There is typically no shortage of toys on a child’s wish list as the holiday approaches. But this past Christmas, with the help of our caring donors, we were also able to fill the single request of a very special little girl in our Head Start (HS) program. Genesis didn’t ask Santa for Barbie™ dolls or video games this year. This sweet 4 year old child asked for only one thing; a bed of her very own. Genesis had never slept in her own bed before. She lived with her parents and two younger siblings, and the family of five shared one full size bed. Genesis’ parents could not afford to buy the children their own beds, so the family made do in their crowded sleeping space.

Each year we see a tremendous outpouring of support and kindness from individuals and companies who donate beautiful new gifts to our children, so as the holiday grew near, our HS Family Advocate Mary Sanchez visited Genesis’ family and asked the children what they might want for Christmas. Genesis’ answer touched Mary’s heart, and she worked with our Marketing & Donor Coordinator Angie Giacolona and our Director of Corporate Development & Volunteerism Pamela Cipriano to find donated funds to fulfill this little girl’s wish along with sheets, a comforter, and of course a few toys. Generous donors were eager to help, and our custodians Theotis Robinson and Sebastian Alvarez volunteered to deliver the bed to Genesis’ home when the family was unable to pick it up themselves.

Stories like this offer not only a glimpse into the lives and daily struggles of our clients, but also a peek at just how caring and generous our many donors and staff can be. We are so grateful to everyone who came together to grant Genesis’ Christmas wish, and the wishes of so many of our children.
FAREWELL TO A DEAR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

Following 13 years of dedicated service to our children, families, and community, we say goodbye to Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, a remarkable friend and leader, who has accepted the exciting Chief Program Officer position of the Middlesex County Puerto Rican Action Board.

Martiza’s departure leaves “big shoes” for us to fill, as she has developed and enhanced so many important programs through her unwavering commitment and absolute passion for helping the at-risk babies, children, youth, and families we serve. Under her leadership, our Maternal/Child Health and Community Support Services have grown tremendously, while maintaining the warm, one-on-one connection and cultural sensitivity that makes our programs extraordinary. We wish her the best in her new position. We are certain Maritza will continue to do great things for her community.

Our President & CEO Donna Pressma praised Maritza’s outstanding support and leadership, saying, “Although I am CEO, Maritza has taught me so very much over the years. Her concern for relevant services that truly make lives better is undeniable. I am proud to have worked with and learned from such an outstanding professional.”

CHSoF NJ CONGRATULATES OUR NEWEST DIRECTORS

Joan O. Martin, CHSoF NJ WIC of Mercer County Program Administrator, was promoted to WIC Director, managing all program operations including the supervision of staff, main office and satellite sites; client intake; certification and distribution of checks; and nutrition and breastfeeding education and support. Joan holds a Masters of Public Health and 27 years of experience as a WIC Nutritionist/Supervisor, Head Start Nutrition Manager, Health Education Collaborative Coordinator, and Public Health Consultant. Her WIC experience prior to leading the Mercer County program was at the Health and Hospitals Corporation in Brooklyn, New York. Her 23 years of Head Start experience was with Newark Preschool Council, the largest Head Start provider in Newark, where she implemented and managed a collaborative partnership between WIC and Head Start in Newark. Joan plans to link WIC to CHSoF NJ Head Start.

CHSoF NJ Program Administrator Louise McCants Shabazz, has been promoted to Director of School-Based Programs. Louise has worked with our Trenton school children and families since 2005. Louise oversees the CHSoF NJ 21st Century Community Learning Centers Positive Impact Program, which offers daily after-school Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) programming, homework help, and other engaging activities for over 200 middle school students in Trenton schools. Louise also oversees operation of the Trenton Education Dance Institute (TEDI), a National Dance Institute arts education youth development program serving 200 Trenton students in Grades 5 through 10 with in-school and after-school dance instruction and performance opportunities. Louise brings extensive experience in business and management to her new position, as she holds a BS in Business Administration and has served as Vice President of Capitol City Contracting in Trenton, New Jersey. Every year she witnesses victories as student after student goes on to college.

RECOGNIZING OUR OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEES

CHSoF NJ congratulates the following employees on their recent accomplishments; Vilma Aguirre has been promoted to Coordinator for Maternal Child Health. Aniela Brzoza and Socorro Garcia have both been promoted to Family Success Center Coordinator. Sarah Stecker, who previously served CHSoF NJ as a consultant, has accepted a position as our Associate Grant Writer and Program Developer. Pamela Cipriano has been appointed to lead the coordination of our agency’s annual Gala on April 30, 2017. Pam retains her responsibilities as Director of Corporate Development and Volunteerism in addition to the new responsibilities she has taken on.

Keep up the great work team!
Our Marketing & Donor Coordinator Angie Giacolona recently spoke with Yv Desiderio, a CHSoN friend and donor, to ask what inspires her to do so much for our babies, children, and families. Yv shared her personal story and with her permission, we are so excited to share it with you now.

Yv’s penchant for giving began when she was very young; she recalled one particular Christmas, when she was still very little, when Santa had brought her a beautiful and expensive doll. Children from the neighborhood were gathered and Yv’s father, as he did each year, had dressed up as Santa and was handing out toys. “I remember showing off my expensive doll to the kids who were waiting to receive a toy. My parents took me aside to explain that those children were there because their parents could not afford to buy toys for Christmas, and why it was wrong for me to show off the way I did. That lesson has never left me.”

As an adult, Yv adopted a daughter, which only deepened her desire to do something purposeful for children who might not have the comforts she and her husband were able to provide for their daughter. She reached out to CHSoN and immediately began organizing an extraordinary Christmas drive for our children. “While organizing a gift drive for The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey has certainly given me the chance to help kids in need, it has also become a way of expressing gratitude; of giving thanks for the blessing our daughter has bestowed on us,” she said.

Yv’s eyes welled up with tears as she spoke about our children, “Life has not been kind for so many of the children who participate in the various programs offered by The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey; some may have had to take on responsibilities that children don’t normally have to assume. So I love picturing them being allowed to just be children, playing with the toy they’ve been dreaming of for so long.” Yv also really enjoys helping our older teen children who are in need of basics; a sheet set, a shaving kit, a purse, etc.

“For many of us, and certainly this has been true of me, charity is an abstract idea,” she said. “But as my house begins to fill with donations, each intended for a particular child, the idea of doing good and helping others becomes concrete. Knowing that we are all actually making a difference in the life of a child renews my commitment to The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey’s gift drive each year.” Thank you, Yv!
FAMILY SUCCESS CENTER DADS

Our agency has always recognized the importance of involved, loving fathers, and we are so proud to announce a new initiative that celebrates the cherished bond between a father and his child. Under the leadership of our Family Success Center (FSC) staff members Socorro Garcia, Brenmarie Rentas, and Hilda Villanueva, our South Ward FSC will host a new and exciting activity each month to encourage communication and interaction between fathers and their children while reinforcing important education components such as math or reading. The first such event, “Fathers & Kids Cook Together,” will happen this March. Activities are open to all Family Success Center fathers and their children over the age of five.

TEDI

We want to thank TEDI President Richard Bilotti and our Director of Corporate Development & Volunteerism Pamela Cipriano, as well as the Trenton Public School District and our generous sponsors, corporate partners and supporters for coming together to celebrate our 4th Annual TEDI Fall Fundraiser at Grounds For Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ. The evening was a tremendous hit amongst our guests and raised crucial funds to help enhance this life-changing arts youth development program based on National Dance Institute Curriculum.

CORPORATE PARTNERS & FOUNDATIONS

We thank the following corporate partners and foundations for $284,000 gifts received between August 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016:

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In 2016, we met a remarkably caring group dedicated to making a difference and supporting at-risk children and families; **Muslims for Peace**. Our shared mission has led to a wonderful friendship wherein we work together to make a real difference in our Trenton children’s lives.

Under the leadership of Mustafa Abdi and Zain Ali of the Muslims for Peace Executive Team, the group has partnered with CHSofNJ in a number of important ways. Muslims for Peace has hosted extraordinary holiday parties for our Trenton children and families, providing delicious healthy dinners, many meaningful gifts, and a personal connection through their kind volunteers. The group has actively participated in and helped ensure the success of our Latino Parenting Conference (LPC). Recognizing the amazing impact our collaboration can have for our families, Mustafa Abdi has accepted a position on our Board of Trustees where he can further help us plan to better serve our at-risk infants, children, youth, and parents.

When asked why Muslims for Peace is so committed to our shared goals, he replied, “Charity begins at home. Our duty alongside helping our families is helping our neighbors and local communities.” CHSofNJ serves over 59,000 at-risk babies, children, youth, and families from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds through nearly 40 unique programs. We are proud to partner with Muslims for Peace because together **we can make miracles happen right here in New Jersey for our most at-risk children**.

**LIGHT A LAMP FOR DIWALI BENEFITS CHSoFNJ CHILDREN**

Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, is one of India’s most celebrated holidays. Over the course of the five day festival, which marks the victory of good over evil, Indians light clay lamps outside of their homes to symbolize inner light as protection from spiritual darkness, and revelers enjoy feasts, family gatherings, colored sand, bonfires, flowers, fireworks, sweet treats, and enchanting candles and lamp light.

This year, in honor of this important holiday, **Bhuchar Law Firm** and **Diwahar Performing Arts Group** came together to host a special event to benefit our children and families; **Light A Lamp for Diwali with The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey**. This most remarkable evening featured dinner, music, Bollywood dancers, and a special performance by our TEDI dancers. We are so grateful to our friends for planning this beautifully creative, successful fundraiser, and for so warmly welcoming us and our children into this beautiful tradition.
For nearly two decades, the Trenton Fire Department has donated truckloads of toys and clothing to CHSofNJ for our at-risk children and families, and this year was no exception! Pictured left, CHSofNJ staff and members of the Trenton Fire Department celebrated a job well done after unloading hundreds of gifts from the firetruck. We are so grateful to these caring firemen for inspiring hundreds of big smiles on our children’s faces on Christmas Day!

Our 53rd Annual Brunch with Santa hosted by CHSofNJ’s Trenton Auxiliary was once again a community favorite! This beloved event featured games, holiday crafts, and a chance for local children to meet Santa Claus before settling in for an original children’s Christmas play performed by the ladies of our Auxiliary and friends. All proceeds from the festive event go to CHSofNJ foster children.

The young ladies of Girl Scout Troop #71409 personally delivered over 85 presents to The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey this past Christmas, making the holiday season a little brighter for dozens of our babies and children. Supported by generous members of the community, the girls have collected gifts for CHSofNJ children for the past five years. We cannot thank troop members Camryn Gartner, Katelyn Adams, Juleesa Alvarado, Kennedy Robinson, Rayna Herman, Reagan Robinson, and Kelsey Raftery for all that they have done and continue to do for the at-risk babies and children we serve!

Our caring friends at Fox Rothschild, LLP donated tons of new toys and gifts for our children this holiday in addition to their outstanding financial support of our programs and services. Their kindness helped make the holiday extra special for dozens of at-risk babies and children in our communities! Fox Rothschild and their caring employees have been helping make a difference in our children’s lives for two decades and we are so grateful for their support.
CHRISTMAS DONORS

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TCNJ School of Nursing
TGI Fridays, Freehold
TGI Fridays, Hamilton
The Learning Center (TLC)
Thomas Edison State College AFT Union
Three Bridges Reformed Church
Liz Tolomello
Barbara Trainor
Thi Tran
Trenton Fire Department
Villagers of Allentown
Tom and Lynn Voigtsberger
Jill Volarich
Wear The Cape, LLC & KidKind Foundation
West Trenton Presbyterian Church
Wicoff Elementary Plainsboro PTA
The Wolfe Family
Woodside Presbyterian Church
Janice Yahoo
Zeta Tau Alpha at Fairleigh Dickinson University
Greg Zoltanski

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Woodside Presbyterian Church
Janice Yahoo
Zeta Tau Alpha at Fairleigh Dickinson University
Greg Zoltanski
SAVE THE DATE FOR CHSofNJ’S GALA

Join Us For Our 123rd Anniversary Gala
Seeds of Hope

Since 1894, CHSofNJ has been helping grow strong, healthy families throughout New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. Our Board of Trustees invites you to celebrate our 123rd anniversary with us at this year’s Seeds of Hope gala! Join the festivities at Cherry Valley Country Club in Skillman, NJ on Sunday, April 30, 2017. Your support will help us save children’s lives and build healthy families. To reserve tickets or learn other ways you can participate in this event, contact Pamela Cipriano at 609-695-6274 x160 or pcipriano@chsofnj.org.

Upcoming Events 2017 Please call 609-695-6274 for more event information

CHSofNJ Auxiliary Designer Handbag Bingo: May 5, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church (West Trenton, NJ) TICKETS ONLINE
TEDI Event of the Year Performance: May 25, Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School (Trenton, NJ)
A Night with Calvin Trillin “Being a Parent”: May 31, Grounds For Sculpture (Hamilton, NJ)

FOR A CHILD’S SAKE NEWSLETTER

Donna C. Pressma, President & CEO Dana Johnson, Editor
Justin Girard, Layout, Design, Editing
Angie Giacolona, Contributor

To learn more about CHSofNJ, visit our website at www.chsofnj.org