



Futures News

Winter 2010

Preventing Poverty through Education

Futures Provides Transformative Opportunities for Deserving Youth

There is no question that Improving education is essential to ending poverty. In today's competitive job market, the best jobs go to those with college or trade school degrees. Unfortunately many barriers to higher education remain in place for children challenged by the built-in adversity that minority and disadvantaged teens face.

We define "disadvantaged" as students from an environment that has inhibited them from obtaining the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed in school and in life. Among other things, they often lack the kind of family know-how that children need to navigate the pathway through high school and into college. Chester County Futures changes the odds for young people that show talent, leadership potential and a drive to succeed, in spite of their circumstances.

Futures' 14-year old Passport to College after school program has provided hundreds of deserving youth with transformative opportunities to explore career options and pursue the higher education needed to become successful in life. Regardless of their background, when children have the resources and support they need, the odds of success swing greatly in their favor. While much ground has been gained in the last few decades with increasing percentages of low income and minority students finishing high school, there are still an alarming number who lack the resources and guidance to stick it out in school and prepare for college.

Futures' college access program doesn't just prepare students for success academically. They develop the social skills, communication skills, teamwork ability and personal confidence to be ready for college, work and life. They



Four busloads of Futures' students from Coatesville, Oxford, West Chester, Phoenixville and Kennett area toured Holy Family College in mid-November. College tours are an important part of Futures' comprehensive 5 year college access program for deserving teens.

complete rigorous academic enrichment curriculum, set challenging academic goals, interact with positive adult role models, tour college campuses, explore career options, participate in corporate workshops, hone their technology skills and volunteer in their communities.

Futures exposes students to new environments and opportunities, emphasizes life experiences that go hand-in-hand with higher education, and promotes the importance of college access and completion. Futures' students overcome significant personal hardship and demonstrate determination to set and exceed rigorous goals.

100% graduate from high school on time and an astounding 92% enroll in college

“ High school dropout rates devastate potentially bright futures and cost our nation dearly. Had all the students graduated who would have been part of the class of 2009, our economy would have benefited from \$350 billion in additional wages, tax revenues and productivity. ” — General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.)



Stronger Futures

Honoring
young students
who won't give up



Americans across the political spectrum view childhood poverty as a failing we must do something about. Our future success as a nation depends on our ability to ensure that all children from all backgrounds and circumstances have the opportunity to thrive today and gain self-sustaining employment when they grow up. With our increasingly knowledge-based economy it will take more than a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely to get the education required for lifetime success. Today's tough economic climate is exacerbating the situation, taking a terrible toll on poor families, and pushing their children even further off the path of opportunity and financial stability. Without outside help, the poverty of the parents will repeat itself across generations.

If we agree that every child deserves a fair chance in life, then we must make the kind of investment that gives each of them a quality education and a path to lifelong success. If we fail to do this, we run the risk of creating an even larger gap between the poor and the rest of us. This gap already threatens the economic future of our region and robs us of the human gifts that poverty leaves undeveloped.

There is no doubt that poverty drags multiple obstacles into the schools with children, and that these obstacles are extremely challenging to overcome. But that doesn't mean it can't be done. Futures has helped hundreds of local

children surmount those multiple obstacles and gain stronger futures by graduating from high school and going on to college.

In 2011, more than 500 deserving low income students from eleven Chester County schools will benefit from Futures poverty prevention educational services, bringing the fourteen year total to well over 700 children since Futures began in 1996. In all that time, 100% of participating students graduated from high school on time and 93% went on to college or trade school.

Hundreds of caring people have supported Futures' work. Their names are etched in the hearts of the students their dollars helped.

If you are among this group of donors, thank you for joining Futures' poverty prevention effort.

Please continue to help.

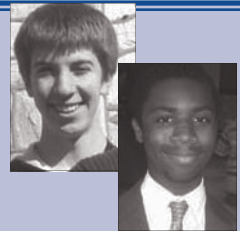
If you have never made a donation to Futures, what better time than now.

There is much work ahead. The futures of hundreds of really good children hang in the balance. Become a part of Futures' incredible mission and help to give disadvantaged local children the stronger futures they need and deserve.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send a donation. Your gift in any amount will be of immense help as we continue carving out futures for Futures' kids.

Futures Recruitment Initiative Tackles Male Dropout Problem

Eighteen months ago, Futures launched a concerted effort to boost male enrollment in its after-school college access program. At the time, and throughout much of its history, males represented barely a third of Futures' students. It isn't that high school boys don't need the kind of academic support Futures provides. Far from it. Locally and nationally, boys are dropping out of school in higher numbers than girls and fewer are enrolling in college.



The male recruitment initiative has produced very promising results to date:

Nearly 5% increase in male students as of the 2010-2011 school year
2008: 30% male and 70% female enrollment 2010: 34.7% male and 65.3% female enrollment



Holy Family College Tour

Busloads of 10th, 11th and 12th grade Futures' students from five school districts toured Holy Family College in November, the first of four campus tours planned for this school year. The day included an overview of the college, admissions criteria and campus life given by the Assistant Director of Admissions. Students also toured the campus and facilities, including some dorms. The hands-on campus experience gave students valuable information and new perspectives on campus life.

The Futures' Program provides students with support in the areas of academic preparation, tutoring, mentoring, cultural enrichment and personal development to ultimately prepare them to enroll in college or trade school and graduate with a degree. Students are exposed to the college campus environment as an integral part of the college preparation process.

I Believe

by Futures' Student Danielle

I believe in the impossible. That anything you set your mind and heart to you can accomplish the task, no matter who you are or what you come from. Anything you say I "can't" do instantly becomes something I "will" do. When someone says to me, "you can't do that" it only makes me work harder.



I'm sure when Neil Armstrong had the idea to walk on the moon someone said to him, "that's impossible." I'm sure when Oprah Winfrey decided that she wanted to host a talk show she was told it was impossible. Needless to say, neither of these tasks was impossible; in fact, they were proved to be possible.

So why, in the average person's life, do people undermine their goals by telling themselves that their goals are impossible? I will never settle for anything less than my best. You will never hear me say that my goals are impractical and impossible; that is because nothing is impossible unless you make it out to be.

Now, don't get me wrong; to accomplish the impossible is not easy; it takes motivation and a strong sense of persistence. Dictionary.com defines impossible as something that is "extremely difficult to deal with or tolerate." However, nowhere in that definition does it mention that it is completely unable to occur, only extremely difficult to happen.

No matter if you're a child or an adult, rich or poor, you CAN do what seems to be impossible. Just set everything you have in you towards that one goal and you will be surprised with how many "impossible" things you can accomplish. I very strongly hope that one day I will be able to write a follow-up novel based on the ideas of this essay. And in that novel, I will discuss how I accomplished the impossible in my life.

Accountability in Action

Chester County Futures achieved something rather impressive in the fiscal year just ended June 30, 2010:

More than 85% of the donations we received was used to support our student and mentor services programs; and less than 15% was used for management and fundraising.

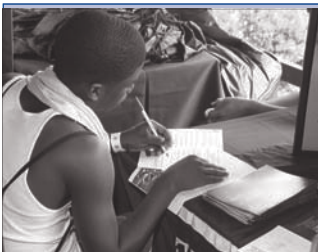
The American Institute of Philanthropy recommends that in most cases you should expect the charities you support to use at least 60% of your donation for program services. Most highly efficient charities are able to devote 75% or more to program services. Futures' ability to send such a large percentage of charitable revenue directly into the programs that directly benefit our students reflects a combination of efficiency and effectiveness in our day to day operations. Above all, we look for ways to maximize the impact of each dollar without sacrificing quality. This includes creative use of over \$100,000 worth of in-kind donations from dozens of individuals and companies.

We Value Your Trust!

Catherine Mesaros

Catherine Mesaros
Executive Director

More than \$.85
from every dollar
donated goes into
direct program
support.



Please Support Futures Annual Fall-Winter Appeal by mailing your donation in the enclosed envelope. Or you can donate via PayPal online at www.ccfutures.org. Futures is a 501(c)(3) charity. Your gift is tax exempt and every penny goes to work helping deserving children in the Chester County community. Help Futures
PREVENT POVERTY THROUGH EDUCATION.



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As Futures' Executive Director since 2005, I've been privileged over and over again to watch struggling 13 year olds be transformed into self-assured high school seniors ready and able to move on to college or trade school. The support of our faithful donors makes this possible. We send each of them a most sincere thanks for helping Futures have such a powerful impact on hundreds of young lives. Our work is far from over. Please add what you can to Futures' success story.

Thank you,

Catherine Mesaros

Catherine Mesaros
Executive Director

Brandywine Learning Center Becomes Futures' SAT Prep Partner

Futures' recently teamed up with the Brandywine Learning Center in Chester Springs to make expert SAT preparation and test taking strategies available to 11th grade Futures' students. BLC will provide on-site SAT preparation workshops in Futures' after-school

classes in January and February 2011. The collaborative effort is a real win for Futures' students as they prepare to take the all-important SAT college entry exam that determines whether or not they gain admission to the colleges of their choice.

