

FREADOM[®]

A way out



2023 Annual Report of The FREADOM[®] Road Foundation



Gold
Transparency
2023

Candid.

The Freedom[®] Road Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 Not-For-Profit Tax Exempt organization, whose mission is to break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration. We accomplish this through ongoing research and evidence based literacy programs conducted onsite with partner organizations committed to the same, or mutually supportive goals.

We are pleased to share highlights of our programs

Freedom® Families and Home Visiting Program at Family Focus Chicago – Englewood community

Our original Freedom® Families program, which began with literacy services to just a few families, continues to be expanded and supplemented with a curated on-site collection intended to serve all families enrolled in the various components of the Family Focus Home Visiting program. The families and their assigned parent educators have the flexibility to choose from this collection as enrollment of participants and/or change of parent educators or supervisors allow. This collection, housed in the large blue lockable rolling cart purchased in 2022, is replenished as needed. The cart's collection of materials, protocols for use, and potential for marketing our program at Family Focus are monitored with an eye toward improvements and possible innovations based on observation of the foregoing and openness to Family Focus feedback.

In addition to the above, we participated in three other Family Focus programs –the Mothers Day Celebration, the Community Celebration “Growing and Glowing,” and the Christmas Celebration.

At the Mother's Day Event, in addition to providing many new books and other literacy materials for children and their families to select for their home libraries, we offered blank Mother's Day cards; both for the mothers at the event, and for them to take home to send to their own mothers.

For the Community Celebration we distributed many book, writing, and art materials, encouraged families to visit their neighborhood library, get

library cards, and identified potential Freedom® Families.

At the Christmas Celebration, in addition to the usual event materials, and the expected holiday incentives, we offered a raffle of ten special holiday gifts. As in the previous year, our grand prize was the American Girl doll “Claudie” based on a real 12-year-old African American girl from Hinsdale, Illinois. Of course, Claudie came beautifully packaged with a book.

The Family Focus Englewood program falls under the umbrella of Kiwanis International's Young Children: Priority One and is sponsored by Kiwanis Club of LakeView Chicago.

Freedom® Family, Indiana – Family Focus extension

A Freedom® Families participant from Family Focus Englewood is still involved in our program. She had initially joined us in 2014 while she was living in a homeless shelter with her four month old daughter. She has since secured housing, moved to Indiana, and gotten married. She now has four daughters who are all reading voraciously, doing well in school, and winning awards! She has been our Parent Advisor since 2021. In 2023 she recruited four additional families to our children's program and referred one incarcerated individual for our Learning Lotto program.

***John Stephan's Escape from the Jeopardy Zone**

This program, in partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago's Logan Square at Funston club, is designed to prevent the dire prediction of high risk future incarceration of third graders who score below

proficient in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading tests.

We experimented with a Zoom read aloud series, which the children greatly enjoyed. Also, club staff trained some of the older children to read to the younger ones from the books we provided. Club staff reported yet another successful outcome to this endeavor.

Additionally, we made two major book and craft materials deliveries which included hundreds of items such as big box Crayolas and Little Golden books collected by individual Kiwanians. These items along with our regular supply of new books filled our “Big Red Rolling Library” on wheels housed at the club.

Escape from the Jeopardy Zone falls under the umbrella of Kiwanis International's

Read Around the World Initiative and is sponsored by Kiwanis Club of LakeView Chicago.

**John Stephan was a long-time member and officer of the Kiwanis Club of LakeView, former director of the Logan Square Boys and Girls Club, and co-creator of the “Escape from the Jeopardy Zone” Program.*

The Learning Lotto

The Learning Lotto was reestablished. When someone “enters” the name of an incarcerated individual they know personally into the Learning Lotto, that individual becomes a winner. He receives an initial selection of books from us, after which he may request additional titles of his choosing. The name of a parent incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections was “entered” by one of our program participants.

Children Exposed to Violence (CEV)

While not a program per se, CEV is a body of knowledge we continue to research and reference. Initiated in previous years in connection with our partnership with the Office of Violence Prevention and Behavioral Health of the Chicago Department of Public Health, understanding CEV impacts the design and delivery all our programs and services.

LOOKING FORWARD

We will continue to work on the long time development of our curated online library/bookstore for the incarcerated, pre-release detainees, and returning citizens and their families. Since 2022 we have partnered with a former correctional library director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. To date over 150 titles have been selected, vetted, and categorized.

We will continue to work on developing a photojournalism book about formerly incarcerated individuals who have turned their lives around to become contributors to society and role models for those still caught in the cycle of intergenerational incarceration.

It is intended that all the royalties from the sale of this book will support the work of The Freedom® Road Foundation and become the flagship title in our evolving, online collection.

We will continue to follow our pattern of consistently increasing the number of persons – children and their families - served by our programs, which has grown to nearly 400 from fifty initially reached in 2014.

Encouraged by our continuing success in attaining successively higher levels of Candid Seals of transparency, (Bronze, Silver, Gold) we antici-

pate being awarded the Platinum Seal in 2024.

DISTINCTIONS

Earned Gold Seal

We earned the Candid Gold Seal of Transparency. It was displayed on our Facebook page and website footer.



Maria Hayley with Dolores Huerta.

Met Dolores “Si, se puede!” Huerta

We met Legendary American labor leader and civil rights activist Dolores Huerta at the Dominican University Library on March 14th.

We exchanged T-shirts. Ms. Huerta said, “I love it!” as she held up our FREEDOM® T-shirt “I want to know more about it!” Ms. Huerta’s T-shirt says “Yes She Can”

Chosen to participate in National Study

Based on a Family Focus supervisor’s recognition of our excellent services, we were invited to participate in “The Home Visiting Equity Project” conducted by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). HRSA “is the primary federal agency responsible for improving health outcomes and achieving health equity through access to quality services, a skilled health workforce, and innovative programs.”



Growing a reader right from the start!



Art, coloring, scribbles. Future writer!



Book joy! Future scholar!

GRATITUDE

We are grateful to and sincerely thank all our donors, supporters, volunteers, partners, program participants, and sponsors who have made 2023 a memorable year of sustaining and growing programs that make a difference in the lives of our participating children and families.

We are especially thankful to our dedicated Board of Directors and to the Kiwanis Club of LakeView which supports our children's programs which fall under Kiwanis International's Young Children: Priority One and Read Around the World.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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