Mission Statement & Vision

We provide opportunities for children and adults from Chicago’s underserved neighborhoods to excel academically, grow spiritually, expand life experiences and become effective leaders.

Holy Family Ministries’ programs strengthen communities by educating youth for entrance into high performing high schools; instilling in youth the values and resilience needed to succeed in life; providing them sanctuary within a struggling area of the city, and developing new young leaders within the community.

Population Served

The Holy Family Ministries Center is located on the border between the Chicago communities of North Lawndale and West Garfield Park, and serves youth from these and surrounding neighborhoods such as Austin and Humboldt Park. Children from the neighborhoods we serve struggle with:

Poverty: 90% are classified as low-income by their eligibility for free and reduced-price meals from the State of Illinois. To put this into perspective, a family with a mother and two children qualifies for free meals if the annual household income is less than $25,727 (83% of our families) and reduced meals if the income is between $25,728 and $36,612 (7% of our families).

Cultural Isolation: Children grow up lacking the experience and confidence to go away to college or take a job outside their comfort zone.

Safety: The Center is located in the troubled Harrison Police District 11. Of the 23 Districts in the City of Chicago, the Harrison District is ranked highest in the number of violent crimes, and in 1st and 2nd degree homicide with almost twice as many as the Chicago mean. The District also ranks highest in the number of drug abuse crimes, with more than four times the Chicago mean.

Struggling neighborhood public schools: The three high schools in our neighborhood have a mean ACT score of 15, and less than 3% of graduates meet “college readiness” benchmarks! Rather than attend these schools, our goal is to prepare our students for admittance into private and selective enrollment public and charter high schools.

History—We celebrate 30 years of excellence in 2015!

In 1985 Holy Family Lutheran School was founded as an alternative to under-performing area public schools in the Cabrini Green public housing community. An after-school program was added in 1992. To streamline operations, programs were united in 1999 under the umbrella of a new 501(c)(3) organization and Holy Family Ministries was created.

In 2008, HFM opened the 45,000 square foot Holy Family Ministries Center on the historic Homan Square campus in North Lawndale, Chicago to serve as a permanent home for Holy Family’s programs. The new Center was built to allow for the expansion of critically needed services, and since opening, program enrollment has tripled in the new facility.

In 2010, after a merger with St. Gregory Episcopal School, the school was renamed Holy Family School in recognition of HFM's unique operating model – a public charity umbrella organization operating an ecumenically sponsored faith-based school alongside several secular programs.
Holy Family’s four programs are open to all who enroll on a first-come, first-served basis, without regard to religion, race, gender, previous academic achievement, or ethnicity.

Holy Family School: Kindergarten through 8th

Holy Family School nurtures the healthy social, academic, physical, and spiritual development of Chicago youth. Students enter with a wide range of abilities and academic readiness skills, yet, by the time they graduate 8th grade, typically every graduate is accepted by a strong high school.

Factors in our success include:

- A focus on competency in core subjects of reading, mathematics, social studies, language arts, science, and technology, supplemented by instruction in art, music, and physical education
- Emphasis on problem-solving skills
- School-wide character education to teach respect for self, other students, teachers and parents
- The Parent Education Initiative, designed to provide training and education regarding best-practice parenting skills, and to offer activities for parents and children to promote positive bonds
- The 8th Grade Mentoring Program matches a young professional with 8th grade students to help them apply to competitive private and/or public college-prep high schools
- Electives, including STEM enrichment activities or music in middle school
- The Saturday Academy provides intensive support for students who are struggling academically and need additional assistance to stay on track
- The Discover America trip for 8th grade students to visit colleges in other states. This was designed to encourage students to expand their horizons outside of the Chicago area, and to dream big dreams

Holy Family School Outcomes

Academic Excellence
In 2014/15, we switched from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to the Northwest Evaluation Association - Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) test. This is an adaptive computerized test that alters the difficulty of the questions in order to determine a student’s true ability, to measure each student’s progress and to give teachers information regarding where each child needs additional assistance. The school average on the NWEA MAP exceeded the national norm! These results are significant because this is a national test that compares our students to students from all economic backgrounds throughout the country.

High School Placement
Over the past five years, 99% of our 8th grade graduates enrolled in private and selective-enrollment public and charter high schools (100% in 2015).

Our Students
We also evaluate success by listening to our students!

“Thanks to Holy Family I have a brighter future. My teachers believed in me and I believed in myself. This school will always be my heart and considered my second family”.

“What’s so frightening is that there are jobs out there, but not knowledgeable or employable people to fill them. Our only hope is education and thinking outside the box, or like there is no box at all”.

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Little Learners Academy

The Little Learners Academy equips children ages 3 to 5 for kindergarten and beyond by offering an ambitious curriculum designed to challenge students as well as make learning an exciting process of discovery. The pre-school is combined with a childcare program to provide care for the entire day to accommodate working parents.

Little Learners Academy Outcomes
Students who are preparing to enter kindergarten take a nationally-normed Kindergarten Readiness Test. This past year, 53% of our graduates scored stanines of 4, 5, and 6 representing “readiness” for Kindergarten and 28% of our graduates scored stanines of 7, 8 or 9 representing Above Average readiness for Kindergarten entry. Graduates falling in the Marginally or Not Ready stanines are often referred and evaluated for special needs services such as speech and language development.

Adventures in Learning (after school & summer)

A report by the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention - Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois, indicates that “In response to a George Mason University study, 72% of Illinois’ law enforcement leaders chose providing ‘more after-school programs and educational child care programs’ as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime, over hiring more police officers, prosecuting juveniles as adults, and installing more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools.”

The Adventures in Learning program provides youth with a safe haven, caring and trusted adult role models, educational support and enrichment, meaningful activities, and exposure to the larger world outside their neighborhoods. Our strategy combines activities that are proven winners in after-school and summer-programs (arts, fitness, technology, etc.) with new and out-of-the-box initiatives that speak to youth in a fresh voice (spoken word performance, drama).

Adventures in Learning Outcomes

HFM uses a survey adapted from the Colorado Trust’s Toolkit for Evaluating Positive Youth Development which measures reported improvement in in academics, life skills, life choices, core values, and sense of self. In a May 2015 survey, 67% of students reported improvement in academics. They also reported positive sense of self (86%), core values (86%), and life skills (90%). 91% indicated that the program has led to positive life choices, such as the ability to stay away from violence and fighting, and to say “no” to things they know are wrong.
The Peace Exchange

In 2013, Holy Family Ministries created a pilot program, the Peace Exchange, an innovative leadership development initiative for young people (“Peace Builders”) dedicated to peace and violence prevention. This became a permanent program of HFM in 2014. Our Peace Builders’ strategy includes:

- Examining the root causes of violence in all its forms, and exploring the historical alternatives to confront violence
- Training in leadership skills
- Becoming global citizens and more visionary leaders
- Sharing their knowledge and experiences as they lead the youth in their communities in conversation about the values and practices that underlie peaceful communities

The program includes a rigorous 60-hour program of reading and study, discussions, workshops, community meetings, and lectures, followed by an exposure trip outside the country. Our first group of Peace Builders travelled to Thailand and Burma in late 2013.

In June 2015, Holy Family led a 12-day trip to Nicaragua to learn about traditions of non-violence. Peace Builders lived with host families and met with community members who survived the Contra fighting in their villages. The Peace Builders observed the way Nicaraguan society maintains a peaceful community and calm streets in everyday life and learned how it rebuilt itself after conflict. Peace Builders are able to compare these issues with similar issues facing Chicago communities (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunity, violence, and social injustice), and bring this information back to share with youth in their communities.

Our 2016 Peace Builders are now preparing for their international trip to South Africa in June. A documentary film is available at http://www.peacex.org.

Holy Family Ministries Endorsed by

For the third year in a row, Holy Family Ministries received Charity Navigator's coveted 4-STAR RATING for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency! Only 14% of Charity Navigator rated charities have received three consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that “Holy Family Ministries outperforms most other charities in America.”

For more info, visit www.charitynavigator.org and search for “Holy Family Ministries.”

www.hfm.org