

SANTA MARIA **COMMUNITY SERVICES**



FALL 2021



H.A. Musser, Jr.

President & CEO

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc.

Can you believe the holidays are right around the corner? It is with great anticipation that we navigate this holiday season as Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. gets closer to celebrating 125 years of helping families help themselves in 2022. We will be celebrating throughout the year. Text SANTAMARIA to 42828 to subscribe to our e-mail list so you can stay tuned for all the details.

This has been a difficult year for many of the families we serve. While we are grateful for your generous support, many families are still struggling and need our help, and we cannot do it without you. The holidays are the perfect time to transform the lives of families with a gift to Santa Maria. Please take a moment right now to go to www.SantaMaria-Cincy.org and click the donate button.

We at Santa Maria thank you for your generous support this year and wish you a blessed Christmas.

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Cassie Hursey

Santa Maria High School Equivalency Student of the Year Award Winner

Cassandra (Cassie) Hursey was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and has lived in Westwood since she was seven. Early on, she found it difficult to learn, and struggled with bullying in school. Cassie tried online school, but it was not a good fit. According to Cassie, her homelife was not comforting or supportive, which made getting online school work completed very difficult. Cassie was ready to give up, but she knew she needed an education to move forward. "High school isn't for everyone, and it was not for me. I tried over and over again, and I just didn't feel like I belonged there. Santa Maria gave me the opportunity to get an education and feel accepted and I am so grateful for that," Cassie said. So, she decided to drop out of online school and enroll in Santa Maria's High School Equivalency (HSE) program.

Cassie also enrolled in Santa Maria's Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) in August 2020. Through that program, Cassie was able to be enrolled in the Avenues to Success program. Avenues to Success allows youth to earn gift cards for maintaining employment for a specified number of hours over a certain number of days. Cassie was able to utilize this program through her work at LaRosa's and later Walmart.

The road to success through the HSE program wasn't always easy. Halfway through the program, Cassie suffered injuries in a car accident which delayed the process. Luckily, she recovered and returned to the program about a month and a half later. Santa Maria even helped her get another car.

Not only did Cassie graduate with her HSE in July, but she was named Student of the Year along with one other student! "This award is given to two students who show incredible

determination and hard work throughout their time in the High School Equivalency Program," said Cassie's former workforce coach, Briana Blanchard.



Cassie and Friends

Cassie didn't always have a lot of support from her family, but when she came to Santa Maria she felt like she had the support of the Santa Maria family. Briana said, "Cassie is a strong and independent woman who is dedicated to her goals. She works hard and is determined to succeed. She has proven time and time again that she is reliable and incredibly smart. In her year with Santa Maria, she has successfully held her job, obtained a new vehicle, and worked to obtain her HSE, all before the age of 18."

Cassie appreciates Briana's support. "Briana has been a lovely addition to my life. She has helped with Avenues to Success, my HSE program, and even helped me get a car. She has always been an amazing support and I can always go to her if I need her," said Cassie. She has been able to maintain stable and consistent employment with Briana's help. While working toward her HSE, she was employed at LaRosa's Pizza Kitchen for eleven months. That stint was followed by one with her current employer, Walmart, where she has worked for more than six months.

Cassie credits the Santa Maria classroom team for her success. "I would not have been able to do this without them," she said. Cassie is described by the team who has worked with her as "smart, savvy, and determined," and those characteristics, her team said, have allowed her to pursue and achieve her career and educational goals. When asked about her inspirations in life, Cassie confidently replied, "I inspire me. I'm a perfectionist. I feel the need to be the very best at everything I do."



Cassie Hursey

Cassie thanks Santa Maria for setting her on a path to success. "I would not have pursued my HSE without Santa Maria," Cassie said. She plans to continue down the path to success. Cassie has consistently proven that, with the right resources, hard work, and dedication, you can set realistic goals to better yourself and those around you, and then achieve them. The Santa Maria HSE team was so excited for the opportunity to see Cassie graduate at the July ceremony.

Cassie has been able to leverage her newfound education into a pay increase with her current employer! With the help of Santa Maria, she has maintained steady employment for over a year and a half, purchased her own car, and is now looking toward the future with higher education in mind. Cassie credits Santa Maria for giving her the chance at a better life, one she wouldn't have had otherwise.

You can help young people like Cassie achieve great things in life by donating to Santa Maria's programs. To donate, please visit SantaMaria-Cincy.org and click the donate button.

Planned Giving

Mike and Becky Gentry

In the winter of 1989, Mike Gentry was invited to serve as Treasurer of Santa Maria's Board by then Board President, Val Sena. Val and Bill Sena were



Becky and Mike Gentry

Mike's friends, and they talked highly about Santa Maria and its mission. Coincidentally, Mike was looking for volunteer and service opportunities in Cincinnati. He got involved as the Treasurer first, and then became the Vice Chair, and eventually took the position of the Board Chair and stayed in that role for three years. He said that he thoroughly enjoyed his years of service and so did his wife, Becky, since she got involved in the agency's Development Committee and helped plan events. "We both loved helping with organizing the big party in 1997 to celebrate Santa Maria's centennial," Mike said.

Their daughter, Grace, was born in 1996, and that made Mike and Becky start thinking long term. They started planning for their future more closely and including Santa Maria in their wills came naturally as they worked on their estate planning. A number of factors played a role in making that decision: they are both big fans of H.A. Musser, the President and CEO of Santa Maria, and they highly value the mission of the organization. Mike said, "I actually got to vote when H.A. was selected from being interim CEO to assuming that role permanently."

Mike rotated off the Board of Santa Maria in 1997, since he was building his family and career, but he returned in 2018. "H.A. and I kept in touch all those years, and I was glad to be back," Mike said. "The mission of Santa Maria is still the same, although the work is different. We are energized by seeing younger people on the Board and on the committees. H.A.'s role as the leader of the agency and in the community is very strong. The agency does great work in helping those in need help themselves."

Mike stated that he is at a different place in both his personal and professional lives, and, based on life experiences, he now has a deeper appreciation of Santa Maria's work and its impact. "I am glad to see some of the old timers also being back on the Board – old friends like Barb Kruetzkamp and Ted Mitchel. My conviction about leaving a legacy gift to Santa Maria has strengthened through the years," Mike said.

Mike's story is one of service, dedication and generosity that truly demonstrates the power of a legacy and its ability to touch many, many lives through planned giving.

Many people give to our annual fund, and their generosity provides for the everyday operations of our agency. However, making a planned (deferred) gift to Santa Maria can ensure that the legacy builds a financial foundation upon which other generations of annual givers can

build. Your legacy gift would fund great human service programs and help families be self-sufficient. Whether your interests are in issues related to parenting and child development, self-sufficiency for struggling families, financial stability of families, or the general wellbeing of our agency, Santa Maria will help tailor your legacy to a personalized legacy fund. Having said that, an unrestricted designation will ensure that your gift remains relevant.

If you have any questions about making a planned gift to Santa Maria, please contact Nune Sargsyan by calling (513) 557-7267 or e-mailing Nune.Sargsyan@SantaMaria-Cincy.org. You can also contact your financial advisor, and we will be glad to work with him/her.

Terry Walls

Santa Maria Volunteer

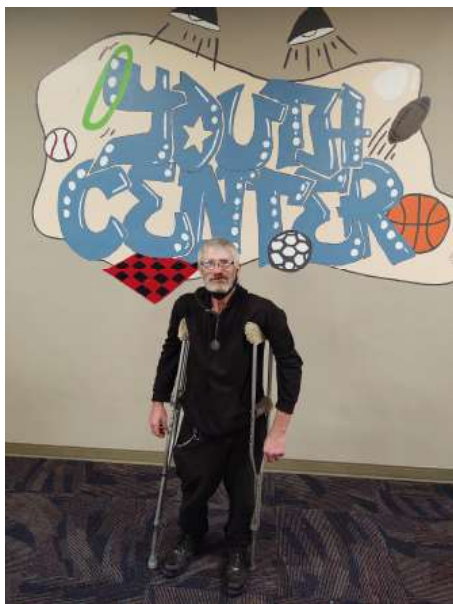
Santa Maria established a Family Center in Lower Price Hill in 1987 to provide youth a safe place to go after school to have fun and hang out with friends in a supportive atmosphere. In 2016, the center moved into the former Boys and Girls Club location at 2312 Glenway Avenue, and became the Joe Williams Family Center (JWFC). For the past decade, before and after the move, there has been one constant – volunteer, Terry Walls.

Terry has spent most of his life in Lower Price Hill and loves being able to give back to the community. He performs a plethora of tasks for the Youth Development Program at Santa Maria Community Services (SMCS), including regularly taking the trash and recycling bins in and out, sweeping up leaves, pulling weeds, and shoveling snow.

Terry does all of this even after a car accident in the 1980s made him a paraplegic. Even though he cannot feel his legs, he has learned how to get around using crutches. Once he was able to that, he said, he could start doing everything.

That includes helping with maintenance inside and outside the JWFC, painting and trim work, and assisting in completely remodeling the Center's kitchen.

"Terry's strengths include his positive attitude, giving spirit, perseverance, and strong work-ethic," said Jessica Polzin, Santa Maria Youth Development Program Coordinator. Everyone at JWFC is fond of Terry and appreciates his efforts, she said. Terry is just as fond of Santa Maria staff.



Terry Walls

"I work around a bunch of great people here at the Family Center. There is nothing in the world I wouldn't do for them," he said.

"Terry is always displaying

the idea that it's better to give than to receive," Jessica said. "He is a constant reminder for me that kindness is the overarching way to connect with others." Danny Burrige, Youth Development Program Director at JWFC, echoes Jessica's admiration. Terry has a lot of energy and enthusiasm, he said. "He's always trying to chat, engage, and help out in whatever ways he can."

The JWFC staff hopes Terry will continue to volunteer and make their days brighter. Danny said, "Terry is an integral part of the Lower Price Hill neighborhood and of our programming here at the Joe Williams Family Center. We are lucky to have him here to support us with everything from helping out with handyman jobs, to

keeping an eye on the Center on weekends, and bringing a smile to our faces on rough days."

Terry hopes to one day be able to purchase buildings and lots in Lower Price Hill and help restore the area that he holds dear in his heart. He would also love to obtain a 30-foot box truck to start a mobile business someday. In the meantime, you will be able to find Terry at the JWFC where he plans to continue his service to the Lower Price Hill community.

Read more about Terry in WCPO's online story: <https://tinyurl.com/TerryWalls>. Keep reading to learn about more volunteers from Santa Maria and how you can volunteer your time and talents.

Volunteer at Santa Maria

by **Lucienne Driehaus,**
Volunteer Coordinator

What can we say? Our Santa Maria Volunteers rock!



Health Fair Volunteers

We have over 140 volunteers that help us fulfill our mission to help the families we serve reach their educational, financial and health goals.

These generous people are from every walk of life, young students and more mature adults. They work in groups or on their own. They serve on our board and committees to make sure Santa Maria is doing what we promised in Price Hill. They help us maintain our properties, they tutor GED students, they work with youth, they distribute food to our community members, they work with our women's group, they help bundle diapers for distribution, they make sure our



Ted Mitchel

health fairs are successful, and on and on. We couldn't do what we do without these amazing people.

Our volunteers have done so many important things this year. I think about Ted Mitchel, a longtime volunteer who has served on

our Board for more than 20 years, including several years as the Board Chair. He is a retired executive from Columbia Sussex with many years of financial experience. Ted gives a lot of his time to Santa Maria. Not only does he attend Board and committee meetings, he's also the man of the hour if we have any maintenance requests for our buildings. You can regularly find Ted doing anything from painting lines in our parking lots to installing new fluorescent bulbs, to building desks and painting. He's a man of many talents!

I also think about Salma Fleifil who has been a volunteer with us for a little over a year. Salma comes in twice a week, every week, to work with our Oyler School middle school girls in our Youth Development's social/emotional groups. She doesn't stop there... She also steps in to help with our health fairs, or to take kids on field

trips. She's committed, dependable, personable and altogether lovely.

I can't say enough about the generosity of our volunteers and the amazing work they do throughout the year. They are out there with us, walking side by side with staff and clients, and we're so grateful.

For information on how you can volunteer to help families help themselves, please contact me at Lucienne.Driehaus@SantaMaria-Cincy.org or (513) 390-0314.



Salma Fleifil with a Student

Bilingual Navigator

by Jessica Gries

The following story comes from Jessica Gries, who joined Santa Maria in June as a Bilingual Navigator for the Every Child Succeeds (ECS) program. ECS helps pregnant women and new moms and their families raise happy, healthy, thriving children. Home visitors help optimize children's health and development through evidence-based home visiting models. Professionals like Jessica work closely with moms to develop parenting skills, improve maternal and child health, create stimulating and nurturing home environments, and connect families with other community supports.



One of Jessica's Clients

My first quarter as a bilingual navigator for Every Child Succeeds was a huge success. I worked with 27 clients and completed a total of 58 cases, since I have worked with most of the clients more than once on different topics. The main resources and services I provided to these clients included Sweet Cheeks diapers, housing assistance and searches, Medicaid and SNAP applications and renewals, and financial assistance. Additionally, I helped to translate for some final visits for clients that I have gotten to know well. One of the projects that I undertook to support the home visitors is a weekly e-mail containing resources and events going on in the City of Cincinnati, with a special emphasis on events that celebrate Hispanic culture or provide important resources for the Hispanic community.



Two of Jessica's Clients

barrier through my work as a navigator. One of the clients with whom I have worked in the past reached out to me with concerns about her daughter's language development. "Elsa" is a little girl from Guatemala who is just over three years and one month old. Her mother, "Beatrice," explained to me that she is worried because Elsa is not speaking at all. This was a great connection for us to make, because I happen to be working toward a master's degree in bilingual speech pathology.

I spoke with my supervisor and one of my professors, both of whom agreed that it would be beneficial for me to meet with the family to collect a case history, ask Beatrice some questions, and conduct an informal screen of Elsa's speech and language. Then, I will be able to collaborate with my professor (a certified bilingual speech-language pathologist who has volunteered with Santa Maria in the past) to conduct a full evaluation.

The greatest and most frequent obstacle that many of the clients have faced is language barriers that prevent the clients from gaining access to services. I find that my role is often serving as an intermediary, helping communicate the wants and needs of the clients to outside organizations that do not have



One of Jessica's Clients

Spanish-speaking staff. For example, I often contact utility companies, landlords, and government offices on behalf of the clients to explain their situation, get their questions answered, and obtain necessary documents.

I recently had the opportunity to address a different kind of language

In meeting with the family, I learned so much about Elsa's current language input and output, her nonverbal communication behaviors, and some of the things that she likes to do. My plan going forward is to obtain the official evaluation, and then help Beatrice enroll her daughter in preschool so she can benefit from a rich linguistic environment and language intervention.

This is just one example of the ways in which my work as a navigator builds on my own interests to support the community, and in doing so, provides me with practical experience in my own career path. I look forward to providing continued support to Beatrice and Elsa as they navigate this process, and to learning more from other clients as we work together to accomplish our goals.

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. Awarded \$50,000 from the Charles H. Dater Foundation

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. is pleased to announce it has been awarded \$50,000 from The Charles H. Dater Foundation, Inc. for its youth development program.

Santa Maria Community Services' Youth Development Program engages with families of Lower Price Hill youth ages 10-16 and provides youth the opportunity to partake in a life/social-emotional skills groups while learning how to develop peaceful conflict resolution, peer resistance, youth safety, bullying prevention, self-management, and goal-directed behavior skills. In addition to life skills development, the program focuses on youth mentoring and leadership through academic assistance and tutoring, age-specific activities, personal responsibility, and optimistic thinking skills. Participants have opportunities to engage in community service projects, and each child's family is linked to resources that promote family stability while addressing concerns that threaten or hinder the family's well-being.

"This generous grant from The Charles H. Dater Foundation will help Price Hill youth learn how to be more successful in school and in life by utilizing skills developed through our youth development program," said H.A. Musser, President and CEO of Santa Maria Community Services. "Santa Maria's youth development team enhances young people's strengths and promotes positive outcomes by fostering positive relationships, building on their strengths, and nurturing their development."

"Santa Maria's programs for underserved young people are a perfect fit for the Dater Foundation, and we are proud to be a longtime supporter from the very first years of the foundation's existence," said Bruce Krone, Foundation president. The Foundation made its first grant to Santa Maria in its second year of existence

in 1987 and has made 38 grants totaling more than \$700,000 over the years.

Third Quarter Donations

Santa Maria Community Services is pleased to announce that it received six grants supporting its programs and services during the third quarter of 2021.

CareSource Management Group Company awarded Santa Maria \$5,000 for child safety, safe sleep, car seats, and Mothers' Family Health Education as well as providing partial funding for AmeriCorps staff.

GE Foundation awarded Santa Maria \$400 as a matching gift for the total donations of Shawn Newman and Jose Atilas.

Mariner Foundation Fund awarded Santa Maria \$5,000 for general operating support via donor Cassie Bicknell.

PNC Grow Up Great® awarded Santa Maria \$30,000 for Supporting Preschoolers in Price Hill.

SC Ministry Foundation awarded Santa Maria the Sr. Elise Grant, which will be used for English as a Second Language courses.

Marge and Charles J. Schott Foundation awarded Santa Maria \$5,000 for general operating support.

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. Receives \$38,000 from Nehemiah Manufacturing

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. is pleased to announce that it has received a gift of \$38,000 from Nehemiah Manufacturing.

The gift is from the proceeds from Nehemiah Manufacturing's 8th Annual Make a Difference Golf Classic held at Western Hills Country Club and is being used in part for Santa Maria's Youth Development Program.

Santa Maria Community Services' Youth Development Program provides Lower Price Hill youth ages 10-16 with the opportunity to partake in a life/social-emotional skills group while learning how

to develop peaceful conflict resolution, peer resistance, youth safety, bullying prevention, self-management, and goal-directed behavior skills. In addition to life skills development, the program focuses on youth mentoring and leadership through academic assistance and tutoring, age specific activities, personal responsibility, and optimistic thinking skills. Participants have opportunities to engage in community-service projects, and each child's family is linked to resources that promote family stability while addressing concerns that

threaten or hinder the family's well-being. The Youth Development Program welcomes Price Hill youth to learn how to be more successful

in school and in life. Santa Maria's Youth Development Program Team changes lives by resolving issues related to school, social culture, and family life.

"We are so grateful for the generous support of Nehemiah Manufacturing," said H.A. Musser, Jr., President and CEO of Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. "This generous gift will have a direct impact on Lower Price Hill youth and will help us provide them with the

support and hope they need to be successful."



L to R - Front row: Santa Maria's Danny Burrridge, Jessica Polzin, Ben Klayer, Nune Sargsyan and Nehemiah's Dan Meyer; 2nd row: Nehemiah's Chris Lahni and Robin Marsh; 3rd row: Santa Maria's H.A. Musser and Nehemiah's Eli Livingston; 4th row: Nehemiah's Michael Kenning; 5th row: Nehemiah's

"We are so grateful for the generous support of Nehemiah Manufacturing... This generous gift will have a direct impact on Lower Price Hill youth and will help us provide them with the support and hope they need to be successful."

-H.A. Musser, Jr., President and CEO of Santa Maria Community Services, Inc.

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Santa Maria Community Services is a catalyst and advocate for Cincinnati's Greater Price Hill families to attain their educational, financial, and health goals.

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