

# suburban life

*Kylie Kelce*  
**TAKES THE LEAD**  
pg. 28

**+ Also Inside:**  
Leaders in  
dentistry,  
real estate,  
and more

**Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia**, which last year awarded more than 6,000 scholarships to help students attend the school of their choice, has its sights set even higher for the years ahead.

page 36



Keisha Jordan, shown here with students from Greene Street Friends School in Philadelphia, leads Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia. CSFP provides need-based scholarships to children in kindergarten through eighth grade so these students can attend the private school of their choice.

# Empowerment Through Education

**Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia**, which last year awarded more than 6,000 scholarships to help students attend the school of their choice, has its sights set even higher for the years ahead.

by **LEIGH ANN STUART** | photos by **ALISON DUNLAP**

**The Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia** (CSFP) operates on a simple yet profound principle: Every family deserves access to a quality education for their child.

Since 2001, CSFP has been uplifting the lives of Philadelphia families by providing need-based scholarships to children in kindergarten through eighth grade so these students can attend the private school of their choice.

"The goal is to positively impact students," says Keisha Jordan, CSFP's President and CEO. "The organization primarily works with families living in Philadelphia neighborhoods with some of Pennsylvania's lowest academic achieving public schools. We're dedicated to helping the families who need our support most—families who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford a private school education.

"Every child should have access to the

type of learning environment their family chooses for them," she continues. "Every child is different, every family is different, and we want every child—no matter where they live—to have that option to start what could become a lifetime of success."

As many as one in four students in Philadelphia private schools, from kindergarten through eighth grade, receive CSFP scholarships. Students are selected each year via a random lottery to ensure all corners of the city are represented.

"The median household income for our families is well below the median in Philadelphia," Jordan says. "For families that couldn't afford a private school otherwise, it is really impactful to win our lottery because CSFP scholarships stay with a student all the way through eighth grade."

Every parent in the program pays at

least \$500 for their child's schooling each year, and sometimes much more, but the expense is an investment in their child's future. After their years with CSFP end, 95 percent of children go on to high schools of choice that include the city's private, magnet, and charter schools.

"This is about breaking that generational cycle of poverty," Jordan says. "Seventy-eight percent of our parents say they want their child to go on to earn a bachelor's degree; 56 percent say they want their child to go on to a master's degree or higher; and 72 percent of our students do go to college."

CSFP has awarded 70,000 scholarships to date, with 6,200 students earning scholarships for the 2023-2024 academic year. All these scholarships add up to a significant investment in the community, as today's children will become the leaders of tomorrow.

## Community Partners

Christianne Clymer spent five years working with CSFP, first as Development Manager and ultimately as Assistant Director of Partnerships and Events. She now has a new role as Executive Director of Philadelphia Insurance Companies Foundation, headquar-





“  
**Making sure every child  
 has the opportunity to get  
 a high-quality education  
 benefits the entire region.”**

—KEISHA JORDAN OF CSFP,  
 SHOWN WITH STUDENTS  
 FROM GREENE STREET  
 FRIENDS SCHOOL

tered in Bala Cynwyd.

“I am so proud to remain connected with CSFP through the work I am doing here at Philadelphia Insurance Companies (PHLY),” she says. “In 2022, PHLY hosted CSFP’s Lottery Day in our home office. This event allowed our employees to understand the joy that comes from hearing a parent find out, for the very first time, that their child has been selected from CSFP’s scholarship lottery.” The two organizations have since become even more closely connected. Today, Philadelphia Insurance Companies’ President and CEO, John Glomb, sits on CSFP’s “Breaking Barriers” Campaign Steering Committee. PHLY has been able to fund more than 1,000 scholarships so far, via participation in Pennsylvania’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC).

“As a Philadelphia parent, I know what it’s like to try to navigate Philadelphia’s school system,” Clymer adds. “There are just a handful of public schools, beginning in kindergarten up through high school, that compare to the education available in many Philadelphia suburbs. ... We see it time and time again, young adults making the choice to live in Philadelphia, where they can enjoy the city’s vibrancy, only to leave and to raise a family in the suburbs, where they will have access to safe, quality schools.”

This, she says, is where CSFP changes lives.

“CSFP opens doors for parents who are seeking options for their children,” Clymer says. “They help families learn about the private school system and navigate their choices. ... Ideally, the Philadelphia public school system will get to a place where it can

provide a solid education for all students. In the meantime, the children of Philadelphia deserve an education that meets their needs and offers a promise for a better tomorrow. CSFP fills that need today.”

### Breaking Barriers

While the scope of CSFP’s work has certainly been impressive, the goal is to keep growing. Fundraising will be paramount to CSFP’s continued success; every dollar that the organization raises is directly invested in increasing scholarships and providing support for Philadelphia’s under-resourced families. The five-year Breaking Barriers Campaign, which started in 2022, has a goal of raising \$100 million dollars to help the organization serve 7,700 students per year by 2027.

From a programmatic standpoint, CSFP will be able to increase the number of students served as well as the amount each family receives in assistance. As a result, families will not only be able to plan finances with more certainty but also keep their child in a partner school for a longer period and, in the process, help them become more proficient in core subjects such as reading and math.

Jordan wants to see CSFP expand its organizational capacity in order to achieve sustainable growth. As the organization seeks to serve more students longer, they must add

more people to the fold. In the end, CSFP’s goal is to connect children with quality education reaches far beyond the walls of any school, and into the homes of families who live in Philadelphia and surrounding communities.

“We want our region to be strong and to thrive, and education is at the center of that,” Jordan says. “Making sure every child has the opportunity to get a high-quality education benefits the entire region. Families of every income and every ZIP code in our region want the same thing.”

CSFP receives its funding through outright gifts to the organization. It is also recognized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a Scholarship Organization, which allows CSFP to accept tax credit gifts through Pennsylvania’s EITC and OSTC programs. Individuals and businesses with Pennsylvania tax liability can receive state tax credit that allows them to transform their taxes to educational scholarships for children in Philadelphia.

“People and businesses can be the philanthropists they’ve always dreamed of being with this program, directly improving educational outcomes for Philadelphia’s younger learners while receiving significant tax benefits,” Jordan says. “This program is incredible and a win-win for students and supporters who care about strong education. You can have a tremendous impact and give kids great outcomes in a way that transforms the tax liability that you already have.” ■

➔ For more information, visit  
[www.csphiladelphia.org](http://www.csphiladelphia.org)  
 To learn about tax credit giving, go to  
[www.csphiladelphia.org/support/tax-credits](http://www.csphiladelphia.org/support/tax-credits)