



Speech written for Board of Directors' President to give at 2014 Annual Benefit

At Christopher House, we believe every child deserves access to a quality education that begins at birth. We believe children deserve to be supported by highly effective teachers, and to grow up a nurturing home.

Unfortunately, many of the children in the communities we serve face a much different reality. By age three, the children from low-income households know fewer than half as many words as their more affluent peers. This disparity, along with similar gaps in math and emotional development, persists and widens as children get older. In Chicago today, just four percent of low-income high school students go on to earn a college degree. This lack of educational achievement limits their career options and perpetuates the cycle of poverty, which has a lasting, negative affect on our entire city.

Low-income parents come to Christopher House because they want the best for their kids. They are hard-working adults who want to move their families forward. We give them the education, tools, and resources to help them achieve their goals. We work with children of all ability levels – often taking those whose needs could not be met by other schools.

Our family of schools directly addresses the challenges of poverty that plague the at-risk communities we serve. We inspire children to dream big and we empower parents to fully engage in their child's education. We foster a culture of achievement centered on college readiness.

- Our renowned Infant and Pre-Schools build the hard and soft skills that will help children succeed from kindergarten through college, and beyond.
- Our new Elementary School combines rigorous curriculum with wraparound supportive services. We make sure each scholar gets the individualized attention they need.
- Our After-Schools broaden the horizons of children and teens, raising their expectations for their own futures, and transforming them into self-assured young leaders.
- We know that learning starts at home, and our Parent School offers the guidance and support parents need to build stable, healthy homes for their children.

This year's family honoree, the Ruiz family, exemplifies Christopher House's values – achievement, perseverance, respect, compassion, equality, and a commitment to excellence.

Sonica Ruiz and Denise Sebo adopted their nieces Alysa and Lorena when their biological mother was unable to care for them. Sonica and Denise knew the girls needed more individualized support than a traditional childcare center could give them. They wanted Alysa and Lorena to have all the advantages of a first-rate education that would support their academic, social, and emotional development. The Ruiz family found what they were searching for in Christopher House. We have watched them grow and thrive in our schools, from when they enrolled in our Pre-School to when they joined the inaugural class of our Elementary School. We are proud to be able to honor them tonight.