

# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW



Like so many organizations throughout the world, the past twelve months have stretched our capabilities, shifted our course, and changed our approach to the most fundamental areas of our operations. While it often hasn't been easy and it's safe to say that 2020 didn't unfold as any of us would have expected, it has also allowed us to actively reimagine our approach to our mission and consider what our team, families, and Scholars need most from us through trying times. As we enter 2021, it is with the resiliency and clarity that comes from reflecting on our values and mission with an eye toward what is essential, equitable, and at the core of who we are.



- Lindsay Harper,  
*Executive Director & Founder*

## COMING TOGETHER



In January of 2020 we started our programming year with a Career We Can event led by local medical professionals, who shared insights about their career journeys and gave Scholars first-hand accounts of their experiences as first responders. It was impossible then to imagine that our speakers would soon be on the frontlines of fighting a disease that would close our schools and keep us from gathering together for such events.

Our last in-person event was a day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. where our entire team and Scholars gathered at Kianga Isoke Palacio Park to plant trees for the benefit of our local community. Throughout a year in which outdoor spaces have been particularly important in serving our community, we hope that our trees have continued to provide shade and scenery to many visitors.

From where we stand now it's easy to feel a sense of longing for the times when we could gather with such ease, however we haven't stopped creating opportunities for us to come together because they are an essential part of our CORE Community. Throughout 2020 our team worked together to find safe and creative ways for us to continue to remain connected with each other and our local community. In May, we hosted a day of appreciation at UMC where our Scholars distributed over 600 iced coffees and teas to frontline healthcare workers. In August we hosted our first ever digital fundraiser in partnership with EAT and Chef Natalie, where we successfully fundraised for new Chromebooks to keep Scholars connected. This December we hosted our first "Holiday Express" event where our families drove through multiple stations of holiday cheer to receive trunk-fulls of both essential needs and seasonal gifts. Our "attitude of gratitude" has kept us together throughout 2020, and we have found that no matter the circumstances we can find ways to come together as we support each other.

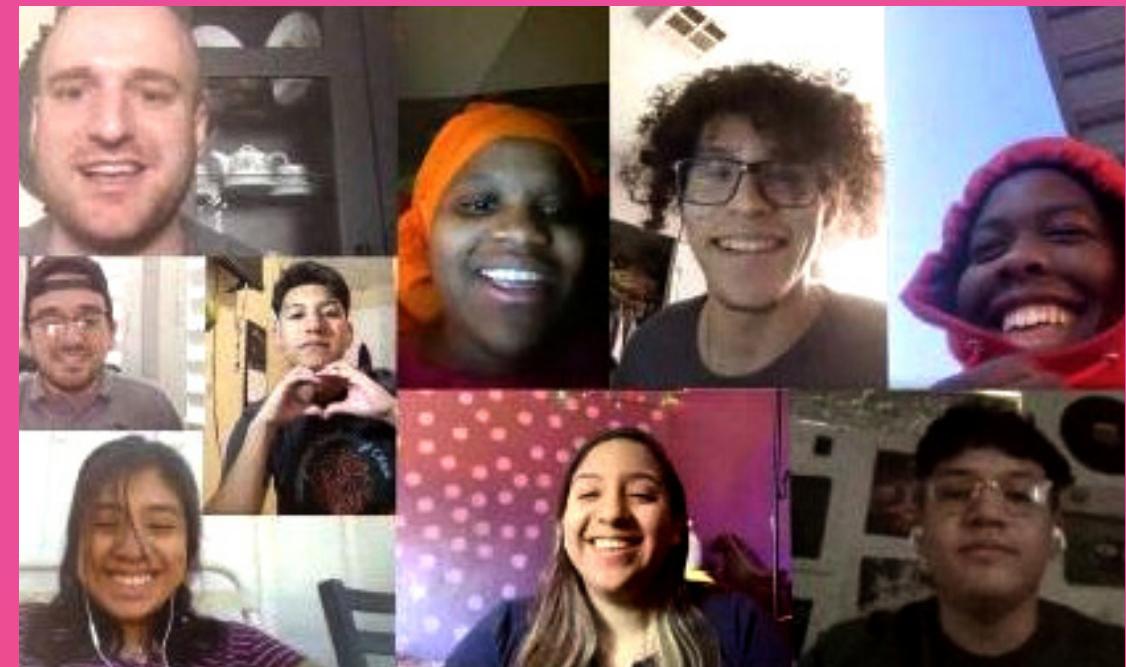
# PROGRAMMING FOR NEW REALITIES



Undoubtedly the biggest shift for families throughout the Clark County School District and much of the nation has been the move to virtual classrooms necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues that have long been bubbling beneath the surface of mainstream conversation, such as the digital divide in our classrooms, were suddenly thrust into the forefront of education planning as families adapted to a new reality. As Clark County Schools enter their eleventh month of virtual learning, we have had to adapt our programming and planning to ensure Scholars receive the support they need through this difficult, prolonged transition.

Our first online programming session started in May of 2020 with an initial 6-week test program facilitated by our Character Ed Guru and Empowerment Coach, Vita and Melvin. Our entire team followed this up by collaborating to plan a weeklong virtual Summer Enrichment program that was held in July of 2020. Taking the lessons learned from these initial programming offerings, our team evaluated what elements were working and what changes could be made as we shifted to a fully virtual Google Classroom format for the 20/21 school year. We are proud to report that from the start of this school year we have been able to (1) continue conducting successful programming with Scholars, (2) deliver an entirely virtual CORE Orientation program, and (3) check in monthly with each Scholar to ensure their basic and mental health needs are being met.

The unique challenges of this past year have highlighted that supporting students' social-emotional needs is just as important as academic support, a philosophy that has long been reflected in our programming. We believe that the Character Education and Mindfulness curriculum central to our programming is vital to students such as our Scholars now more than ever. Our programming provides young people with more than just coursework or academic support, it builds a community.



# TEAM CORE



Our programming continued to take place because of our amazing team, a team that has kept growing to support our changing needs! In February we welcomed Melvin King as Program Manager and Empowerment Coach. Melvin's leadership has been integral to our success as we moved into virtual programming and created an entirely new system to fulfill our afterschool activities. We also welcomed Kris Burrell, our newest Scholar Advisor who will be dedicated to our new mini-cohort of high school Scholars: the Martinez Cohort. Longtime CORE team member Richard Johnson is also taking on a new role within our community as our Alumni Coordinator. Richard has already used his signature dynamic energy to spearhead a number of new Alumni-focused initiatives including a podcast and other social media campaigns to re-engage our entire CORE Alumni population. Finally, we recently had the privilege of hiring one of our very own CORE Alumni to join our team! Ariel Anderson has been onboarded as our new Enrichment Intern and is giving back to our CORE Community with all of the wisdom and character she developed in our program and beyond.

## 2020 was also filled with a number of milestones among our team members:

Our Outreach Director, **Barbara Molasky**, celebrated 5 years with CORE - making her our longest serving team member!

Four of our team members are about to celebrate their fourth year with us! Congratulations **Jill Moat**, **Ana Avalos-Garcia**, **Albert Haylock**, and **Celinda Dominguez**.

One of our newest team members celebrated their first anniversary at CORE, congratulations to our Annual Giving Director: **Liberty Leavitt**.

*Thank you to each and every one of our CORE team members for making our ideas into realities. You are truly at the core of our community.*

# KEEPING OUR **CORE** COMMUNITY TOGETHER



One thing we have certainly missed this past year is gathering with all of you: our CORE Champions. However, we hope that while we haven't been together physically, you've been able to feel connected with us through our variety of new initiatives geared toward telling the CORE story.

In April of 2020 we launched our new website at [corewecan.org](http://corewecan.org) and a new monthly newsletter: **CORE Champions**. Our website is not a static landing page, but a constantly evolving resource that includes our **CORE Stories Blog and Resources Directory**, which are both regularly updated with new materials geared towards families, supporters, and community partners. As part of our Resources Directory we have continued to update and distribute a bilingual **Family Resource Guide** that has been available to our families since April. This guide, along with personal check-ins from our full time Social Worker Celinda Dominguez, have helped our families stay informed and connected to necessary resources throughout the pandemic. In December we launched our latest communications outlet, **CORE Community/Comunidad CORE**, a bilingual quarterly newsletter filled with resources and stories for our families that will focus on the needs of each season. If you haven't been by recently, take a moment to check out [corewecan.org](http://corewecan.org) and stay up to date on all of our latest work!



# REFLECTING ON OUR CHALLENGES



The events of this past year have dramatically highlighted the systemic inequities that have always faced communities such as our CORE Scholars and families. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us all, but frontline workers and black and brown communities have fared far worse in terms of both healthcare and economic outcomes. Quite simply, the combination of inadequate resources in healthcare access, technological connectivity, and job security have created a situation in which the most vulnerable families in our communities have been overwhelmed.

From the start of this ongoing crisis, we have sought to be proactive in supporting our families to ensure that they could not only survive, but thrive. However, we've also had to navigate the logistics of doing so safely. During those early months of the pandemic our team members went above and beyond as we activated our Emergency Relief Fund to personally deliver our families with gift cards for local grocers and other basic needs. Starting in November, our Social Worker, Celinda Dominguez, spearheaded our new series of monthly drive-thru food distributions held at West Prep in partnership with Three Square Food Bank. At these events we have been able to serve over 300 families on a single day while following safety protocols. As we continue these events through the rest of the 20/21 school year, we look forward to continuing to support not just our own families, but the broader community at the school in which we operate, as we face unprecedented communal challenges and demand for assistance.

*"I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it."*

- Maya Angelou

## CORE: REFLECTING ON OUR CHALLENGES



Our transition to online learning has ensured that we continued to offer programming, but it certainly hasn't been without its challenges. From the start, CORE has had a high touchpoint philosophy that thrived on face-to-face interpersonal communication. Currently that model isn't available to us, and we are constantly learning from our experiences as we refine our approach to online learning and figure out this transition. With young people such as our Scholars entering their eleventh month of distance learning, there is growing concern amongst educators and parents about the social-emotional effects of this prolonged disruption at such a pivotal developmental point. As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 health crisis, we must also confront the growing mental health crisis that is particularly burdening our young people. We are doubling down on our commitment to ensuring the mental and emotional well being of our Scholar community. Our entire CORE programming team is required to undergo training with the Office of Suicide Prevention so that we are ready to recognize the risk factors and respond, and our full-time Social Worker continues to provide relevant referrals to community partner

programs for counseling, therapy, and other resources for those with heightened needs. For young people in need these services are not a luxury, but a vital lifeline that can create a world of difference.

The challenges our community faces haven't all been limited to the COVID-19 pandemic and digital transition. The May 25th 2020 murder of George Floyd painfully demonstrated the longstanding societal injustices that continue to hold back BIPOC communities. As we work to build equitable and choice-filled lives for our Scholars, we must confront the reality that the inequities they face do not end in the classroom. While we see opportunity in this past summer's renewed focus on the Black Lives Matter movement and calls for dismantling oppressive systems in our society, we also know that any progress has come with pain. The unfortunate truth is that many of our Scholars will face roadblocks and barriers along their journey that are rooted in inequity and racism; our challenge is to understand and confront this landscape in order to meet their needs and help them to overcome these obstacles as they achieve success.

## SCHOLAR ALLISON

Scholar Allison is a senior in high school attending West Prep Academy, and is highlighted here because she continually demonstrates her dedication to both the CORE Community and her own personal development. Allison displayed her perseverance as she met the many challenges associated with the transition to virtual learning head-on, and reached out to CORE team members to advocate for her academic and emotional support needs. She currently has a 3.7 GPA and wants to pursue business, Human Resources, or Marketing when she graduates from high school. She has already applied to UNLV, CSN, SUU and plans to apply to Nevada State College before the application deadline. She is a true leader among her COREmates and is well positioned in her pursuit of living a choice filled life.

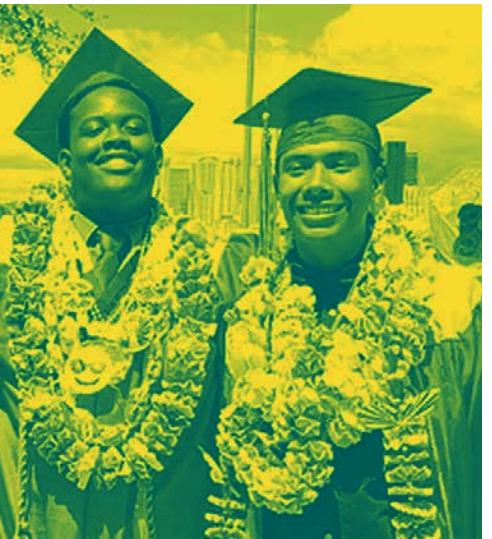


## ALUMNI CHRISTIAN

Alumni Christian is currently attending Nevada State College, where he is majoring in Criminal Justice. In the future he plans to become a detective for the LVMPD and he plans to stay in the Las Vegas area to give back to his community. Christian is currently on track to meet his goals, successfully overcoming some of the obstacles this past semester has presented with a 3.2 GPA. When asked what advice he would give to current CORE high school students Christian said, "(he) would tell them to take high school seriously, so that when they get to college it's an easy transition and you may save yourself from taking remedial classes as well." While transitioning to college life (both in-person and online) Christian says he has encountered transportation issues and sometimes struggled in prioritizing his schedule, but that he has been able to successfully overcome these obstacles in the end. Christian would like to thank the entire CORE Team, he says: "I think they have done a great job in providing the best they can to their students and staff."



## 5 BY 2025



It is with great pride and anticipation that we announce our strategic plan to expand to five school sites, with five cohorts of Scholars, by 2025! We know that there is an incredible amount of need throughout the student population here in Clark County, the nation's 5th largest school district. We also know that our CORE model works, and that with each cohort we create comes a new opportunity to support choice-filled lives. We look forward to updating you with more aspects of our plan in the coming year as we begin laying the foundation for our race to 5 by 2025!

CORE has a longstanding commitment to affirming and celebrating racial, ethnic, gender, age, class, spiritual, national, regional and personal identities both within our organization and in the communities that we work with as a way to achieve equity. We aim to uphold this commitment at every level of our operations, and in 2021 we look forward to welcoming two new board members who directly reflect the communities we serve.



*“Education is the passport  
to the future, for tomorrow  
belongs to those who  
prepare for it today.”*

- Malcolm X

300+

**HOURS OF 1:1  
TUTORING** provided  
to CORE Scholars as they  
studied from home in 2020

80+

**HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT OFFERED**  
to our staff in change management,  
leadership, work-life engagement

713

**27**  
**NEW & UNIQUE  
DONORS** joined  
our CORE Community

2000+

**COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS**  
performed by our Scholars in the past 18 months

Number of **West Prep  
community households  
served** at our 2020 drive-thru  
emergency food distribution  
(that's over 3600 individuals!)

[corewecan.org](http://corewecan.org)

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