motivate them to stay on the path to success, including job shadowing, entrepreneurship workshops, leadership conferences, life-skills training, college-prep workshops, tours of college campuses and international travel.

GapBuster gets results by creating a caring environment where students — and their families — are held to high expectations. Parents play a central role in student success, so the organization offers parent workshops on education advocacy, math and language arts. GapBuster also encourages school administrators and PTAs to collaborate with parents, and to be welcoming and inclusive so that all parents can participate fully in their children’s academic success. Since its founding in 1999, GapBuster has grown to five full-time staff, 30 part-time staff, and nearly 70 volunteers, with plans to expand to more sites in the Washington region.



AT GAPBUSTER, STRONG FOUNDATIONS AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS PUT YOUTH ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Purchase a bus for student transportation; expand service hours and hire more teachers to continue low student-teacher ratio; create an advanced digital learning center for students; provide more students with free SAT prep and college tours; serve 50+ more middle school clients per year; increase sustainability.

TIME: Mentor a student one hour a week; tutor students in math or language 2–4 hours per week; provide job shadowing experiences as a professional mentor; write grant proposals; assist in the office or Teen Center; serve on advisory board.

GOODS: 25-seat passenger bus, in-kind carpentry work for kitchen and office build-out, computers and software to establish an advanced learning center for teens, copier, portable PA system and podium, security system, office furniture, school and office supplies, copy paper, educational games, books, furniture for Teen Center. Pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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gapbuster@earthlink.net
www.gapbuster.org

Operating budget:
\$521,000

GREENBRIER LEARNING CENTER

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Expand to serve 50 additional students per year at Kenmore Middle School, bringing the total to 100, while keeping student-tutor ratio low; replicate tutoring and lifeskills program at other schools.

TIME: Work one-on-one with a middle school student after school; lead Friday afternoon lifeskills sessions; lead a session on employment readiness for Teen LEAD students.

GOODS: School supplies, books appropriate for 6th-8th graders (new or gently used), art supplies, storage bins, padfolios for youth to use on interviews. Local pick-up of smaller goods can be arranged.

CONTACT

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www.gblc.org

Operating budget:
\$381,562

The Washington region is well-known for its diversity and its constantly shifting demographics. Columbia Heights West (CHW), a neighborhood in South Arlington, is no exception. It is among the poorest areas of a county where, since 1990, general poverty has increased by 20 percent and childhood poverty by 33 percent. Columbia Heights West also has one of the densest concentrations of immigrant residents in a county where the foreign-born population has soared in recent years. Greenbrier Learning Center helps youth in this challenging neighborhood stay in school while encouraging them to focus on the future.

Greenbrier was founded in 1994 to provide tutoring services to low-income Columbia Heights West elementary students. In 1999, Greenbrier formed a partnership with Kenmore Middle School in order to provide tutoring services at the school. As executive director Erin Kliewer puts it, "Children do not suddenly stop needing help in the 6th grade." Kenmore provides dedicated classroom space, as well as access to student information with parental permission. Working closely with teachers, administrators and parents to improve academic performance for middle school youth, Greenbrier targets at-risk Latino, African American and immigrant youth, most of whom are severely behind in school. Last year the program at Kenmore worked with 30 youth ages 11 to 14. A recent evaluation showed that 84 percent of student participants had improved attendance, and that 66 percent of student participants raised their grades, including a significant number of students who had previously been failing.

Students in grades 8–10 are served by the Teen LEAD program at Greenbrier, which has two-way benefits for students and the community: students gain job skills and leadership experience through workshops, community service and an internship. Partnerships with George Mason University and Marymount University give many students their first glimpse of college life, including campus visits and mentoring relationships with college volunteers. Lifeskills workshops provide students the chance to create their first resume, learn interviewing skills and gain confidence. By providing programming for middle school students, Greenbrier is able to bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood.



GREENBRIER HELPS YOUTH IN SOUTH ARLINGTON
STAY IN SCHOOL AND FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

believe



MORE THAN 10,000 YOUNG LIVES HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED
BY THE HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

When Yizhuo Chen came to the Higher Achievement Program in 6th grade, he was working 10 hours each week washing dishes in Chinatown, in the same place his mother and father worked. Despite their desperate need for more income, Yizhuo's parents agreed that his time would be better spent at Higher Achievement. He never missed a day, and after three years, he enrolled at Gonzaga College High School on a full scholarship. He recently graduated with a 3.88 GPA and has started his freshman year at the University of California, San Diego, where he plans to pursue a degree in astrophysics.

Yizhuo is not alone in pursuing his dreams. Higher Achievement has helped more than 10,000 youth over the past 30 years realize their intellectual potential. This small but nationally recognized program currently serves more than 400 students from under-resourced communities at locations in Alexandria and Wards 1, 4, 6 and 7 in the District, and is expanding to serve more students. Each year, scholars spend 650 hours in the Higher Achievement Program in addition to the 900 hours they spend in school. The program's results are both immediate and far-reaching. In 2004–2005, 76 percent of scholars earning Cs in reading at the beginning of the year improved to Bs. And more than 75 percent of 8th grade scholars are consistently placed in top school programs.

Higher Achievement achieves these results by focusing middle school youth on academic success and creating a positive cycle of learning during a time often marked by declines in achievement. The program's advanced, social justice-based curriculum is aligned with public school standards, and every child benefits from three mentors, as well as exposure to other positive role models and constructive peer groups. Most important, in everything it does, Higher Achievement champions three principles: talent is everywhere, intellect is built through effort and opportunities matter.

in excellence

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Support high-level field trips (including 3-day university trips); launch an alumni outreach program; improve branding and visibility; increase professional development for staff to improve quality of programs and services.

TIME: Mentor 3–4 motivated students one evening per week for 26 weeks using Higher Achievement's challenging curricula.

GOODS: Office and classroom supplies and furniture, up-to-date computer equipment (laptops, disks, re-writable CDs, memory cards), cell phones, metro/bus passes, and gift certificates to be used as incentives and rewards for scholars and families.

CONTACT

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www.higherachievement.org

Operating budget:
\$2,033,000

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: \$15,000 HVAC unit to maintain summer site for 150 young people; 15-seat passenger van to transport participants on field trips; \$550 will fund a field trip to a local museum for 50 youth; \$90,000 needed to open another school site to serve an additional 40 students.

TIME: Become a mentor; chaperone Saturday field trips; tutor youth after school; assist with tech/networking issues.

GOODS: Calculators, computers, backpacks, basketballs, board games. Pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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www.linkdc.org

Operating budget:
\$401,000



FIELD TRIPS ARE ONE WAY THAT LINK HELPS YOUTH FROM SOUTHEAST D.C. EXPAND THEIR HORIZONS

LINK

At a remarkably young age, Sharon Weaver knew that she wanted to devote her life to early childhood education. This has been her dream since she was a student at John Philip Sousa Middle School in Southeast Washington, where she enrolled in the after-school tutoring program LINK. Now a senior at a charter high school in D.C., Sharon has applied to six colleges. She credits LINK with keeping her GPA high — and keeping her motivated. “I was a good student, and I knew I wanted to go to college, but I think things would have been different without LINK,” Sharon says.

A group of American University law students founded LINK seven years ago. Working in the juvenile justice system, they saw that many of the youth in trouble came from Southeast in Washington, D.C. They set out with the sort of goal that seems vague in its simplicity until it is borne out in stories like Sharon’s: they wanted to help young people “reach their full potential.” LINK offers after-school homework assistance five days a week, a Saturday Academy, and a Summer Academy in which activities such as gardening and theatrical production are integrated with standards-based lessons. Staff also meet regularly with parents, whose support is integral to student success. Last year, 120 African American youth ages 10 to 14 were served at Sousa Middle School. LINK plans to expand to a second middle school in 2007.

“The average LINK student is someone who is talented, but doesn’t have a blueprint for how to do well,” said executive director Gerald Zavala. “Sometimes kids get a myopic view — they can’t see past circumstances over which they have no power. We use a term, ‘going beyond the block.’ For some kids at Sousa, the whole world is what is between 37th Street and Ely Place in Southeast. Where we come in is to help them see, little by little, what the world has to offer.”

believe in creativity

REACHING OBJECTIVES THROUGH JOINT ACTION (ROJA)

Last year, Reaching Objective through Joint Action (ROJA) asked 300 middle school students at Drew Freeman Middle School in Suitland to read 25 books during the school year above and beyond their assigned classroom reading. This was a true challenge for these middle schoolers, since ROJA works with youth in this troubled community where most students test at only 50 percent of the recommended proficiency in reading. Every student read at least 10 extra books on their own, and many read 15 or more. This self-directed reading, combined with tutoring for struggling students, resulted in dramatically increased reading scores, improved grades and better attendance levels — and the school's reading proficiency increased by 8 percent.

Founded in 1989 by educator Janice Euell, ROJA works to give African American youth in Prince George's County the academic and life skills they need to thrive. ROJA's flagship program, the Youth Changers Success Club, provides reading and math assistance, as well as development of a broad spectrum of life skills. ROJA also offers enrichment activities, such as field trips and community service opportunities, and resources and referrals for students' families. ROJA targets students in kindergarten through 12th grade, including several hundred middle school youth each year.

Teaching youth to help others is also part of the ROJA philosophy, and during the 2006–2007 school year, the program will partner with an orphanage in West Africa so that students can send school supplies and other necessities to needy children half a world away. Like everything ROJA does, providing a connection to youth in Africa is designed to help youth in Suitland to broaden their understanding of the world around them. "If you offer students something that they want, something that makes them feel good, they'll work for it," Euell says. "Children love to be able to see new things, and we offer them a chance to look at the world from a different perspective."



ROJA CHALLENGES YOUTH IN SUITLAND TO WORK HARD AND SEE THE WORLD IN NEW WAYS

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Hire more tutors to reduce the student-tutor ratio to one-on-one; hire new staff to increase membership in the Youth Changers Success Club; open a new after-school learning center in Landover, MD; provide healthy snacks for youth; increase recreational and cultural activities.

TIME: Tutor students in math or reading weekday afternoons; chaperone recreational/cultural events excursions; assist with fund-raising and grant writing; become a board member.

GOODS: Copiers, TV with VCR capability, DVD players, projector for PowerPoint presentations, new computers, incentives to motivate youth to read (t-shirts, book bags and other school supplies). Pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

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Operating budget:
\$295,000

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Success in middle school sets the stage for success in life. The middle school years lay the foundation for academic success in high school and college, and they also are a time when young people begin their journey toward adulthood. Yet too many young people in our region are falling behind at this critical time in their intellectual and personal development, partly because the middle school years often are overlooked by those working to improve education.

Fortunately, there is much we can do to support the social development and academic achievement of middle school youth, as evidenced by the 15 organizations featured in this year's *Spirit of Giving*. These superb organizations are leading the way in making a difference for middle school youth in many ways — from school leadership and systems reform, to parent participation and youth development programs, to improving the quality of classroom instruction. Of course, all of these areas are interrelated.

An effective, lasting approach to meeting this challenge will require a comprehensive strategy that addresses all of these interrelated areas. Furthermore, while nonprofits are a powerful starting point for change, transforming education will require a community-wide approach. Businesses, government, donors, foundations and advocates must work together to find solutions. Those that are closest to students — parents, teachers and administrators — must be committed, unwavering advocates for middle school youth. Finally, students themselves need to play a part in improving their schools and ensuring their own success.

The Community Foundation, as part of its ongoing commitment to successful outcomes for youth, is increasing support for middle-schoolers across the region. When middle school students grow into successful, productive adults prepared to participate fully in the workforce and engage in civic life, everyone in the metropolitan Washington region reaps the rewards.

believe in potential

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH: ADDING UP THE IMPACT

This guide addresses the needs of youth in grades 5 through 8, or ages 10–14 — a significant number of youth in our region:

- There are more than 175,000 students in grades 5–8 in 8 public school districts in the metropolitan Washington area
- Each year in our region, more than 40,000 public school students enter the middle school grades, and just as many 8th graders prepare for the transition to high school
- Over the next 20 years, well over one million students will attend grades 5–8 in our region

It's important to note that not all youth in grades 5–8 attend a middle school. Many middle schools start with grade 6. Also, while middle schools now account for more than half of middle grade schools, many school districts across the country — including those in our region — still have junior highs, which typically teach grades 7–9. However, no matter the type of school they attend, all students in the middle grades are affected by the developmental issues that make these years so critical.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN THE WASHINGTON REGION

PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	5TH GRADE	6TH GRADE	7TH GRADE	8TH GRADE	SUBTOTAL 5TH–8TH
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	4,670	4,519	3,989	3,941	17,119
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD	10,319	10,390	10,762	10,817	42,288
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	10,718	10,657	11,264	11,046	43,685
ALEXANDRIA CITY, VA	808	851	765	758	3,182
ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA	1,428	1,324	1,264	1,289	5,305
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA	12,319	12,251	12,706	12,915	50,191
FALLS CHURCH, VA	157	133	145	141	576
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA	3,425	3,383	3,319	3,348	13,475
TOTAL	43,844	43,508	44,214	44,255	175,821

“When parents, educators, and members of the public form a web of support around young adolescents, they enable students to see themselves as capable and contributing members of the community.”

“SUCCESS IN THE MIDDLE: A POLICYMAKER'S GUIDE TO ACHIEVING QUALITY MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION” (2006), NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

INEQUITY IN ACTION: GREATER WASHINGTON'S ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Research shows that performance during middle school declines across the board, but the decline is steeper for low-income students and African Americans and Latinos. This pattern is part of a widespread problem known as the "achievement gap."

Across the nation and here in our region, a gap in academic achievement persists between certain minority and disadvantaged student populations and their White and Asian counterparts. For instance, Asian and White students have lower dropout rates and consistently outperform African Americans and Latinos on standardized tests.

While the achievement gap is particularly severe in some schools and jurisdictions, it affects students across the entire Washington region. A look at standardized math and reading scores for middle school students shows the gap in achievement between White middle school students and their Black and Latino counterparts in four local jurisdictions:

READING ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN MIDDLE SCHOOL % STUDENTS SCORING "ADVANCED"

	WHITE	BLACK	LATINO
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	40.24%	2.85%	2.35%
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	52.94%	16.77%	14.37%
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY	37.90%	13.20%	9.97%
FAIRFAX COUNTY	47.00%	14.50%	11.00%

MATH ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN MIDDLE SCHOOL % STUDENTS SCORING "ADVANCED"

	WHITE	BLACK	LATINO
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	32.54%	1.84%	1.58%
MONTGOMERY COUNTY	35.23%	6.30%	6.93%
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY	23.77%	5.34%	5.00%
FAIRFAX COUNTY	45.00%	13.50%	14.50%

"Education to capture the young person's emergent sense of self and the world, and to foster inquiring, analytical habits of mind, is not only feasible but constitutes essential preparation for life."

"GREAT TRANSITIONS: PREPARING ADOLESCENTS FOR A NEW CENTURY"
(1995), CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

believe in achievement

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITY

The social development and academic achievement of middle school youth is the topic of this year's *Spirit of Giving* because it is critical to ensuring equity and opportunity for every child in our region. It's also an area in which The Community Foundation is providing broader leadership as part of its commitment to dramatically increasing opportunities for low-income children, youth and adults to contribute to and benefit from our region's prosperity.

Throughout the metropolitan area, thousands of middle school students are in need of greater support, in and out of school, to overcome significant, systemic inequities in their schools and communities. Across the board, these inequities are closely aligned with race, ethnicity and class, as evidenced by the achievement gap (*see sidebar*). This pervasive pattern of disparity drives home the need for system reform. Educational inequities also connect to other pervasive problems, including health care disparities, the opportunity gap, and the digital divide. These connections underscore the importance for schools and community to work together to provide middle school youth with a comprehensive set of supports.

In addition to ensuring equity for every student, we must break down barriers to access, inside and outside the classroom. In the context of education, access involves everything from basic issues, such as ensuring that every classroom has an adequate number of textbooks, to big-picture issues, such as placing qualified teachers in every classroom and giving every student a challenging curriculum and career development opportunities. The best educational systems facilitate full access to educational resources at all levels.

By recognizing and cultivating the inherent potential of our youth, we can open the doors to a world of opportunity.



WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS



Achievement in middle school is a reliable predictor of success in high school and beyond. Unaddressed problems during the middle school years — especially problems that arise as students transition out of elementary school — often contribute to a “snowball effect” of academic, behavioral and social problems extending to high school and, ultimately, the workforce.

Middle school is a turning point for many students because youth go through tremendous changes during these critical years — intellectually, physically and socially. For instance, scientists have found that the greatest spurts of brain growth after infancy occur just around adolescence. Dr. Jay Giedd, a neuroscientist at the National Institutes of Health who has studied the teenage brain, describes these years as “a time of enormous opportunity and of enormous risk.” Middle school is also the point where youth begin to develop their sense of identity — who they want to be, and what their talents and skills are. In short, it is a period of expanding self-awareness.

Because the middle school years are so complex from a developmental standpoint, even formerly strong students tend to lose ground academically when they reach middle school — and those who were already struggling in the elementary grades typically fall further behind. When students transition out of middle school without the skills and desire to succeed in high school and beyond, often it is too late to undo the damage.

The worst-case scenario is that such students leave school altogether. “The Silent Epidemic,” a 2006 report from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, shows that for every three students who enter high school, only two will graduate. The likelihood for graduation is even lower for some students in the Washington area. For instance, in the District of Columbia, fewer than half of 9th graders go on to graduate from high school. In addition, even in jurisdictions with graduation rates that exceed the national average, there are troubling disparities. In Fairfax County, for instance, 90 percent of white students graduate from high school, compared to 72.6 percent of African American students and 60 percent of Hispanic students.

Furthermore, according to the Philadelphia Education Fund, students who enter high school two or more years behind grade level have only a 50 percent chance of on-time promotion to 10th grade, and 9th grade retention is the biggest factor in dropping out of high school. Finally, many of those who do graduate from high school are unprepared to pursue higher education or career goals. For these students, low literacy and a lack of basic skills can result in chronic unemployment and underemployment.

When middle school students are supported and challenged, they are prepared for high school and primed to pursue productive, fulfilling lives.

MOTIVATING MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS: EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

Connecting with middle school youth during out-of-school time — through after-school, Saturday and summer programs — is one of the most powerful opportunities we have for engaging youth in their own development. A sense of ownership and involvement in their own development and progress is a critical element in the success of any program that focuses on middle school youth, and effective out-of-school programs allow youth to be stakeholders in their own success.

Because these types of programs are so important, and because nonprofits are particularly well-suited to addressing this need, 10 of the organizations in this guide have a strong focus on out-of-school youth development (see pages 8, 10, and 14–21). In addition, the three schools (pages 11–13) support students outside typical school hours through extended days, weeks and school years.

Out-of-school programs engage middle school youth in a variety of ways, from intensive mentoring and supervised study time, to giving youth opportunities to take part in arts and athletics, to promoting youth advocacy and leadership. In every case, these programs play an important role in allowing young people to fulfill their potential and follow their dreams — in and out of school.

“The imperative is to educate each student successfully, which may require different types and levels of support to ensure that all young people have equitable opportunities.”

“ENGAGING CITIES: HOW MUNICIPAL LEADERS CAN MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS” (2006), ANNENBERG INSTITUTE

believe in possibilities

believe in progress

ONLINE RESOURCES

Center for Teaching Quality
www.teachingquality.org

The Education Trust
www.edtrust.org

Forum for Youth Investment
www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
www.ncpie.org

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality
www.nccctq.org

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
www.mgforum.org

National Middle School Association
www.nmsa.org

Public Education Network
www.publiceducation.org

Southern Regional Education Board
www.sreb.org

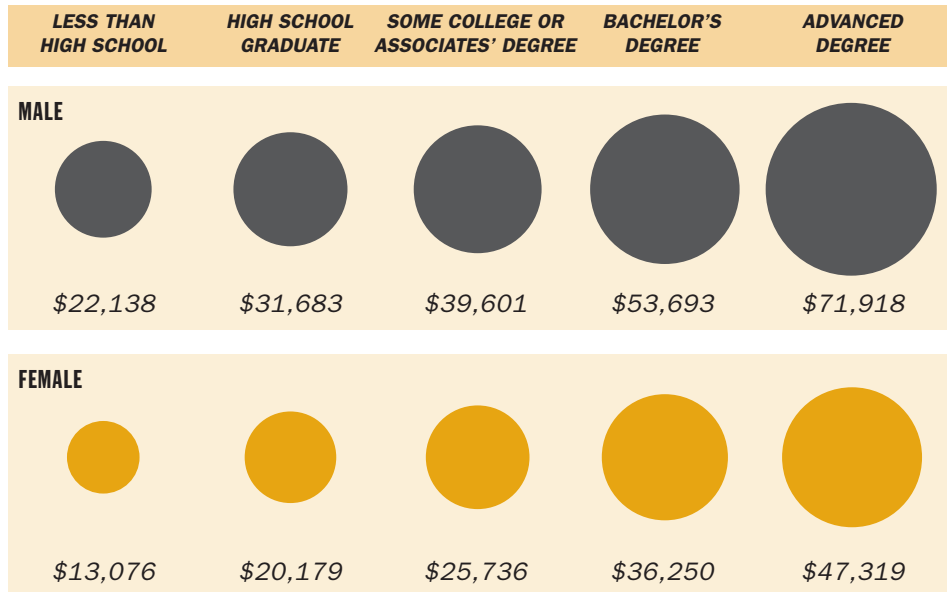
Turning Points: Transforming Middle Schools
www.turningpts.org

FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO MAKING A LIVING

The middle grades lay the foundation for success in high school, and ensuring that students finish high school gives them significantly greater ability to support themselves and their families. In 2005, median income for a male high school graduate was \$31,683, compared to \$22,138 for a high school dropout.

Preparing middle school youth to pursue a college education opens the doors to even greater economic self-sufficiency. In 2005, men with bachelor's degree earned almost two-and-half times as much as male high school dropouts — and women with bachelor's degrees had nearly three times more earning power than female dropouts.

MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR WORKERS 25 YEARS AND OVER IN 2005



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey

TODAY'S STUDENTS, TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

Achievement in middle school is crucial not only because every child deserves a high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed, but also because the Washington metropolitan area demands a well-educated workforce and engaged citizenry.

There is a distressing disconnect between our region's prosperity and our youth's lack of preparation to take part in that prosperity. Opportunity exists, but it is beyond the reach of too many young people in our region, especially those who are low-income, African American and Latino — often because they are struggling through school or, even worse, giving up on school altogether.

Education is society's great equalizer. Its power to open doors to opportunity is an essential part of the American dream. Yet more than 50 years after *Brown v. the Board of Education*, thousands of students who live in the shadow of the nation's Capitol are being shut out of that dream and denied those opportunities because they do not have equal access to a good education. At a time when global competitiveness is increasingly important, many youth who are struggling in school are in danger of being permanently disenfranchised. If we don't intervene and support these students during their middle school years, many of them will face futures of severely limited possibility.

By supporting the academic achievement and social development of middle school youth, we can begin to address some of the income and equity gaps that permeate our region. The long-term impact of investing in these young people will be that more students will succeed in high school and be prepared for an increasingly competitive global workforce.

By focusing on the success of middle school youth, our region will cultivate tomorrow's employees and entrepreneurs, taxpayers and voters, parents and community leaders.



GIVING TO FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

INSPIRING INCREASED RESOURCES

Since the first *Spirit of Giving* was distributed in November 2003, this annual guide has raised awareness about key issues facing our community and the role of smaller nonprofit organizations in addressing these challenges.

- The 2003–2004 *Spirit of Giving* offered an in-depth look at neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C., featuring 15 nonprofits working with children and families on issues ranging from education to AIDS to youth violence.
- The 2004–2005 *Spirit of Giving* focused on civic engagement, profiling 15 organizations that forge community change by bringing together residents, youth and community leaders in creative and inclusive ways.
- The 2005–2006 *Spirit of Giving* examined workforce development, highlighting 15 nonprofits that create a path out of poverty by giving people the skills and opportunities necessary to participate fully in our regional economy.

Donors from across the region have responded enthusiastically to the *Spirit of Giving*, generating significant grants and other forms of support for the nonprofit organizations featured each year. In addition, The Community Foundation has helped leverage support for these groups from its donors and has itself made grants to the 43 organizations featured over the past three years.

Donors are moved to give by many factors, and it is often difficult to track the sources of support for nonprofit organizations. However, our efforts to capture results show that at a minimum, the *Spirit of Giving* has generated more than \$1 million in cash and in-kind contributions over the past three years.

The Community Foundation actively leverages grants to the organizations featured in the guide. Over the past three years, 43 organizations have been featured in the guide (two groups have appeared twice), and two out of three — 26 out of 43 — have secured a donation from a Community Foundation donor or through one of our partners. Several of these organizations were first-time recipients from these funds, and the value of the grants ranged from \$3,470 to \$50,000.

Furthermore, many organizations find that inclusion in this guide adds to their credibility with potential funders, and reinforces the confidence of their current supporters. While many sources of financial support cannot be attributed solely to the *Spirit of Giving*, clearly it is an important tool in generating community support for these worthy nonprofits.

believe in

POWERFUL PARTNERS

Three innovative groups have been integral to our capacity-building efforts with organizations featured in the Spirit of Giving.

Greater DC Cares engages the entire region in unique and rewarding giving experiences that strengthen community organizations and enrich Greater Washington. Learn more at www.dc-cares.org

Mosaica is a multicultural nonprofit capacity-building organization that helps community-based nonprofit organizations become more effective and sustainable. Learn more at www.mosaica.org

TouchDC is a web-based initiative that allows donors to find out about the great work of local nonprofits, donate funds online, and find local volunteer opportunities. Learn more at www.TouchDC.org

INVESTING IN CAPACITY

The Community Foundation has committed itself to helping the organizations featured in the *Spirit of Giving* to grow stronger and more sustainable over time. To that end, we have provided special capacity-building opportunities as a follow-up to inclusion in this guide.

Through a partnership with Touch DC, all 45 groups also have been able to participate in fundraising fundamental sessions designed to strengthen their efforts around marketing and individual donor cultivation. For all 45 organizations featured in the first three guides, we are now partnering with Greater DC Cares, which helps nonprofits build capacity through the strategic use of highly skilled volunteers — such as professionals with experience in developing strategic plans, or technology experts who can set up a computer lab.

When appropriate, The Community Foundation also offers capacity-building opportunities specific to each guide's particular focus. For instance, for organizations in the 2003–2004 *Spirit of Giving*, which focused on neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River, we leveraged support for two years of organizational development with Mosaica. And for the civic engagement organizations profiled in the 2004–2005 guide, we sponsored the groups' participation in workshops led by nationally recognized experts in advocacy, communications and messaging.

The power of giving

HOW TO SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS

We invite you to support the academic achievement and social development of middle school youth. It's easy to make a donation of dollars, goods or time to any of the nonprofit organizations featured in this guide. Let us show you how.

DONATE FUNDS

DONATE THROUGH THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

DONATE BY CHECK: Mail us a check made out to CFNCR/Spirit of Giving. To simplify mailing, use the envelope included with this guide. Tell us whether you want to support one or more organizations, or the guide itself.

DONATE ONLINE: Go to www.thecommunityfoundation.org and click on the "Donate Online" link. Select "Add to a Fund" and write "CFNCR/Spirit of Giving" under the fund name.

DONATE THROUGH YOUR DONOR ADVISED FUND AT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: If you have a fund, you may fill out a donor suggestion form — indicating support of "Spirit of Giving" — and mail or fax it to us. For more information about establishing a donor advised fund, go to www.thecommunityfoundation.org or contact Kenny Emson at kemson@cfncr.org.

DONATE DIRECTLY

DONATE BY CHECK: Make your check payable to the name of the organization and mail directly to the attention of the contact person listed on the organization's profile. Please tell the organization you found them in the *Spirit of Giving* using the memo line of your check or by attaching a note. If you have any questions, call or email the organization's contact.

DONATE ONLINE: Go to www.TouchDC.org or the websites of the individual organization. When giving online, please tell the organization you found them in the *Spirit of Giving* by writing "CFNCR/Spirit of Giving" in any space available for notes.

SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS TO REFORM EDUCATION

MAKE A GIFT TO OUR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FUND: Follow the above instructions for giving through The Community Foundation, making out a check or donating online to the CFNCR/Community Leadership Fund. To simplify mailing, use the envelope included with this guide. Please write "Spirit of Giving" on the memo line of your check, and also let us know that your contribution is a gift to support our leadership work in education.

DONATE GOODS

Many organizations accept appropriate in-kind donations. It's always best to contact the organization first to be sure your donation will be used effectively. Call or email the nonprofit organization's contact person in advance to arrange for delivery of your gift.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

The organizations in this guide offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities — in fact, most could not have such extraordinary impact without the involvement of committed, caring volunteers. Call or email the nonprofit organization's contact person to introduce yourself and arrange for an appropriate volunteer placement. Please let the organization know that you learned about them through the *Spirit of Giving*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with The Community Foundation's staff about the groups in this guide or other giving opportunities in the metropolitan Washington region, contact Kristin Scotchmer, Program Officer, at 202-263-4769 or kscotchmer@cfncr.org.

WHO WE ARE

Whether you are a donor or a nonprofit organization in search of support, The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region can assist you. We help donors connect with the people and issues they care about. We provide grants to exemplary nonprofit organizations serving the community. We listen carefully to what each of our stakeholders has to say. And then, working together, we find solutions that build a stronger community and enrich the quality of life for present and future generations.

Since 1973, The Community Foundation has managed the philanthropic dollars of metropolitan area families, individuals, corporations, and institutions. Today, The Community Foundation has 540 funds, each as unique as the donor who created it.

We offer a wide array of flexible options to encourage and nurture effective charitable giving at all income levels. Our knowledgeable staff is “plugged into” the community and provides donors with information on local nonprofit organizations to help them make solid community investments. The Foundation also hosts opportunities to learn more about issues affecting our region and works with donors to create personal giving plans, conduct estate planning, and help involve families in creating a legacy of giving.

The Community Foundation and its three regional affiliates — The Alexandria Community Trust, The Montgomery County Community Foundation, and The Prince George’s Community Foundation — work to maximize the social return of philanthropy in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. region.

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MISSION

The mission of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region is to facilitate individual, family and organizational giving at all levels to improve the quality of life in the metropolitan Washington region.

We accomplish this by:

- *Providing expertise and services to donors on how to realize their goals in philanthropy;*
- *Connecting our donors to organizations providing effective programs;*
- *Serving as a convener and catalyst on emerging issues; and*
- *Providing sound financial management of assets.*

believe in community

believe in opportunity
spirit of giving



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