




Impact Report

2020-2021

The background features large, stylized letters. A red 'H' is positioned in the upper left. An orange 'C' is in the center, overlapping the 'H'. A yellow 'Z' is in the lower left, overlapping the 'C'.

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

CONTENTS

2

LETTERS

6

EXPANDING OUR NATIONAL REACH

14

STORIES OF IMPACT

22

**WILSON INSTITUTE LEADS THE
WAY ON NATIONAL EFFORTS**

28

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN DINNER

30

OUR SUPPORTERS

48

WAYS TO GIVE

KWAME OWUSU-KESSE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Letters from Leadership

So much over the past year was unprecedented — from the pandemic to racial and social unrest to stark political division. Yet, we also saw communities come together in equally unprecedented ways. This was never truer than it was at Harlem Children's Zone.

In my first year as CEO, I witnessed the power of collective action. Every member of our staff played an integral role in ensuring the children and families we serve had the resources to weather this crisis. I could not be prouder of our leadership, our staff, and our community. They have been an inspiration to me.

Since the outset of the pandemic, HCZ acted quickly and at scale. Thanks to a catalytic investment from The Audacious Project, and as the first initiative of the William Julius Wilson Institute, we partnered with six cities across the country and three national organizations to implement our National COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Effort. Together with our partners, we raised over \$54 million to ensure underserved Black and brown communities across the nation had the supports and services they needed, and we served over 250,000 individuals.

Here in Harlem, we provided more than 3,000 families with over \$3.3 million in emergency relief support; we distributed 45,000 masks and nearly 2,200 thermometers; and we equipped our scholars with over 5,700 devices for remote learning, including laptops, hotspots, and headsets. Our #StayCoveredHarlem media campaign garnered more than 34 million impressions.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, 100% of our graduating Promise Academy High School seniors were accepted to college last year. This is a testament to their resilience and dedication to their education and their future.

None of what we accomplished would have been possible without the commitment and leadership of our Board of Trustees. Their advice and encouragement have been a critical source of support to me and their dedication to the children and families of Central Harlem was never more evident than during this crisis.

Finally, I want to thank our donors. Your generous support has allowed us to help ensure the safety, health, and future of our Central Harlem community. Throughout this dark period, your confidence in our work and care for our scholars and families has helped light the way toward the bright future that I know lies ahead for each and every one of them.





“Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, 100% of our graduating Promise Academy High School seniors were accepted to college last year ... a testament to their resilience and dedication to their education and their future.”

Children's ZONE
GEMS NORTH
-539-5898



KEITH MEISTER

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Letters from Leadership



“The HCZ mission to end intergenerational poverty in Central Harlem and beyond could not be more important than it is now.”

We knew in July 2020 that last year would present unparalleled challenges. We know now, a year later, how well-prepared Harlem Children’s Zone was to confront and surmount these challenges. Under Kwame’s leadership, the organization was able to do what it does best — mobilize a staff of nearly 2,000 talented, deeply committed professionals to best serve children and families when that service was needed most.

The pandemic taught us just how vulnerable communities like Harlem remain. Across the country, we witnessed how underserved communities of color endured disproportionate suffering from the pandemic. More than ever, this inequity speaks to the need for HCZ and its leadership. The Board and I are grateful for the diligence, commitment, and perseverance that Kwame and the entire HCZ team have shown over the past year.

As the world continues to grapple with the pandemic, and to strive toward greater racial and economic equity, HCZ remains committed to its place-based approach. We look toward a future where HCZ continues to innovate, making economic mobility for the children and families we serve a reality — and influencing the national anti-poverty conversation to include best practice approaches that can level the playing field.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank, with utmost sincerity, every supporter who made this work possible — the HCZ mission to end intergenerational poverty in Central Harlem and beyond could not be more important than it is now.

KEITH MEISTER

Expanding Our National Reach





The last 18 months have been, in a word, catastrophic. Our community has faced multiple, simultaneous pandemics. While disastrous on its own, COVID-19 brutally amplified and exposed long-standing systemic inequities — access to educational and economic opportunity, affordable housing and healthcare, and much needed technological resources. These inequities, exacerbated by COVID-19, hit Harlem — and communities like Harlem — disproportionately hard.

Fortunately, our organization was built to rise to the occasion in times like this.

Though the pandemic was an unprecedented challenge, it became an unprecedented opportunity to make an impact not only in Harlem, but in underserved communities across the country. Together with national partners and led, in part, by our newly launched William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI), we undertook a series of strategic and informed efforts to respond to the pandemic and address the needs of communities devastated in its wake.

Our work is far from over. The threat of COVID-19 continues. But we stand proud of the ways we were able to come together and provide for our children and families. Today, our communities — both here and across the country — are emerging from the pandemic with much-needed resources and are moving forward on the pathway toward social and economic mobility.

Here's a look back at our impact over the last 12 months:

980,000+
masks distributed



55,000+
digital devices distributed



COVID-19 hit our community hard — we hit back

Our national response to the pandemic began here in Central Harlem. The moment the pandemic struck, we worked quickly to create a holistic, five-pronged emergency response and recovery plan to close resource gaps in our neighborhood. This included:

- ★ Protecting the most vulnerable
- ★ Bridging the digital divide
- ★ Preventing learning loss
- ★ Mitigating the mental health crisis
- ★ Providing economic relief and recovery

Our work was so impactful that The Audacious Project made a generous, catalytic investment of \$26M to supercharge our national relief and recovery efforts, led by our William Julius Wilson Institute, in Harlem and in six partner communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. That initial investment paid off — together, we raised over \$54M and served more than 250,000 youth and adults across the country.

#StayCoveredTogether
generated over
270 million
impressions to date

Our response evolved to encompass #StayCoveredHarlem and #StayCoveredTogether. These public health campaigns — one local, one national, respectively — encouraged mask-wearing as life-saving protection against COVID-19 transmission. What's more, we partnered with Take on Race, a coalition of best-in-class companies led by Proctor & Gamble, to drive a nationwide movement to bridge the digital divide. Together, we put laptops in the hands of tens of thousands of scholars to empower them to learn remotely.

Taking the fight to the pandemic

As important as it was for our community to weather the pandemic, we also knew we had a role to play in ending it. To that end, we led multiple efforts to get our community vaccinated.

To confront this challenge, we had to acknowledge the barriers to vaccination in our community — mistrust of a medical system rooted in centuries of abuses against Black and brown communities, doubts about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, and lack of availability. We decided to focus our efforts on two key goals: awareness and access.

Together with NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, we opened a walk-in vaccination site at our Harlem Armory for everyone in our community. Additionally, we hosted Just the Facts: COVID Vaccine Virtual Town Hall, a community-wide event with Black physicians from NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Medical Center who provided science-based responses to questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.





100%

**of our Promise Academy seniors
were accepted to college last year**

Showing up for our community

These efforts were a crucial lifeline to our community and communities across the country. None of it would have been possible without our HCZ staff.

When we transitioned to remote learning, our teachers and staff quickly and creatively adapted their classes and curricula to a virtual environment. When our scholars needed equipment and ingredients for online fitness and cooking classes, our staff mailed those resources to them. And when a child needed encouragement studying for a test or completing a college application, our staff members gave them a call — regardless of whether they were in scholar-facing roles.

The result: attendance and engagement across HCZ remained high throughout the pandemic and 100% of our Promise Academy seniors were accepted to college last year. We are proud of the resilience of our scholars for pushing through this pandemic and the staff who showed up to support them every step of the way.

Emboldened for our next chapter

The pandemic exposed many systemic failures in our society. However, it also brought to light the strength and resilience of our families; the selflessness and ingenuity of our staff; and the capacity of the entire HCZ community to come together, work creatively and collaboratively, and lend a helping hand to those in need. It revealed Harlem Children's Zone's capacity to make an impact on a national scale.

We're emboldened and excited about the next chapter of our journey.



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**Harlem
Children's Zone**

Stories of Impact





From Pre-School to Promise Academy to Syracuse University:

Kiara Molina's HCZ Journey

When Kiara Molina stood at the White House podium to introduce President Barack Obama in 2014, she had no doubt where she would be after high school.

"I used to want to be a veterinarian. But now I'm thinking, maybe I'll be a lawyer, because I love 'Law and Order,'" she said at the event celebrating the president's Promise Zones

initiative. "But either way, I am going to college."

Though her quip got a laugh from the president, Kiara wasn't joking about her plans: After graduating from Promise Academy, she went on to attend and receive her diploma from the prestigious Newhouse School at Syracuse University.



“Seeing the impact HCZ has had on me is motivation to help out other kids who look like me get to the places I’ve been. I’m forever grateful to HCZ.”

Kiara is proof of the potential of our young people and a shining example of our model. She started her HCZ journey in our Harlem Gems Pre-K program; then enrolled in our world-premiere Promise Academy Charter School; and finally became a participant of our Center for Higher Education and Career Support (CHECS).

Now, Kiara — who recently landed a role at Viacom CBS — hopes to give back to the next generation of scholars so that they can achieve the same success.

“Seeing the impact HCZ has had on me is motivation to help out other kids who look like me get to the places I’ve been,” she said. “I’m forever grateful to HCZ.”

Stories of **Impact**



The Samassi/Diaby Family Builds a Bright Future at HCZ





When the pandemic hit, Harlem Children’s Zone was in the Samassi/Diaby family’s corner — and they continued to thrive.

Mariam, as a new mom, learned the ins and outs of early childhood development and how to raise her kids in a safe, healthy home.

Sametchie, her daughter, became a math whiz and budding nutritionist who taught her family about healthy eating.

Yaya, Mariam’s son, discovered a passion for chess and made plans to go to college while inspiring his younger sister to do the same.

When the pandemic hit, Harlem Children’s Zone was in the Samassi/Diaby family’s corner — and they continued to thrive.

At the time, Mariam, a baker, found herself temporarily out of work. Yaya and Sametchie found themselves at home, attending school virtually for the first time after Promise Academy transitioned to remote instruction.

HCZ provided technology for remote learning and emergency funds and food to help the family through the crisis.

“That was around Christmas, so my mom bought me some clothes and got me some sneakers,” Yaya says. “My sister got some, too.”

Recalls Mariam, “The first time I went to pick up the food, I didn’t expect to get a lot of stuff. But they gave me a lot — milk, rice, eggs, and vegetables. On Thanksgiving, we had a turkey. They helped me a lot.”

Today, the family is continuing to build a bright future, with college on the horizon both for Yaya and Sametchie.

“I love Promise Academy because they make the kids promise, ‘One day, I will be in college,’” Mariam says.



“I have always believed that the most powerful way to fight poverty is to make strategic investments that change the odds for low-income communities. After 20 years of success in Central Harlem, we’ve shown the world that it can be done.”

GEOFFREY CANADA

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

PRESIDENT, THE WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON INSTITUTE

Letters from Leadership

In May of 2020, during our 20-year anniversary and an unprecedented global pandemic, we launched the William Julius Wilson Institute, named after one of the nation's most influential scholars on poverty and inequality. Through partnerships with on-the-ground collaborators and national place-based partners, the Institute was founded to deliver comprehensive strategies, support services, and tools that close opportunity gaps in neighborhoods across America and open pathways to social and economic mobility.

Our first initiative was one that was dire in necessity — coordinating a national response to COVID-19 across communities of color. At the onset of the pandemic, we knew that we would need to take action and build a foundation for an equitable recovery among the Black and brown communities that would bear the brunt of the crisis' devastation. Through partnerships with national organizations and place-based entities across six cities, we were able to provide much-needed resources and technical assistance to communities across the country, collectively serving over 250,000 youth and adults.

As we forge an equitable pathway out of this crisis, the Institute is leading the national charge to increase vaccination rates across vulnerable communities. Our #OneDecisionforUs campaign has challenged individuals in underserved neighborhoods around the country to become more informed and take ownership of their health by becoming vaccinated.

What remains unchanged since the launch of Harlem Children's Zone in 2000 is my belief in the people of Central Harlem and communities like it all over the nation and the world. I have always believed that the most powerful way to fight poverty is to make strategic investments that change the odds for low-income communities. After 20 years of success in Central Harlem, we've shown the world that it can be done. Now, building on our generation of evidence, the Institute is joining Blue Meridian Partners in an unprecedented effort to get one million young people in disinvested communities on the pathway to social and economic mobility in the next ten years. The William Julius Wilson Institute expands HCZ's powerful reach to underserved communities across the nation that need the kind of resources and success we've experienced here. I could not be prouder to be at its helm.



Wilson Institute Leads the Way on National Efforts

BACKED BY A GENERATION OF EVIDENCE, WE'VE PROVEN, THROUGH PLACE-BASED INTERVENTIONS AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS, THAT WE CAN TRANSFORM LIVES AND COMMUNITIES.



We have made tremendous progress here at home. But our mission has always been to scale our model to impact under-resourced communities across the country — and the world. With support from Blue Meridian Partners (BMP), the William Julius Wilson Institute (WJWI) was launched with the intention of putting one million young people on the pathway to social economic mobility. To date, we have reached 14 cities via our Place Matters partnership.

The pandemic proved to be a pertinent example of the urgency of our mission. With an unprecedented health crisis ravaging

communities of color, we knew it was time to expand the reach of our impact beyond Harlem.

On the frontline of this work was WJWI. Under the leadership of our Chief Executive Officer Kwame Owusu-Kesse and President Geoffrey Canada, WJWI spearheaded a National COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Effort of unparalleled scope. Together with national partners, WJWI delivered comprehensive strategies, support services and resources to help hard-hit communities weather the worst health and economic crisis in recent memory.

Here's a snapshot of WJWI's impact:

COVID-19 Relief and Recovery

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic here in Harlem was incredibly successful. Armed with a \$26 million commitment from The Audacious Project, WJWI expanded our COVID-19 relief and recovery effort to six other communities around the country. WJWI led efforts to:

- ✦ Outline potential actions against each focus area
- ✦ Provide training and technical assistance
- ✦ Share public health campaign materials
- ✦ Virtually convene community leaders to problem solve and share proven practices
- ✦ Assist in securing resources



The WJWI team visited the site of the new HOPE Center in Northwest Dayton, part of a trip in support of the Northwest Dayton Partnership.

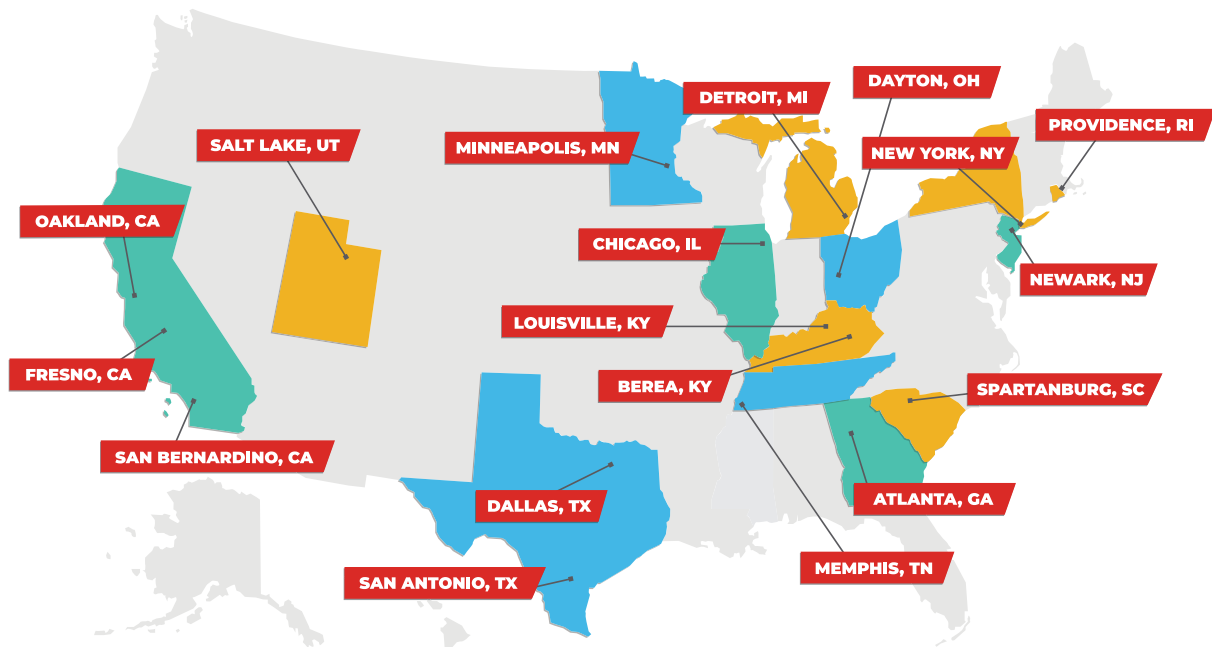
Together with our national partners NAACP, PolicyLink and StriveTogether, we were able to serve more than

250,000

youth and adults.

We were also able to partner with nonprofits in areas of need across the country to provide vital resources. The network of place-based organizations included:

WJWI NATIONAL IMPACT LOCATIONS



** Map as of December 2021*

#StayCoveredTogether

Joined by our six national community partners, WJWI launched #StayCoveredTogether, a national campaign to drive awareness and public education about the importance of wearing masks to stem the spread of COVID-19.

The campaign's message was simple: keep your distance and wear masks to protect your neighbors, the most vulnerable populations, and the frontline workers fighting the virus on the ground.

#OneDecisionforUs

We know that people in our community — and communities like ours across the country — have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines and want to learn more before making the decision to get vaccinated.

To provide answers to these questions, WJWI launched #OneDecisionforUs. Created in partnership with the Dalio Center for Health Justice at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, the multimedia health campaign aims to empower our communities with the information and understanding they need to make an informed decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The creative for the national initiative was developed by Vayner Media and appears in New York, Newark, Atlanta, Oakland, Chicago, Detroit and Minneapolis. As of November 2021, this campaign has garnered over 100 million impressions.

National Convenings

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, WJWI hosted a series of national convenings to confront, in real-time, the issues impacting under-resourced communities of color. Bringing together world-renowned practitioners in the field of place-based, cradle-to-career solutions, these convenings provided a platform for the exchange of ideas on confronting systemic inequities in health care, housing, education, employment, and other critical areas.

- ★ **Leveraging the “Power of Place”: Strengthening the Field from Networks to Neighborhoods** - WJWI's landmark convening focused on using neighborhood capacity building, effective school-community partnerships, and public sector engagement to change the odds for a generation of young people.
- ★ **Race and Place** - Building off the themes in “Power of Place,” WJWI and Blue Meridian Partners co-hosted a seminar exploring the intersection between racial equity, social and economic mobility, and place.
- ★ **Leveraging the American Rescue Plan Act** – During the two sessions of this series, WJWI provided community leaders from our 14 Place Matters communities with a national platform to discuss their needs, plans, and contextual considerations around the American Rescue Plan Act and ensure that funding got to the young people who needed it most.



The WJWI team joined the Education Redesign Lab on a visit to the City of Poughkeepsie to learn about their efforts to create cradle-to-career systems of opportunity.

FRIEND OF THE CHILDREN AWARD CELEBRATION

This past fiscal year, we held two virtual Friend of the Children Award Celebrations in support of our work in Central Harlem. We were fortunate to honor two pillars of HCZ, each of whom has played a significant role in the development and success of the organization — Stanley Druckenmiller, Trustee and Chairman Emeritus, and Barbara Picower, President of The JPB Foundation.





Stanley Druckenmiller

HCZ Trustee and Chairman Emeritus

On September 9, 2020, we gathered virtually to recognize Stan's 20 years of service as chairman of the Board of HCZ and his unparalleled dedication to the children and families of Central Harlem. In honor of all that Stan and his wife, Fiona, made possible, we were delighted to announce the establishment of the Druckenmiller Scholarship Fund. It will support our college scholars and ensure the mission of HCZ to end intergenerational poverty, and honor the the legacy of Stan and Fiona's impact.

The evening was a historic success, raising over \$60 million. We are thrilled to share that, thanks to the generosity of so many, construction on the core of the Sendero Verde property, the future home of Promise Academy II Elementary School, was completed in November 2020 and the fit-out construction process is well underway.

In September 2022, our Elementary School scholars will begin the school year in a state-of-the-art building, innovatively designed to support our exceptional academic, athletic, and extracurricular programming. Aside from classrooms, the new charter school space will include a gymnasium, cafeteria, administrative offices, and music and art rooms. The space will also be used for afterschool programming for our scholars and community programs for Sendero Verde residents.



Barbara Picower

President, The JPB Foundation

On April 15, 2021, HCZ had the privilege of honoring Barbara Picower. One of HCZ's earliest and most generous supporters, Barbara has truly been a "friend of the children" for well over 20 years.

Barbara's philanthropic impact is known and felt in New York City and across the nation. The JPB Foundation's investments in anti-poverty, medical research, and the environment have impacted countless lives and driven the field forward. Barbara's partnership enables HCZ to focus on solutions to the community's most pressing issues. The JPB Foundation has been instrumental in helping HCZ create, launch, and expand the Healthy Harlem initiative, which for the past decade has been an evolving model to fight childhood obesity and provide children, families, and the entire community with opportunities to live healthy, active lives.

Thanks to the generosity of our Board and our dedicated donors we were thrilled to raise over \$10 million in Barbara's honor. The evening was truly a testament to her commitment to the children and families of Central Harlem and underserved communities across the country.

A Thank You to Our Donors

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

Every donation counts. Big, small, or something in between. Your contributions makes a difference — a real difference in the lives of real people, of all ages, in Harlem and beyond. Never was that felt more than in the past year.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you.

The HCZ Team

\$1 MILLION+

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“Providing resources and keeping our community safe are key to our mission. We promise our scholars and families that we will be there for them, and even a global pandemic cannot stop us from keeping that commitment. Our teams continue to work tirelessly for our scholars, community, families, and each other. It is a testament to how impactful we can be when we work together in recognition of our mission.”

NANA ANNAN
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

“During a time of unprecedented uncertainty, the HCZ team turned crisis into opportunity by leaning into our national field-building work. Our model continues to serve as a beacon for practitioners of place-based initiatives, and the launch of the William Julius Wilson Institute has provided critical support to a growing cohort of community leaders we’re partnering with across the country.”

HAYLING PRICE

SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

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White Family Fund

\$5,000 - 9,999

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“If we had a cooking class, we sent our students ingredients to make food with us. If we had a cosmetology class, we sent them a head stand and make-up. We tried to be as proactive as possible and make sure our scholars had everything they needed to stay engaged in a remote setting.”

SERINA MOYA

MANAGING DIRECTOR, K-12 ZONE AFTERSCHOOL & ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

“We learned a lot throughout the pandemic. But most of all, we learned about the resilience of our children and families. Not only have they adjusted to remote learning, but they’ve also shown us the best way to teach them. Our young people and families offered advice, and we listened.”

REBECCA NAVARRO
MANAGING DIRECTOR, EARLY CHILDHOOD

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“It doesn’t matter which department, program, or school you’re in at HCZ — we are all involved in the personal growth of our young people and their acceptance into college. During remote learning, we deployed several people to be in our students’ lives. We don’t put ourselves in a box, or say, ‘This isn’t my responsibility.’ If you work for HCZ, your goal is ‘whatever it takes,’ and that’s exactly what we’re doing.”

DR. ACHIL PETIT

SUPERINTENDENT, PROMISE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS
AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

“Our families had a really challenging time during the pandemic — there was loss of jobs, loss of incomes, and loss of loved ones. Students were unsure if they could even remain students because their families needed them for financial and emotional support. Through their participation in CHECS and all of HCZ’s programming, they received the academic, financial, and professional support needed to help them persist and make it into college. At a time when people were running away from the pandemic’s issues, we ran directly toward them and helped our scholars thrive.”

CANDICE CLAWSON
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
& CAREER SERVICES (CHECS)

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HCZ Legacy Society

The HCZ Legacy Society is comprised of individuals who have generously included Harlem Children's Zone in their estate plans, ensuring we can support future generations of youth and families.

If you are not listed and you have included Harlem Children's Zone in your will or estate plans or would like to learn more about doing so, please email HCZdevelopment@hcz.org.

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“We learned that flexibility was key to all engagements. While it was unusual to consider virtual engagement in our field pre-pandemic, we found that our offerings allowed for greater outreach. They offered families, staff, and youth opportunities to remain engaged with our organization throughout this difficult period.”

JESSICA LAKE
DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLNESS PROGRAM





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**Harlem Children's Zone breaks the cycle of
intergenerational poverty with comprehensive,
on-the-ground programming that builds up
opportunities for children and families
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