



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
ILLINOIS

SOS NEWSLETTER FALL 2018

# BUILDING A LEGACY

FAMILY FIRST ACT

**PG 4**

A COMMUNITY UNITED

**PG 5 and 6**





**SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES**  
ILLINOIS

# IN THIS ISSUE



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## CEO MESSAGE

### A GIFT FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

Page 2

## VILLAGE VOICES: FINDING WHAT SUSTAINS US

### MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS A CHILD'S WELLBEING

Page 3

## FAMILY MATTERS:

### THE FUTURE OF FOSTER CARE - FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT

Page 4

## A COMMUNITY UNITED: ROOSEVELT SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTER ANNOUNCEMENT

Pages 5 & 6

## FOUNDATIONAL EVENTS: SUPPORT FOR THE CENTER

## DINING & CONVERSATION EVENING OF HOPE 2018

Page 7 & 8

## 2018 RELATED LENDLEASE ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

Page 8

## SOS ILLINOIS JOINS A MILESTONE IN ILLINOIS' HISTORY

## EDRINGTON GIVES THE GIFT OF FALL

Page 9

## HOPE FLOATS: SAILING AND FUNDRAISING WITH THE CHICAGO YACHT CLUB

Page 10

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CEO Message

## A GIFT FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

“THE LEGACY OF SOS ILLINOIS  
COMES NOT BY WHAT WE LEAVE  
FOR PEOPLE, BUT IN PEOPLE.”

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS CEO - TIM MCCORMICK



Recently, I was so proud and happy to gather with others at 13th and Blue Island in Chicago, which is the future site of the new Roosevelt Square Community Center. As I stood on the ground of the new site, I realized the story to construct this innovative community center began some time ago. I was thinking not only of the time when we began to design the building and securing the needed funds, but also about the organization in its historical context. The narrative of this center, as with all we do, is tied into the first Village that was created over 25 years ago in Lockport, Illinois. In the early 1990s, founding board members, community leaders, and supporters also stood on vacant land and announced a child welfare agency was coming to offer services to children needing a stable home in a community environment. The first SOS Illinois Village in Lockport, Illinois has shaped the lives of what is now thousands of children, who through our help, have been able to rediscover hope and create a better life.

The work each person does to contribute to the betterment of society is what weaves the strong and vibrant fabric of a community. Those individuals who have gone before us did their part to make life better for many of us. And when we look at our neighborhoods today, we see the influence of their work still present in our community. Those who

preceded us have taught and guided us to envision a new reality for individuals and communities. Being at the site of this new center, I realized the work we are doing is intimately connected to the legacy of others.

This new center in the Roosevelt Square community will also leave a lasting legacy for so many. The center will continue the work of SOS Illinois in providing strong social, emotional, and educational support to children who have been neglected in many ways. It also will foster a sense of belonging not just for the SOS Illinois families, but for the community to come together and explore ways to live out their dreams. A cornerstone of the center will be the culinary kitchen along with the hospitality training program, both of which will empower young people to find a pathway to new jobs and self-reliance.

The impact of this project will endure far beyond the doors of the building and even the longevity of its structure. SOS Illinois is able to do this because of your kind support and guidance to reshape the lives of generations of people that we encounter. The Roosevelt Square Community Center is an enduring legacy of the values and principles we hold that every child is worth our attention and energy. Together we walk a journey that includes a vitally important process of healing and strengthening each child and in doing so,

we collectively heal and strengthen the community.

We each stand on a piece of ground on this earth that is home to all of us; and we each bring our traditions of those who have gone before us, which have informed us, guided us, and prompted us to be the good people we are. As we move forward with the center, we continue our notable and worthwhile legacy to use our time, effort, and energy to transform this world.

As you read this newsletter, I encourage you to pass on the stories about transforming lives. Shared here is our progress on everything from the center's design to the staff helping us flourish to our amazing corporate partner support. Your generosity is enabling us to make lasting change. The legacy of SOS Illinois comes not by what we leave for people, but in people. It is our commitment and vision to build a better world of hope and care for those oftentimes forgotten that weaves each of us together to create the vibrant fabric of our community today and for years to come. Thank you for helping us build a community center that can change the structure of the hearts, minds, and lives of those surrounding it. Together, we are transforming society and creating an enduring legacy - the best gift one generation can leave for the next generation to come.

## VILLAGE VOICES: FINDING WHAT SUSTAINS US



*The winners from our Case Management Appreciation Lunch games gather for a victory photo*

"I chose to be a social worker after teaching elementary school and learning about the youth and what they experienced in their home life, and not being able to assist them in the ways they needed assisting. I was in the education field when I found one of my 3rd graders sitting at the school door at 7:20am. When I arrived to open the door, he stated that he didn't have breakfast, he needed a bath, and clean clothes. I took a half day and went shopping for my student. What sustains me is seeing the children smile."

**Mercedes Hunter, Child Welfare Specialist**

"What sustains me in this job is knowing that the tedious work can pay off in the end. If even one kid gets to either return home or to go to a new home where they will have a better life it makes it all worth it to me." **Michael Merlotti, Child Welfare Specialist**

At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, the success of our community is the result of many hands and much hard work. Our Case Management team provides compassionate support and advocacy for the children in our care as they transition into our Villages, navigate the Illinois court system, and make strides towards permanency with a biological relative or adoptive family. This October, we celebrated our Case Management team for their tireless work towards building the future of foster care.

We are excited to be able to share a few of their words on why they choose to offer themselves to the SOS Illinois community each day.

## MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS A CHILD'S WELLBEING

SOS Children's Villages Illinois raised awareness for mental health this October 1-5, 2018 in an effort to ensure children in foster care have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. With teen drug use and suicide rates rapidly climbing, it's more imperative than ever that our communities unite together in awareness of the mental health epidemic and learn how we can move forward in ways that will support, assist, and aid our youth in foster care so that they may successfully overcome their struggles with mental health.

On October 2 and 3, staff gathered for a special event with a screening of **"Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope,"** which was then followed by a discussion led by Dr. Jackie Samuel, faculty at National



*Lockport Village staff sporting green for Wear Green Day to raise awareness of mental health*

Louis University, Director of CPS' Safe Passage Program and the South Chicago/South Shore Ceasefire program, as well as a member of the IL ACEs Response Collaborative. Awareness activities also included daily social posts and a wear green day in support of mental health awareness on October 4.

At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we place great importance on the mental health of the children in our care. That's why SOS Illinois has a dedicated team of clinicians that provide trauma-informed therapeutic services for each of the children and families we serve.

## FAMILY MATTERS: THE FUTURE OF FOSTER CARE – FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT



On February 9 of this year, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was put into effect by Congress and signed by the President, changing the future of foster care and shining a light on the incredibly positive effects that organizations like SOS Illinois are having on children in foster care.

Prior to the FFPSA being passed in February of 2018, foster care organizations could only use Title IV-E funds to assist with costs of maintenance for eligible children in foster care as well as administrative expenses used to manage the programs, training for staff, foster parents, adoption assistance, and kinship guardianship assistance.

Thanks to the passing of the FFPSA, any state, territories, or tribe with an approved Title IV-E plan has the option to use funds for preventative services such as in-home parent skill-based programs, mental health services, and substance abuse prevention and treatment services to allow children eligible for foster care to stay with their parents or

relatives. These services, like those offered through Casa Tepeyac, are crucial to keeping families in tact that may be at risk of separation due to a number of factors.

In an effort to better understand this new legislation and its long-lasting influence on services provided to children in foster care, SOS Illinois created a four-part series about the Family First Prevention Services Act. In this series, we look at how it closely relates with our mission, affects foster care, and child welfare across the country. We at SOS Illinois are already practicing the policies and guidelines put forth in the FFPSA, and what the future can look like for children in foster care and beyond thanks to this major piece of legislation being passed in the United States.

To read this four-part series of blogs and learn how SOS Illinois has made a commitment to permanency, visit us online at [sosillinois.org/connect](https://sosillinois.org/connect).

## A COMMUNITY UNITED: THE ROOSEVELT SQUARE COMMUNITY CENTER ANNOUNCEMENT



SOS Children’s Villages Illinois unveiled the final design and plans for the Roosevelt Square Community Center at a special announcement on Wednesday, October 24 at 13th Street and Blue Island Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. In attendance were corporate partners, Board Members, and staff in support of the project, which will serve the SOS Illinois Roosevelt Square Village and surrounding neighborhoods.

As CEO Tim McCormick gathered attendees under a white tent in the middle of the current garden space, he expressed a deep appreciation for the community center benefactors being at the site to stand together in celebration of the project. “When spring comes, because of your commitment, we will begin a process of transformation, and not just of this land and this space, but of this community. Here will be a gathering place for all so that everyone who brings their journey can begin to share a common narrative to help each other to heal, grow, become more, and to share what is a common life of a Village.

Elena Sotomayor, Maestro Cares Foundation Board of Directors Secretary, agreed with this sentiment, sharing, “From the conception of this project the goal was for SOS

Illinois and Maestro Cares to build an interactive and safe space for families in Chicago.”

The collective contributions made by so many, have made the difference in the project. SOS Illinois Board President Don Biernacki thanked fellow Board Members and Lendlease for their work on the center. Additionally, the City of Chicago was recognized for its support for our Village homes and this center; and key to that backing has been Alderman Danny Solis and his Office of the 25th Ward.

A special acknowledgment went to the CHA Board Chairman John Hooker and the collaboration with CHA, which has been instrumental in moving this project forward. The Chicago Housing Authority and SOS Illinois share a common understanding that a house is just the beginning of a story of healing. It’s a connection to the community surrounding that house. That connection can change lives and give new opportunities of hope. CHA Board Chairman John Hooker spoke of his personal connection to having a large family with many siblings and shared, “this is a wonderful day, a wonderful development, and more importantly a great partnership.”

The building was designed by award winning architect Juan Moreno who spoke about why he wanted to do work in the community, “I feel that architecture has the chance to transform lives and make a difference with people. It’s not every day that you get to meet an organization that actually believes that and lives that.”

Don Biernacki spoke of the centerpiece of the Community Center, “SOS Illinois is proud to be offering a unique culinary kitchen to support culinary and nutrition education programming, a much needed resource in the community.”

The culinary kitchen and hospitality program will be a resource for SOS Illinois children and families, as well as community members. Deputy Director of Operations, Case Management Support, Delphine Rankin offered, “I look forward to the day when the children in our care are using the learning annex or taking classes in the culinary kitchen alongside our community residents. This space will be an inclusive center where our children will not learn in isolation.”

This sentiment of uniting a community was reiterated in remarks made by ABLA LAC President Mary Baggett, who shared, “I welcome this center that will bring together a community so divided. This center will offer a place

where our children will be able to talk to someone who understands them.” Wintrust Financial Managing Director, Kandace Lenti added, “We really try to get involved in community institutions, which really do make stronger communities. We are proud to be associated with SOS Illinois and are proud of this expansion.”

The final designs were displayed in a garden walk for attendees to view, admiring the intentionality of the design for the specific community it will serve.

Juan Moreno closed his remarks by saying, “This building is meant to transform lives. When you see it grow, when that shovel goes in the ground in the spring, what you’re going to see transform in front of your eyes is the chance for everyone that goes down Blue Island to see what goes on inside. Not to be hidden; to celebrate all the wonderful and incredible things that SOS Illinois and Maestro Cares do that that will bring, not just this community, but the greater city together.”

SOS Illinois looks forward to being a part of the ever changing landscape of the City of Chicago. The new center at 13th and Blue Island will infuse a community with hope and healing, and most important of all continue to provide services promoting permanency to help build the future of foster care.



For additional renderings, floor plans, and details on the Roosevelt Square Community Center, visit [sosillinois.org/community-center](https://sosillinois.org/community-center)

## FOUNDATIONAL EVENTS: SUPPORT FOR THE CENTER

### DINING & CONVERSATION

On May 30, 2018, the stars came out in support of SOS Children's Villages Illinois. Serving as the culmination of Foster Care Awareness Month and as a foundational event for the Roosevelt Square Community Center Capital Campaign, Dining & Conversation offered the opportunity to gather alongside key supporters and friends during a milestone moment in SOS Illinois history.

#### Leadership Luncheon Hosted by Wintrust Financial

Our friends at Wintrust Financial helped kick off the afternoon of Dining & Conversation by generously hosting a leadership lunch and meeting for special guests and supporters of SOS Illinois. Over the meal, SOS Illinois Chief Executive Officer, Tim McCormick, invited luncheon guests to share about their involvement with the organization and words of wisdom for the community as we continue to build the future of foster care. Special guests included Academy Award winning actor, Christian Bale; Feminist Activist, Gloria Steinem; and President and CEO of Wintrust, Ed Wehmer. Special gratitude to the staff and leadership at Wintrust for being such generous hosts.



*Christian and Sibi Bale enjoy a quick moment of catching up with SOS Illinois CEO, Tim McCormick, at Dining and Conversation*

#### Christian Bale and Gloria Steinem Tour Roosevelt Square Village

Following the luncheon, Christian Bale and Gloria Steinem joined a small group of staff to tour a Roosevelt Square Village home and visit with two SOS Illinois Foster Parents. While on site, Bale and Steinem were able to hear first-person testimony from the Foster Parents on the rewards of our Village model of care, the daily challenges of caring for large sibling groups, and their hopes for the future.



*Gloria Steinem and Christian Bale enjoyed rich conversation, afternoon snacks, and a tour of a Roosevelt Square Village home with Foster Parents Jenny Wray and Tony Moyet.*

#### Dining & Conversation

On the evening of May 30, SOS Children's Villages Illinois hosted Dining & Conversation, a unique event where 120 supporters met and conversed with Luminaries, well-known celebrities from various professional fields. Dinner consisted of courses prepared by Celebrity Chefs from Chicago's most well-respected restaurants. Luminaries shared a course at each table, rotating throughout the evening so as to dine and converse with all guests in attendance. As the event progressed, each guest had the opportunity to talk with all the Luminaries. The night truly resulted in a wonderful evening of dining and conversation.

#### We offer our sincerest gratitude for the time, energy, and talents of our Luminaries and Celebrity Chefs:

**LUMINARIES:** Christian Bale, Sibi Bale, Dan Cronin, David Hudanish, Mo Katibeh, Micah Materre, Marianne Murciano, Alexander Pissios, Bob Sirott, Tom Skilling, Julia Stasch, Gloria Steinem, Rochelle Trotter, Edward J. Wehmer

**CELEBRITY CHEFS:** John Coletta, Federico Comacchio, Kevin Cuddihee, Christopher Gawronski, George Jewell, Michael Klug, Dan McGee, Raki Mehra, Mark Sparacino, John Ward, Tom Van Lente, Dean Zanella

## EVENING OF HOPE 2018

We would like to thank our supporters for joining us for another successful celebration that put emphasis on innovation, community, and hope. This year we honored our builders and visionaries, who empower us to build the future of foster care.



*The Evening of Hope 2018 Host Committee gathered for photos and kind words with our VIP guests, Board President Don Biernacki, and CEO Tim McCormick during the Evening of Hope Cocktail Reception*

### About Evening of Hope

Evening of Hope is SOS Children's Villages Illinois' annual fall event that raises awareness and funds to support the programs at SOS Illinois. This year's event invited guests to join us in raising hope for siblings in foster care with an evening of fun, friendship, fundraising.

Over 500 guests attended Evening of Hope on Thursday, September 27, 2018 at the Museum of Contemporary Art and raised \$300,000 from sponsorships, ticket sales, and in-kind support. The event featured DJ R3DLINE, delicious food, as well as programming with a construction theme. Special thanks to Event Chair John Trotta and the fundraising committee (Thomas F. Carey, III, Dave Crosson, Rashod Johnson, Tim Martin,

Amar Rajpurkar, Jonah Siegellak, Chuck Stenzel, and Noreen Zuniga) for their work on the event.

Top sponsors gathered for a VIP reception, featuring appearances by Robert Schillerstrom, Illinois Tollway Chairman, Jamie Rhee, Chicago Department of Aviation Commissioner, and Liz Gorman, Illinois Tollway Executive Director. Significant in-kind support was offered by Mosaic, Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits, and Anheuser-Busch.

This year's presenting sponsor was WSP USA. Other top sponsors included: HNTB, Exp., F.H. Paschen, Related Midwest, and TranSystems.

## 2018 RELATED LENDLEASE ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

Our extended family at Related Midwest and Lendlease sponsored their Annual Charity Golf Classic at Harborside International Golf Course on September 13, 2018. This year's event celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Charity Golf Classic. The event, presented by Snaidero, was once again sold out with over 300 golfers. Proceeds benefitted SOS Children's Villages Illinois and another child welfare organization. SOS Illinois received over \$200,000. We are incredibly grateful to the event leadership and its faithful supporters.



## SOS ILLINOIS JOINS A MILESTONE IN ILLINOIS' HISTORY



*Swissôtel Chicago Marketing Manager, Brittany Robbins, helps little learners with a hands-on Harvest Day Activity*

On Saturday, October 20, Harvest Day, an annual celebration at our Chicago Village, highlighted the gardening programs at our Villages, as well as included informative and engaging programming centered on health and wellness initiatives for SOS Illinois children and families. Foster Parents

and children gathered with staff, volunteers, and sponsors to enjoy family-fun activities and a shared meal.

This year, Harvest Day honored the Illinois Bicentennial. In collaboration with the Cook County Farm Bureau, and our partners at Swissôtel Chicago, Harvest Day brought to life Illinois' agriculture and history through active, educational stations for the children and families. Each station incorporated themes of Illinois' history, natural landscape, and State symbols. SOS Illinois was #IllinoisProud to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

## EDRINGTON GIVES THE GIFT OF FALL

On September 21, a team of eight members of Edrington led a fall clean-up day and helped decorate the homes at our Lockport Village. The team came with tools, yard bags, pumpkins, mums, and scarecrows, as well as a mystery box. Edrington demonstrated remarkable teamwork and compassion for the families in our care. They even brought lunch for the staff and were able to learn more about SOS Illinois from our Village leadership and case management teams.

After lunch, the mystery box was open to reveal a \$25,000 check to use where most needed at SOS Illinois. Hugs were shared and photos were taken. We would like to thank the Edrington Group for their



*Edrington expresses incredible generosity by presenting a \$25,000 check to SOS Illinois staff*

help to beautify the Lockport Village. We couldn't have asked for a more involved partner, from the planning and execution of the clean-up day to showing such enthusiasm and a positive spirit while working. The fall clean-up brought so much joy and pride to the residents of Lockport Village.

## HOPE FLOATS: SAILING AND FUNDRAISING WITH THE CHICAGO YACHT CLUB

Flanked by Lake Michigan, Chicago has a long history of sailing activity enjoyed by children and adults across the city. The Chicago Yacht Club (CYC) holds an esteemed place in our nautical tradition, having opened their doors to novice and experienced sailors for over 140 years. Late this summer, the CYC thoughtfully welcomed SOS Children's Villages Illinois to its marina for educational fun, a shared meal, and supportive fundraising. We are grateful for our partnership and the memories that were created for the youth in our community and our family of supporters.



*A youth served through our in-home family services program at Casa Tepeyac stopped to smile for a quick photo before setting sail alongside his mother, brother, SOS Illinois staff, and CYC volunteers on the Children's Dinner and Sailing Day*

### Children's Dinner and Sailing

On August 30, 2018, 14 children, strapped up in life vests and Chicago Yacht Club Foundation baseball caps, stepped foot onto six sail boats docked at the Chicago Yacht Club Marina. Led by experienced captains, the children set off into a unique sailing adventure. While on board, the children, accompanying Foster Parents, staff, and Associate Board Members learned about the mechanics of a sail boat. Greg Miarecki, Past Commodore, explained to the staff that sailing offers a special opportunity for educational engagement, learning not only about weather and boating, but about the mathematics and sciences required to become an expert captain.

Prior to sailing, our community shared dinner with captains and volunteers from the CYC, generously hosted by the Chicago Yacht Club Foundation. Together, we dined on grilled summer treats and snacks while getting acquainted with one another and learning about the CYC commitment to educating children across Chicago on the art of sailing.

### The Chicago Regatta

For a second year, SOS Illinois was one of three charity partners for the Chicago Regatta, sponsored by Wintrust and hosted by the Chicago Yacht Club. Despite the

daytime sailing events being cancelled due to weather, the evening's Sweet Home Chicago Dock Party gathered a strong crowd of an estimated 300 guests, who enjoyed a live blues band, dinner and cocktails, a remote control boat race, and silent auction.

Representatives from SOS Illinois were excited to greet guests at our mission table, inviting new friends to learn about our unique focus on sibling foster care and preventative services. The two other charities were the Chicago Yacht Club Foundation, which provides sailing education for youth, and the University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital. We are honored to have been chosen alongside such esteemed institutions and appreciate the lasting commitment for the wellness and education of children held by the CYC.

On November 14, 2018, CYC presented each charity a check in the amount of \$35,000 at their Annual Meeting. With their dedication to creating unique sailing experiences and offering impactful contributions, we are thankful for their ongoing support to building memories and the future of foster care.



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