Welcoming Kidsbridge into Our Family of Services

In summer 2021, CHSofNJ’s Family Success Centers began a collaboration with Kidsbridge, a local nonprofit dedicated to providing young people with support to help them grow as empathetic individuals and positive advocates for themselves and others. Through coaching from caring adults, Kidsbridge empowers youth to challenge racism, bullying, and other forms of discrimination. In February 2023, the agency was proud to welcome Kidsbridge into our family of services. Under the visionary leadership of CHSofNJ Director of School-Based Services Michael Roseborough and former Kidsbridge Executive Director Lynne Azarchi, CHSofNJ and Kidsbridge merged together will support and empower children and youth in our community through Social-Emotional Learning and youth development programming for preschool through eighth grade in school-based services and summer camp. Together, we can teach empathy.

CHSofNJ Launches Central New Jersey’s First Mobile WIC

In 2021, CHSofNJ received funding from the USDA for a unique infrastructure project to increase access to our Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) services for eligible participants throughout Mercer County. And in February, CHSofNJ proudly launched our new mobile WIC van – WOW (WIC on Wheels)! WOW is one of only two units of its kind in NJ, and the only one serving Mercer County. The solar-powered and electric vehicle is a fully-equipped WIC Satellite Clinic that will travel into Mercer County neighborhoods and park in safe, convenient locations to recruit, enroll, and serve eligible participants. WOW brings multilingual WIC professionals directly to families in need of supplemental nutrition benefits, education, and breastfeeding support, thereby better serving those without access to reliable transportation or who live too far from CHSofNJ’s Mercer County WIC office in Ewing to walk to their appointments. WOW can also park at various CHSofNJ offices, such as our newest Early Head Start site in Trenton, The Vivian B. Shapiro, MSW, PhD Early Childhood Center, to help eligible participants access multiple programs.

In 2022, CHSofNJ successfully enrolled 8,251 women, infants, and children in WIC services. Now, thanks to generous funding from the USDA and the vision and leadership of Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Prevention & Community Engagement and Joan Martin, Mercer County WIC Program Director, we anticipate the convenience and flexibility of WOW will help us connect even more women, infants, and young children to needed WIC services in 2023!
Thank You to Our Volunteers, Donors, and Corporate & Foundation Partners

CHSoNJ simply could not make such a meaningful difference in our communities without the support of caring friends like you! We couldn’t possibly share pictures of each individual who helps make our programs and services possible, but we are so proud to share this small sampling of volunteers, donors, partners, and friends. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for helping us save children’s lives and build healthy families!

Pictured: Suzanne Coppola and Paul Schaffer present a $10,000 donation on behalf of CAPTRUST Financial Advisors to our CEO, Donna Pressma.

Pictured: East Amwell Township Elementary School students donate holiday gifts to CHSoNJ’s children.

Pictured: Members of Merrill Lynch Hispanic Organization for Leadership & Advancement (HOLA) with a van full of gifts for our children and families.

Pictured: Suzanne Coppola and Paul Schaffer present a $10,000 donation on behalf of CAPTRUST Financial Advisors to our CEO, Donna Pressma.

Pictured: East Amwell Township Elementary School students donate holiday gifts to CHSoNJ’s children.

Pictured: Members of Merrill Lynch Hispanic Organization for Leadership & Advancement (HOLA) with a van full of gifts for our children and families.

Pictured: Staff accept gift donations for our children from St. Mark Lutheran Church. This wonderful group has supported our holiday drive for 30 years!

Pictured: Members of our Auxiliary Board volunteer their time to work at the 59th Annual Auxiliary-hosted Brunch with Santa holiday event.

Pictured: Fox Rothschild Attorneys At Law (Princeton) has donated to CHSoNJ’s holiday drive since 2008.

Pictured: TEDI Artistic Director Kayla James (left) and TEDI students enjoy ‘A Christmas Carol’ at McCarter Theatre.

Pictured: The Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office brings joy to so many of our kids each year through their generous holiday gift donations!

Donor Spotlight

The Zonta Club of Trenton/Mercer

In February, members of The Zonta Club of Trenton/Mercer visited CHSoNJ’s newest Early Head Start Center, The Vivan B. Shapiro Early Childhood Center. Club President Judy Levy and Co-Secretary Kathy Spence read to our babies and toddlers, and the group delivered donations for the Zonta Closet; aptly named for the club following their pledge to ensure it remains filled throughout the year with emergency diapers, wipes, clothing, shoes, and other essentials for our young children and their families.

We are truly grateful to partner with this caring club to support women and children in Trenton!

Pictured: The Zonta Club of Trenton/Mercer members at The Vivan B. Shapiro Early Childhood Center Zonta Closet.

Upsilon Rho Chapter 471 of Sigma Theta Tau

In December, the agency was pleased to accept a generous holiday donation from the members of Upsilon Rho Chapter 471 of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Thomas Edison State University. This wonderful group has made an annual collective donation (sometimes more than one!) to CHSoNJ since 2015, and we are so grateful they continue to partner with us to provide needed programs, services, and essentials to the babies, children, and families we serve.

Thank you, Upsilon Rho Chapter 471 for your generous holiday gift and ongoing support!

Pictured: CHSoNJ President & CEO Donna C. Pressma (left) accepts a 2022 holiday donation from members of Upsilon Rho Chapter 471.
Remembering a Remarkable Foster Mother and Friend

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to a woman who truly made a difference in countless lives; Mrs. Helen Powell Vreeland. Helen was a caring, wonderful wife and mother with endless love to give. When she and her husband Ted married, they became CHSofNJ foster parents. This full-circle moment brought great joy to the Vreelands and to our staff, many of whom remembered Ted and his three siblings, who had been entrusted to our agency’s care and raised in CHSofNJ’s home when they lost their parents as young children.

For 30 years, Helen and Ted were incredibly dedicated foster parents, providing a loving home for 76 newborn babies and giving “sanctuary” to five unwed mothers at a time when young women who found themselves pregnant out of wedlock were often ostracized from society and even their own families.

On January 14, 2023, Helen was reunited with Ted, who predeceased his beloved wife in 1997. In her 86 years, Helen was the embodiment of love, and her loss is one mourned by many. She is survived and missed dearly by her three children and their spouses, five grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren, family, friends, and many more who called her ‘Mom’ over the years.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Awards $150,000 to Support SEL Programming

Mental Health professionals across the nation are reporting increased stress, anxiety, and depression in youth coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. CHSofNJ’s Youth Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Assets and Strengths Self-Assessment findings mirror those same challenges in Trenton, where our School-Based Youth Development programs operate in partnership with the Trenton Public School District. Now, more than ever, it is imperative we support the mental health of our children as they process and manage trauma caused or amplified by the pandemic. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) understands the critical needs of our community, and awarded CHSofNJ $150,000 in grant funding to support the delivery of services designed to increase compassion, reduce aggression, and inspire prosocial action with community impact.

Since receiving this one-time general operating support in July 2022, we have worked to infuse three core elements into all CHSofNJ programming: leadership by youth, family and community members; support for social, emotional and empathy skill building; and advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Building services around these pillars will enable CHSofNJ to support a strong and resilient community.

The agency’s merger with Kidsbridge, finalized in February 2023, brings both agencies’ skilled and caring teams together to provide enhanced social-emotional learning (SEL) and youth development programming in Trenton, and enabled us to expand our school-based services to some of our youngest Trenton public school students by incorporating programming tailored to children in Kindergarten. Together, CHSofNJ-Kidsbridge developed a six-week ‘Zen Den’ program, which integrates arts and SEL in a way that promotes creativity, self-expression, identity development, emotional awareness, and emotional regulation skills; developed a new ‘Healthy Minds, Healthy Kids’ 15-week program focusing on emotional awareness, emotional regulation, identity, diversity, empathy, and bullying prevention; and implemented quality three-session program offerings in Mindfulness, Identity and Diversity, and Bullying Prevention, tailored to various in and out-of-school enrichment program settings.

To ensure CHSofNJ continues to work respectfully within the communities we serve, the agency supports and encourages active involvement of our Youth and Parent Advisory Boards, and engages in regular self-assessment that includes soliciting community input to develop our comprehensive DEI plan. This work is a continuation of CHSofNJ’s 128-year trajectory; our vision has always been for every child to thrive in a loving permanent family. But rising mental health crises and violence in our schools and neighborhoods remind us that we must work hand-in-hand with families to address the underlying causes of aggression and hate, and from the earliest years, help parents teach empathy so that all can flourish and feel truly at home in our community.

Our Outstanding Board of Trustees Always Goes the Extra Mile

CHSofNJ is proud to work with countless skilled, caring professionals through the many partnerships cultivated through our continuum of programs and services. We are especially grateful for the dedicated volunteers who accept nominations to our Board of Trustees, as their expertise helps guide, strengthen, and grow our agency and the services we are able to provide throughout New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. Current membership comprises professionals from the financial, educational, medical, business, marketing, property management, law, marketing, and information technology fields, as well as local religious organizations. But the story we want to share with you today is how our Trustees not only serve on CHSofNJ’s Board, but do so much more!

CHSofNJ Trustee Tim Ryan Receives Bank of America Global Volunteer Award

Bank of America (BofA) is committed to helping improve communities around the globe, and encourages their employees to volunteer in their own communities by providing paid time off for volunteer activities; grants up to $1,000 for organizations where employees volunteer; and publicly celebrates employees serving their communities exceptionally well through outstanding volunteerism with Bank of America’s Global Volunteer Award. In 2022, 1,890 BofA employees were nominated for the award, and only 79 were selected for this prestigious international honor. Among this elite group of dedicated volunteers was BofA Director of Global Wealth & Investment Management, Finance, Strategic Planning & Analysis and CHSofNJ Trustee & former Board Chair, Tim Ryan! We are not at all surprised that Tim has been recognized with BofA’s most distinguished community service award, as he works so hard every year to ensure the well-being of CHSofNJ’s children, youth, and families.

Tim joined our Board of Trustees in 2007, and serves on various Board Committees including Governance, Strategic Planning, Investment, Head Start, Real Estate, and TEDI. Additionally, after completing a four-year term as Board Chair (2015-2019), Tim became the Board’s Vice President of Fiscal Affairs. His insight and leadership has helped steer the expansion of programs such as Early Head Start, Adoption, Child Abuse Prevention, and many others.

Tim and his wife, MaryAnne, have also co-chaired the annual Gala Committee many times throughout the years. Tim, MaryAnne, and all of their children have repeatedly volunteered to help assemble auction baskets, set up for the gala, sell raffle tickets, and more. The Ryan family works side-by-side with our staff to ensure our largest fundraising event successfully raises critical funds to help CHSofNJ make a meaningful difference in the lives of more children and families.

Tim has also served as a role model to fathers in Trenton through his participation in our Father/Daughter Dances to benefit our Family Success Centers, and has even dressed up in costume at holiday parties to spread joy to young children in Foster Care. Additionally, Tim quietly encouraged a young professional, adopted through CHSofNJ as an infant, to join our Board of Trustees, uplifting an important new voice to help guide our agency.

These are just a few of the volunteer activities Tim participates in each year. His dedication, energy, and passion for helping others through his many roles at CHSofNJ are truly boundless. Through over 3,000 hours of volunteer service, he has directly improved the lives of thousands of children and parents impacted by loss, poverty, violence, and trauma as they seek a better future. We are infinitely grateful for all that Tim has done and continues to do for CHSofNJ’s babies, children, and families, and we congratulate him on this well-deserved global recognition!
8th Annual Wenonah Turkey Trot Raises $10,000 for CHSofNJ

The Woman’s Club of Wenonah invited runners and walkers to *strut their stuffin’* across the finish line of the 8th Annual Wenonah Turkey Trot 5K Run & 1 Mile Walk on November 25, 2022. The annual event has something for everyone: seasoned runners appreciate the USATF-certified course with digital timing, and those interested in a more leisurely pace delight in the scenic, tree-lined streets of historic Wenonah, NJ. Everyone enjoys the atmosphere, teeming with gratitude and celebration. We are excited to announce that 2022 was the most successful Turkey Trot yet, raising an amazing $10,000 for CHSofNJ!

Although Thanksgiving is behind us, we continue to be thankful every day for the leadership of Trustee Jennifer Pizi, who initiated the very first Wenonah Turkey Trot in 2014, and Trustee Tamar Shelov, who joined the coordination of this successful event in 2021. We are also thankful for the runners, corporate and individual sponsors, and friends who made charitable donations in honor of the event to help our children find loving homes and help our families thrive. CHSofNJ is fortunate to have such wonderful partners in our mission of saving children’s lives and building healthy families!

Former Board Member Continues to Lead and Inspire at CHSofNJ

Former Trustee Pat Walsh, who served on our Board from 1988-2002, returned to CHSofNJ in 2021 to speak with current Trustees about his experience on the Board and what inspired him to support the agency for so many years. Pat’s family represents two generations of loving adoption; his wife, Margaret, was adopted. When Pat and Margaret were ready to grow their family, they chose adoption as well, knowing the difference a loving family and permanent home can make in a child’s life.

Pat was warmly received as he recalled the Board’s history and growth, and shared his personal commitment to the agency and our mission. The Walsh family’s belief in loving adoption brought them to CHSofNJ when we were a much smaller agency, and in his 14 year tenure on our Board, Pat was instrumental in our development of a strategic plan to grow and improve so we could be there for thousands more children over the years. We have followed his strategic vision ever since, and as a result, we now make a meaningful difference in the lives of thousands more children and families each year!

Our current Trustees are grateful for the opportunity to speak with and learn from someone who helped steer the Board and agency toward its present success. Pat reminded us of our origins and inspired us to reach even higher in the future. Even now, two decades after his retirement from our Board, Pat Walsh continues to be a leader and inspiration to CHSofNJ!

Partnering to Improve Birth Outcomes in Mercer County

US Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12) recently supported a CHSofNJ funding proposal, called the CHSofNJ Community Doula Services and Training Project, to provide more doula training and more doula services for Hispanic, Black and immigrant pregnant women and teens in Trenton and Mercer County. This new project builds on the success of the CHSofNJ AMAR Community Doula Program – supporting over 100 Hispanic women at birth; and with prenatal and postpartum doula visits with wonderful birth outcomes – since 2019. Thanks to the support of the James E. and Diane W. Burke Foundation, Princeton Area Community Foundation and other funders!

The CHSofNJ Community Doula Services and Training Project was included in the federal budget and is on schedule to be awarded in August or September of 2023. The Congressionally-supported funds promote the ability of families to thrive through financial self-sufficiency in order to prevent and reduce poverty and to promote the healthy development and greater well-being of children and families.
Welcoming the Newest Members of CHSofNJ’s Distinguished Board of Trustees

Dan Gerstenhaber brings extensive knowledge of finance and business systems to his role on CHSofNJ’s Board, having founded, grown, and successfully managed a Risk and Asset Management business for more than thirty years, until retiring in 2020. There, Dan worked with individuals, families, and organizations to identify potential risks; calculate potential losses and rewards; prioritize investments; audit assets; and provide sound fiscal advice to support clients in achieving their financial goals. Other notable roles held throughout his career include Senior Business Planning Analyst and Vice President of Finance and Administration. Despite the demands of a successful career in professional finance, Dan has consistently volunteered his time and talents to support his community. From 2011-2014, he served as Board Member and Treasurer for Camp Fire NJ, a Trenton-based non-profit providing youth development for children (preschool through grade 12) in more than 120 schools and summer camps within and surrounding Mercer County. In 2021, Dan began delivering entrepreneurial counseling and workshops through SCORE Mentors Princeton, a non-profit offering free business mentoring and educational sessions. That same year, he joined the Board of Kidsbridge. When the decision was made to merge Kidsbridge into CHSofNJ’s family of programs, Dan was invited to join our Board of Trustees to continue his excellent fiscal oversight and guidance of Kidsbridge, and extend his expertise to CHSofNJ’s other programs and services. We are looking forward to the many ways Dan will further strengthen our Board and programs with his deep knowledge of fiscal systems and best practices, and his demonstrated commitment to empowering youth and families to succeed.

John Martorana is a marketing expert whose insight has been instrumental to our outreach and program recruitment strategy during the pandemic. With more than 30 years in advertising, branding, and digital strategies, John has helped an impressive roster of local, regional, and national brands from retail to healthcare strategize campaigns and develop communication strategies to achieve their desired results. As co-founder of Oxford Communications, a full-service advertising agency in neighboring Hunterdon County, John is keenly aware of the most effective messaging and marketing channels to reach our target audience. John previously served on CHSofNJ’s Board from 1992-2012, and we are pleased to have welcomed him back in 2021. Resonant of his previous Board service, John’s contributions have helped strengthen the agency and supported CHSofNJ to make a meaningful difference in the lives of even more babies, children, and families throughout New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

Tamar Shelov brings to her role a wealth of knowledge accumulated over more than 40 years in education (K-12) and disabilities consultation. Her expertise lies in co-teaching; assessment and diagnosis of learning disabilities; differentiated instruction; disability support; best practices in Autism; and special education program development. Tamar’s excellent analytical skills help ensure our program is operating to the highest standards, and her strong problem-solving skills help facilitate thoughtful and expedited solutions to any challenges that arise. Tamar has additional experience fostering healthy food access through her work with a community women’s club. In 2021, Tamar collaborated with fellow CHSofNJ Trustee Jennifer Pizi to facilitate the donation of fresh produce from Farmers Against Hunger for our Head Start/Early Head Start and Mercer County WIC program families. Once a week during May and June, bags of fresh vegetables were distributed to families, which proved to be a valuable resource for those struggling to meet their nutritional needs in the food desert of Trenton – especially amid heightened challenges of the pandemic. Tamar has continued to bring new and exciting ideas to the Board throughout her tenure. We are continually inspired by her enthusiasm and dedication to the children and families we serve.

Patricia Stanley is an accomplished accounting professional spent more than three decades honing her skills and deepening her knowledge of business finance and accounting. Patti’s has been a successful Manager of a regional full service CPA firm; Full Charge Controller; and Independent Bookkeeping Consultant serving non-profit organizations and small businesses. She has experience auditing for governmental compliance, and has further diversified her skills through experience in Human Resources. For fifteen years, Patti has also been a Member of the Board and Treasurer of Kidsbridge. This longstanding commitment is how we came to know Patti, who was invited to join our Board in February 2023, as Kidsbridge merged with CHSofNJ. Prior to Kidsbridge, Patti served as Treasurer and Board Member of the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey; Member of the Hamilton Township Women’s Advisory Commission; and Treasurer of United Presbyterian Church. CHSofNJ is pleased to welcome Patti, as her skills, experience, and demonstrated passion for supporting youth and families in our community make her an excellent addition to the agency’s Board.
Newest Members of CHSofNJ’s Distinguished Board of Trustees, continued

Dr. Fong Wei, M.D., F.A.C.P. is a Board Certified Internist-Nephrologist whose impressive career has included Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine; Principle Investigator for various pharmaceutical corporations; President of Medical and Dental Staff; Consulting Physician; Senior Attending Physician; and President and CEO of Princeton Medical Group, P.A., from which he retired in 2019. During his tenure on CHSofNJ's Board of Directors, Dr. Wei will apply his knowledge and expertise in support of the agency's programming, especially as it relates to the health of the children and families we serve. Dr. Wei’s experience enables him to provide meaningful insight and guidance to various health-related endeavors of CHSofNJ, including management and operation of the HS/EHS Health Services Advisory Committee; health-related education for staff and/or families; and best practices related to both delivery and documentation of quality health services.

Recognizing Our Outstanding Staff

We are proud to employ some of the most skilled and inspired professionals in our region! Please join us in congratulating a few members of our team on their recent accomplishments:

Maureen Lawrence, Director of Ocean County Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) retired in October 2022 following a 26 year career at CHSofNJ! During her tenure, Maureen oversaw many of our Ocean County programs, including CCR&R and Sandy Homeowners & Renters Assistance. Although she will be missed dearly, we wish Maureen happiness and relaxation in her next chapter!

Vilma Aguirre has been promoted to Supervisor of Maternal Child Health Services in Mercer County; Silvia Corado has been promoted to AMAR Community Doula Program Supervisor; Jo Ann Fechter has been promoted to Assistant Director of Human Resources; Soccoro Garcia has been promoted to Supervisor for Heritage North and South Family Success Centers in Mercer County; and Melanie Griffin has been promoted to Assistant Controller. Keep up the great work, team!

The agency is pleased to have launched a new Employee Wellness pilot program, made possible through a grant from the Community Health Equity Project at Janssen/Johnson & Johnson! Under the leadership of Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, CHSofNJ’s Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Prevention & Community Engagement, the program incorporates education and wellness activities to improve the emotional well-being, stress, job-related morale and sense of self-efficacy of direct service staff. We are grateful for this opportunity to further support our team as they support the children and families we serve.

CHSofNJ’s Employee Wellness initiative is multifaceted. Weekly emails on ‘Wellness Wednesdays’ remind staff to take care of themselves, and of the importance of positivity, well-being, and mental health. Emails include resources such as links to upcoming webinars on various mental health and wellness topics. Our employee health and wellness newsletter, ‘Now and Zen’ is shared monthly to remind staff of the workplace benefits and activities available to them, such as free and confidential counseling sessions through our Employee Assistance Program; in-person and virtual clubs such as walking, nutrition, or book clubs; quarterly dance/yoga classes; quarterly ‘Grab-and-Go’ healthy breakfast bar; and more!

We are truly honored to work with the caring, dedicated individuals who make our programs and services possible for the babies, children, teens, parents, and grandparents we serve. These efforts are just a few of the ways CHSofNJ lets staff know they are appreciated; as they continue their amazing work, we continue to look for new and creative ways to say thank you.

Are You Passionate About Helping Children and Families?!

CHSofNJ celebrates diversity, and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees, interns, and volunteers. To view employment and internship vacancies, visit www.chsofnj.org/employment.

To learn about volunteer opportunities, call (609) 695-6274.
FOR A CHILD’S SAKE
A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHILDREN’S HOME SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

Donna C. Pressma, President & CEO
Lisa Thibault, Director of Marketing, Communications & Funds Development
Ariana Bartolomea, Manager of Communications & Development
Sophie Ban, Contributor
Dana Johnson, Guest Writer/Editor; Layout & Design

To read past editions and learn more about the impact CHSofNJ has made, visit www.chsofnj.org.