



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
ILLINOIS



A man with a beard and a young boy are kneeling in a park, planting a small tree. The man is wearing a red plaid shirt and blue jeans, while the boy is in a striped shirt. They are both looking up at the young tree they have just planted. The background is a lush green forest.

SOS NEWSLETTER SPRING 2016

IN BLOOM: OUR COMMUNITY OF HOPE

FAMILY MATTERS - ONE TREE AT A TIME

PG 4

OUR EXTENDED FAMILY:
SWISSÔTEL HELPS US BUILD ROOTS

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SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS

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DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Don't miss out on event announcements and Village news.
Send your e-mail address to:

YWAGENER@SOSILLINOIS.ORG

We'll make sure you're on the list!

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2015 HOLIDAY GIVING PROGRAM DONORS

Thank you to our 2015 Holiday Giving Program donors for making the holiday season special.

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CEO Message

IT IS A SEED PLANTED WITH WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE FROM FOSTER PARENT TO CHILD, WATERED AND CARED FOR BY THERAPISTS, VILLAGE STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND TUTORS, AND NURTURED BY YOUR TIRELESS SUPPORT.

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS CEO - TIM MCCORMICK

As winter departs, we look forward to the arrival of spring renewal and growth. It is a natural time to look forward to new opportunities. For SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we welcome spring having received a very special opportunity to tell our story. Through our corporate partnership with Wintrust Financial, we have been featured on a mural along the Kennedy Expressway, one of the busiest roads in the state of Illinois. It is estimated that nearly 1 million people will see the mural during its month-long campaign. They will see a design that is inspired by our commitment to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our children, as well as our dedication to encouraging and supporting their dreams for the future.

We are grateful for the chance to share our story with Chicagoland. It is a story that we know is important and worth telling, far and wide. It is a story of hope, renewal, and growth. Much like a seed planted in a garden, our hope is planted with love and care and the promise of infinite potential. It is that hope that is so precious and paramount to our mission and what we do. It is a seed planted with words of encouragement and acceptance from

Foster Parent to child, watered and cared for by therapists, Village staff, volunteers and tutors, and nurtured by your tireless support.

With your support in 2015, 535 children received care in our Villages, 100 new children found a home in our Villages, and 49 brothers and sisters were united and now live as a family. Four of our students graduated high school, and all are currently enrolled in college or have secured full-time employment. Because of your generosity, you further supported our Sibling Foster Care program, educational programming, made the holidays a truly special and meaningful time for the children in our care, and helped us reach GuideStar gold-level status and earn recognition as one of 20 top charities in Chicago by *Chicago Magazine*.

We cannot emphasize enough the profound joy we feel in seeing the delight on the faces of our brothers and sisters—that you help make possible. While the holidays come and go and one afternoon at the circus or at the ballpark is a short amount of time in the grand scheme of things, each outing, each party, each

PLANTING A SEED OF HOPE TO LAST A LIFETIME



opportunity, and each gift contributes to forming long-lasting memories that the children will carry with them long into adulthood and after they leave our Villages.

Just as the children, Foster Parents, and staff know that it is not enough to simply plant a seed in one of our Village community gardens to see the fruits of their work, so, too, does the seed of hope we plant need to be watered, nurtured, and cared for. We seek to nurture and provide the most full and attentive care so that each child can blossom into the compassionate and self-sufficient individual he or she is meant to be.

We wish you a joyful spring and hope you'll continue to share in our journey of growth and hope. With your time, generosity of heart, and belief in our children, together we can tend to our important work: planting seeds of hope to last a lifetime for bright and flourishing futures, full of possibility.

VILLAGE VOICES

A PROCESS OF GROWTH AND LOVE



“We are the ones planting the seed in the children. We are sending these kids who come to us broken, back into the world as whole, young people. With everything we are, we’re breathing life back into them.”

**KENITRA SHACKELFORD,
PROFESSIONAL SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES
ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT**

“At the end of the day you want to know that you’ve imparted knowledge. Regardless of whether you can see the seed or not, you have to know that in the years to come they will always, always remember what you have taught them.”

**JOY HERTH,
PROFESSIONAL SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES
ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT**

“It’s about ensuring that the children are feeling loved, finding ways to partake in daily activities and having fun with them, and loving them through this process.”

**PHYLLIS BROWN,
PROFESSIONAL SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES
ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT**

RESOURCE LIST – FOSTERING AWARENESS



During the spring months of April and May, two concerns that are very close to our hearts at SOS Children's Villages Illinois will be highlighted on a national level: Child Abuse Prevention Month (April 2016) and Foster Care Awareness Month (May 2016). While these are priorities every day of the year, we believe in the importance of spreading mindfulness throughout these focused months.

Stay tuned to our blog at www.sosillinois.org, and follow along on social media to help us grow awareness around these key issues. We also encourage you to seek out these trusted resources.

Prevent Child Abuse America's list of actions everyone can take on a daily basis: www.preventchildabuse.org/resource/ten-ways-to-help-prevent-child-abuse/

The Children's Bureau's website on National Child Abuse Prevention Month: www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth

Annie E. Casey Foundation's primer on foster care: www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-foster-care/

The Children's Bureau's website on National Foster Care Month: www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/

FAMILY MATTERS: ONE TREE AT A TIME

Maureen McKeough, a former member of the Board of Directors who is still very much an active member of our SOS Illinois family, came to the organization with a great deal of experience in social services and education. When she began with the Board, she also served as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) for three children from a four-sibling family. She saw firsthand the importance of keeping siblings together as well as the isolation many foster parents can face without the resources and support the SOS model provides. Maureen is a champion for education and continuously working to better our programs through data and adjustments, and is the pioneer behind our special tradition of planting a tree for our high school graduates at the Lockport Village each year. We are very fortunate to benefit from her expertise, compassion, and wisdom.

Could you share a bit about yourself and how you came to be involved with SOS Children's Villages Illinois?

I read about SOS Illinois in a *Chicago Tribune* article in the early 2000s—and that is how I first learned about the organization, which was still very young at that time. I had recently retired and knew in retiring that I wanted to volunteer and make a contribution. I also knew it would involve children, because I had spent time caring about the most vulnerable in our society and helping them to overcome injustices. After reading the article, I met with the executive director to join the Board. It was a good fit because of my knowledge and experience. Also, in my research of agencies, I was concerned with finding something that really works for kids.

How do you think your background in education has informed and influenced your involvement with the organization?

My background in education did inform that, certainly. It inspired and motivated me to know what's going in the homes, from tutoring to how our schools were working. As a board member I always stressed the notion that we need data. I worked on developing those indicators and identifying what we expect as activities, resources, and outcomes. We have a particular model and we need to know

how its elements are working. That means asking questions like: Are children in school as often as they should be? Do they have decent grades? Are they participating in extracurricular activities? Are they reading at grade level? Are they graduating from high school?



Could you talk about how you started the tradition of planting trees for high school graduates each year?

Having older children in the Lockport Village and having them stay long enough to finish eighth grade and then into high school, I thought we really should recognize what an achievement that is and applaud them. The first year, around 2006, there were just two graduates, and we planted two trees for them. I identified a local provider who was very interested in helping and gave a discount. He brought a book and talked to that first group about what would work and the importance of diversity of trees.

After that year we were so successful, thankfully, that there were a lot more than two graduates, which is how we came to have one graduate tree. We also talk to them early in their senior year about the tree. We ask them to start thinking about that and they learn about it as they make a contribution in selecting, planting, watering, and caring for the tree.

A tree seemed like such an appropriate thing because it has roots, but it's flexible and can bend with the wind—and these young people have had to do both. We hope that we've given them roots. We hope that they will grow and change and mature and always have roots to keep them grounded. And we hope that we've contributed to that.

What do you share with those who are just learning about SOS Illinois?

I tell them that these are all our children. We need to be responsible for children who aren't biologically ours, who are vulnerable. Whether that appeals to ethics, empathy, or morality, I tell them that they ought to feel that way out of self-interest: these are our future voters and future job-holders who will make things happen. We better be invested in how they're raised.

OUR EXTENDED FAMILY: BUILDING STRONG

swissôtel CHICAGO



SWISSÔTEL HELPS US BUILD ROOTS

IN 2015 SWISSÔTEL CHICAGO, AN AWARD-WINNING HOTEL ON WACKER DRIVE IN DOWNTOWN CHICAGO, BECAME A TREASURED CORPORATE PARTNER AND THE OFFICIAL HOTEL SPONSOR OF SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS. WE ARE HONORED AND GRATEFUL FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND ARE EXCITED TO CELEBRATE THEIR MANY CONTRIBUTIONS WITH YOU.

Our partnership began in March of last year and was kicked off in June with a wonderful Vitality event called Zumba for Charity. Through their Vitality program, Swissôtel Chicago offers guests the opportunity to stay in shape even when on the road, with bootcamps and other activities intended to promote physical well-being and a healthy lifestyle. On June 26, 2015, the entire hotel staff joined in a Zumba-thon, and all proceeds were donated to SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

The Zumba event was a truly exciting way to forge our new partnership, and Swissôtel Chicago's passion and enthusiasm grew as their involvement with the organization expanded.

"Our commitment to SOS Children's Villages Illinois is an employee-driven initiative, created by our CARE Committee. It is so humbling to see how engaged our employees are with fundraising for SOS Children's Villages Illinois. Having a partnership that is local allows us to create more opportunities for the families and the Villages. It is also very rewarding to see the funds we raised as a hotel being put to use to help all of the families in the SOS Illinois communities."

MARK HUNTLEY, REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, CENTRAL U.S.A., AND GENERAL MANAGER, SWISSÔTEL CHICAGO

During the holiday season especially, we were overwhelmed by their continued support. Not only did they donate turkeys for all of the homes in our Villages for Thanksgiving, but they also played a major role in the success of our 2015 Holiday Giving Program. The Holiday Giving Program is an annual program through which contributors can support the children in our care with gifts and recognition during the holiday season. Swissôtel Chicago's contributions included gifts for our children and families as well as a magical Christmas party, co-hosted with AMLI Residential, at the hotel's Santa Suite.

We thank Swissôtel Chicago for everything they did for us in 2015 and everything that they continue to do. Even now they are planning activities throughout 2016, including site visits to our Villages, so that more of their employees may witness the impact of their support. We are immensely appreciative of their partnership and commitment to the brothers and sisters in our care.



G ROOTS FOR A FLOURISHING FUTURE

2015 Corporate Partners, Sponsors, Funders, and Grantors

Our sincere gratitude to all of our 2015 corporate partners, sponsors, funders, and grantors who gave \$10,000 or more in 2015. We are happy to welcome our new funders: The Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation/Driven to Care; Ignite a Better World Foundation / NGK Spark Plugs (USA); Texas Open and Benefit for Children Golf Classic / Valero Energy Corporation, as well as our new corporate partner Mosaic.

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WELCOMING OUR NEW PARTNER, MOSAIC

We are excited to announce one of our new partnerships in 2016, with Mosaic. Mosaic is one of the fastest-growing sales and marketing agencies in North America. The company's charitable responsibility arm, Mosaic Cares, approached us in October 2015 as their charity of choice for 2016. Mosaic Cares aims to support a charity each year via volunteer work and philanthropy.

Mosaic visited our Chicago Village in November 2015 and has been planning their involvement with and support for the organization ever since. In December 2015, they announced a donation of prize money they received from an industry gold award, as well as a gift of all ticket sales and silent auction proceeds from their holiday gala.

Among the many items they have planned for the coming year are: clean-up days, graduation parties, resume writing/career mentoring, a movie night, as well as involvement in our school supply drive and holiday gift drives. We could not be more thrilled to have the support of this young, charitable, and vibrant group of people, and we look forward to a great partnership in 2016.

STHREE AMERICAS HELPS US LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW COMMUNITY CENTER

SThree Americas has been a valued partner to SOS Children's Villages Illinois since 2013. In 2015, they went above and beyond in their support, specifically to help raise funds for a new Community Center at our Roosevelt Square Village. From a 500-mile bike challenge from San Francisco to Los Angeles, auction events like the Auction of Promises event in Chicago, a Boston grand-opening event, volunteering, and book donations, their many impressive efforts in the last year raised over \$58,000 in support of the new community center.

"SOS Children's Villages Illinois is proud to partner with SThree Americas and its enthusiastic and committed staff who genuinely care for the betterment of the children in our care," said CEO Tim McCormick. "The collective dollar amount raised through the many staff initiatives are pledged for the Community Center SOS Illinois is making great strides to construct at our Roosevelt Square Village. As SThree helps our Villages here in Illinois, they also help children and families around the globe. Their generosity has an exponential impact, not only through their company's match, but also because wherever we are able to strengthen our communities, so too are we able to create safe, loving places, where we transform lives of those in need and ultimately change the fabric of our society."



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS

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BECOME A DREAM MAKER: JOIN OUR MONTHLY GIVING CLUB

Dream Makers are a special group of SOS Illinois' most passionate and thoughtful supporters.

Your automatic monthly gift provides the sustained resources needed to help the foster children in our care – Illinois' most vulnerable children.

Monthly giving is the easiest and most efficient way to support SOS Children's Villages Illinois. Gifts of all sizes are greatly appreciated.

You can easily start today at support.sosillinois.org and change your giving at any time.

Become a Dream Maker today!

