



# WTC RELIEF FUND REPORT

CAS REPORTS ON ITS WORLD TRADE CENTER RELIEF EFFORTS

FEBRUARY 2003

## How The Children's Aid Society Continues to Help Primary Victims

The Children's Aid Society (CAS) began working on the day of the attacks to assist those who were particularly vulnerable—the surviving families of low-income, non-uniformed workers, the severely injured and service workers who lost their jobs. Our dedicated social workers have been working very closely with families to help assess their needs and respond appropriately. We have found a great need for financial assistance, especially with critical expenses such as rent, child care, tuition and food, as well as for mental health counseling and case management, where we link families to services such as after-school and job training programs. Thus far, we have committed almost \$6 million to this effort.

The CAS approach has been multi-dimensional; we have responded to these needs in a coordinated, sensitive and timely way. We have been instrumental in assessing the needs and concerns of our clients, determining their level of readiness and connecting them to appropriate services. For example, the emotional trauma experienced by the families whom we have been assisting was severely exacerbated by major financial concerns. While some were eager to seek bereavement and trauma counseling early on, many others simply could not address their emotional needs until their urgent financial situations had been resolved. We therefore have made a range of services continually available and we have developed a database to track the assistance we have provided to each family and anticipate future needs.

CAS has provided highly personalized care to these families, over 340, and are therefore better able to identify their needs and create individualized plans of service. We helped a mother find child care so she could attend a bereavement group and helped pay for a grieving son's weight loss program (in his depression he had gained over 50 pounds). We have referred many families on the verge of losing company-sponsored medical benefits to our facilitated public insurance enrollment program and we have found specialized tutoring and after-school programs for children who are now struggling academically.

**Overriding Concerns: Child Care and Education.** CAS has determined that child care and education are the most prominent concerns of our families. Before receiving assistance from CAS, many parents relied on the kindness of extended family members or neighbors, or simply did not leave their homes in order to care for their young children. In so doing however, they did not tend to their own healing and they did not pursue employment or the programs that will prepare them for their new roles as primary caretaker.

For virtually all of the families with whom we have worked, limited finances have posed a serious threat. Our caseworkers have processed thousands of requests for emergency cash assistance, used primarily for rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, education and food and clothing expenses. They have worked with over 104 families to develop long-term budgets. CAS has made multi-year financial commitments for expenses including school tuition, after-school programs, child care, summer camp and, in some cases, a stipend to assist with housing, clothing and food bills.

**Entering a New Phase.** We are now moving into the aftercare phase of our work. This involves reaching out to all 104 families to whom we have made long-term financial commitments and ensuring that they know whom, within The Children's Aid Society, they may contact with any emergencies or new issues they may encounter. And, of course, we will continue providing mental health services to all who need them.

## New Curriculum Helps Kids Overcome Obstacles

All children need help building and honing skills that help them succeed in school and in the lives they choose to lead as adults. But some children have a better head start in learning and developing those skills than others. To address the many children who have not had that advantage, CAS has introduced *Overcoming Obstacles* in several of its community schools and programs.

We started using this curriculum prior to September 11, 2001 at our Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics community high school in East Harlem, as an after-school seminar for freshmen. Based on its success there, CAS adapted the program for younger students, and introduced it in September 2002 at Town Meetings in three of our community middle schools, I.S. 218, I.S. 90, both in Washington Heights, and at C.S. 98, our newest community school located in the south Bronx. The curriculum is also being used with the middle and high school students who participate in our New Heights student-athlete basketball program based at I.S. 90 and C.S. 98.

*Overcoming Obstacles* is a life skills curriculum that emphasizes communications, decision-making and goal setting, and aims to build resiliency, awareness, planning and organization.

"9/11 made using *Overcoming Obstacles* more urgent and relevant than ever before," states Richard Negrón, director of community schools for CAS. "It helps students look to the future. It develops leadership, and gives them a voice. We saw great results at Manhattan Center." The high school students developed game plans for college and for a work life after school, he said.

"We consider *Overcoming Obstacles* to be an effective curriculum that addresses the need of youth for planning and thinking about the future," said Philip Coltoff, CEO of Children's Aid. "We're hoping we hear from the kids through greater participation in programs at the schools, as well as directly through more feedback."

## Letters from WTC Survivors and Clients Show Depth of Gratitude

Letters and notes of all descriptions have poured into The Children's Aid Society from many of the clients we have helped since the attacks of September 11th. The letters, especially those from the wives of victims, bear words of gratitude and hope.

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