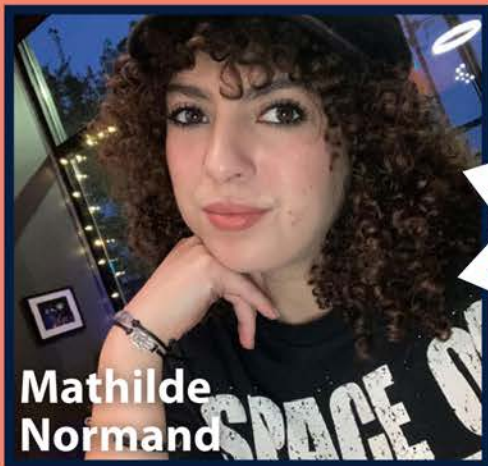


SANTA MARIA COMMUNITY SERVICES

Helping Families Help Themselves Since 1897



**SANTA MARIA
COMMUNITY SERVICES™**

Newsletter · Fall 2023

FALL NEWSLETTER



H.A. Musser, Jr.
President & CEO

This issue first highlights the inspiring journey of Charity Dowers, a true embodiment of our mission's spirit. Growing up near our administrative offices, Charity found solace in our family center's support as a child. A few years ago, she noticed her daughter, Autumn, was struggling with speech and she knew exactly where to go. After completing Santa Maria's Promoting Our Preschoolers program, Autumn is now thriving in school. Charity found out about other programs at Santa Maria and sought assistance for financial hardships. Through financial coaching and assistance from Santa Maria's Education Advancement program, Charity was able to return

to school, and just earned an Associate of Science degree in Applied Science. She is well on her way to her ultimate goal, a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing! Charity's story serves as a testament to the power of community support, as we continue nurturing dreams and empowering individuals to create a brighter future for all.

Secondly, we share a success story from our Workforce Development program. Mathilde joined Santa Maria's youth workforce program last summer. Faced with job loss and housing instability, Mathilde engaged with her workforce coach to work on her professional goals, ultimately participating in the Work Experience program. Excelling during her internship at Refresh Collective, Mathilde received a full-time job offer post-internship and has since maintained regular meetings with her Santa Maria coach, utilizing additional services like financial guidance and resume building. With newfound stability, Mathilde now resides independently, manages her finances, and plans to pursue further education abroad in France, capitalizing on her skills.

Thank you for being an integral part of our Santa Maria family, as we look forward to many more inspiring stories and collective achievements in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H.A. Musser, Jr.".

H.A. Musser, Jr.
President & CEO



CHARITY DOWERS

Forty-two-year-old Charity Dowers grew up in Sedamsville, near to where Santa Maria's Administrative offices are currently located. When she was a little girl, that office, often called 'the center,' served as a community center, similar to what our Joe Williams Family Center is now. That's when she first met Regine Gordon, currently a Family Advocate & Group Facilitator in our Promoting Our Preschoolers (POP) program.

Families and Santa Maria staff often went on day trips together, including visits to Kings Island. Regine recalled, "Charity and her family were a wonderful family. I knew her, her mom, and her siblings. They were all friendly, well-behaved kids," she said with warmth. "It was always a joy to see them when they came to the center for activities."

Charity fondly remembered her time at the center, saying, "It was a safe place to go to relax and have something to do. The adults were safe people we could trust and rely on to keep us safe and provide an atmosphere where we could be kids and do things that we couldn't otherwise do."

If Charity's name is familiar, it's because we first brought you her story in 2020. At that time, she sought help for her youngest child's development. Autumn was struggling with



Autumn



Aubrey, Adam, Charity, Autumn & Josh



speech, and Regine suggested that Charity enroll her in Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) through Santa Maria. SPARK is a program that helps preschool children develop the skills

they need to succeed in kindergarten. It focuses on their social, emotional, and thinking abilities. The program's aim is to prepare children for school and ensure that schools are prepared to teach them.

Soon after, Charity faced financial hardships and sought assistance from Santa Maria's Stable Families program. "The center helped me manage some household bills by paying to keep my utilities on, put me in a class that taught me quite a bit about how to better manage my expenses and income, and encouraged me to go back to school because that was ultimately my goal," Charity expressed her gratitude.

CHARITY

(CONTINUED)



Charity

Stable Families not only provided counseling and advocacy, but also helped Charity navigate college enrollment and find financial resources to support her education.

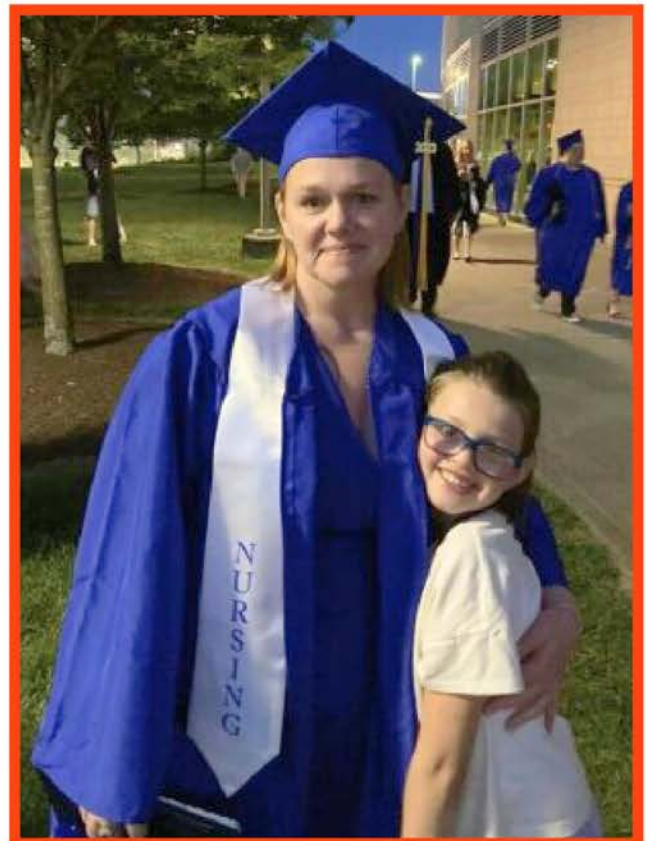
With Santa Maria's support, Charity worked her way through college and proudly graduated this year with an Associate of Science degree in Applied Science from Gateway Community and Technical College. "It felt amazing to be able to put that cap and gown on and soak up the cheering," she reminisced. This graduation held a special significance for her as it marked her first because she obtained a High School Equivalency diploma. "I wanted to be able to show my kids that if I can push for a better life, they can too," Charity said, filled with determination.

Regine expressed her admiration and pride in Charity's accomplishments, saying, "I had the honor of knowing Charity when she was a young girl and then watching her grow up and raise a family of her own. Now, I have watched her achieve her dream of becoming a nurse! The sky is the limit for this beautiful lady... I know she will be an incredible nurse!"

Looking toward the future, Charity shared her aspirations. She hopes to one day be a homeowner, but her next goal is to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.



She also expressed her desire to give back to the community, saying, "I want to be able to pay it forward when I am out of school and in a better financial position." Charity expressed deep gratitude to Santa Maria for their lifelong support, crediting Regine and all of her family support workers for giving her the courage to return to school. "I would have never had the courage to do it had it not been for their support," she concluded.



Charity & Autumn

CELEBRATING DIVERSE ACHIEVEMENTS: A SEASON OF GRADUATIONS AT SANTA MARIA



Graduation season at Santa Maria kicked off right at the start of summer as we extended our warmest congratulations to Santa Maria's High School Equivalency, Workforce Development, and English as a Second Language graduates. Our Workforce Development Programs have been a beacon of opportunity for individuals seeking to enhance their employability, develop new skills, and take significant steps toward career advancement. We were so happy to honor their dedication, resilience, and hard work as they step into the next chapter of their lives.

We then honored the graduation of our 3-year-olds from the Every Child Succeeds (ECS) program. As we celebrate their accomplishments, we are reminded of the significance of providing a strong foundation for our young learners. Witnessing their journey commence with such positivity fills us with hope for the futures they will create. We extend our warmest congratulations to the 27 ECS graduates, their families, and the dedicated home visitors who guided their growth throughout this journey.

Finally, the end of summer was filled with excitement and joy as we celebrated the last in our graduation series – the graduation of our Promoting Our Preschoolers (POP) program participants. Held on two separate occasions, the air was filled with pride and anticipation for the children to begin their elementary school journey. Congratulations to the 44 graduates, their families, and the dedicated home visitors who have been a strong and steady support during this adventure.

As we celebrate these achievements, we recognize the importance of providing a solid foundation for our young learners. These milestones aren't just a victory for the graduates, but also a proud moment for our community, as we remain committed to nurturing young minds and building their promising futures.

These journeys have touched our hearts! Together, we create a tapestry of achievement that reflects the true strength of a community dedicated to shaping brighter futures.

Congratulations to all, and may your journeys continue to be marked by success, growth, and boundless possibilities. We offer a heartfelt thank you to every individual who played a role in making these journeys successful!

Please enjoy the graduation photos on the following pages!

CLASS OF 2023

PROMOTING OUR PRESCHOOLERS



CLASS OF 2023

EVERY CHILD SUCCEEDS



CLASS OF 2023

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY, ESL & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



SANTA MARIA'S AWARD-WINNING COMMITMENT IS A TESTAMENT TO COMMUNITY IMPACT



Santa Maria was thrilled to be named a finalist for 2023 Torch Awards for Ethics by Better Business Bureau Cincinnati. The BBB® Torch Awards for Ethics is Greater Cincinnati's premier ethics-centered awards program for businesses and nonprofits. Torch Awards finalists were selected by a panel of local business leaders for their character-driven operations, extraordinary workplace cultures, and dedication to the community.

Santa Maria was previously named a finalist multiple times and received the 2004 BBB® Torch Award for Ethics, recognizing its exceptional commitment to ethics, integrity, and trust among employees, program participants, and the community.

Winning organizations were revealed at the 2023 Torch Awards for Ethics and Spark Awards Gala on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at Cincinnati Art Museum. Torch Awards finalists were honored at the event, as well as finalists and winners for the Spark Awards for new businesses and young entrepreneurs.

Santa Maria was also awarded a Transformation Award from the Center for Respite Care. This recognition highlights Santa Maria's commitment to making a transformative impact on the lives of individuals and families in Greater Cincinnati. The Center for Respite Care serves adult individuals experiencing homelessness with acute medical issues. The virtual awards ceremony was held on September 14, 2023. The Transformation Award from the Center for Respite Care is a testament to Santa Maria's significant contributions to the Greater Cincinnati community, and we were honored to receive this recognition.



Santa Maria was also nominated for two Nonprofit of the Year Awards from Cincy Magazine. We were nominated in two areas - under the Income Support & Employment category, we're nominated for Job Search/Placement, and in the Education category, we're nominated for Family Literacy Programs. We have previously won three Nonprofit of the Year Awards from Cincy Magazine in 2022 in the categories of After School Programs and English as a Second Language and in their inaugural year, 2021, for Family Literacy Programs.

Finally, our Workforce Development program is a finalist for a 2023 Best in Ohio Business Award from Ohio Business Magazine. Ohio Business readers and professionals across Ohio voted for Ohio's Best Businesses and Santa Maria is proud to be a finalist.

We're proud to be in the spotlight for our commitment to ethics, community impact, and excellence, and we are proud of our team's dedication to making a positive difference in our community.

MATHILDE IS TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Mathilde enrolled in Santa Maria's youth workforce program in August 2022. At that time, she was volunteering with Refresh Collective, a local screen-printing shop, and they referred her to Santa Maria. Mathilde decided to take advantage of Santa Maria's services and was placed with a coach to work on her professional goals. She had just lost her previous job and was in between housing, so she did not have a long-term place to stay or a dependable source of income. Mathilde and her coach, Rylee Burke, met to discuss her interests, talents, and goals. Together they decided that she would be a good fit for Santa Maria's Work Experience program.



Mathilde

Mathilde thrived in her internship role at Refresh Collective, and over the last few months, she has continued to meet regularly with her coach and is currently seeking full-time employment. Mathilde has also taken advantage of additional services Santa Maria's Workforce Development program offers, such as assistance with budgeting, financial planning, and developing a resume.

Mathilde is now living in her own unsubsidized housing, paying her bills, and managing a personal savings account. She has aspirations of moving abroad to France and continuing her education there since French fluency is one of her many marketable skills.

When asked about her experience with Santa Maria so far, Mathilde stated, "Santa Maria connects me to resources that I either was not aware of or had not pursued. Rylee is an expert navigator and is a good listener. She offers solid advice. All around, Santa Maria is a wonderful community service that is helping me out of poverty."



Mathilde

EMPOWERING CHANGE: SANTA MARIA UNVEILS NEW VALUES

We're pleased to introduce our new values statement encapsulated by the acronym SERVE - Safety, Equity, Relationships, Vibrancy, and Empowerment. This revised values statement better reflects our commitment to enhancing every facet of our engagement with the community we proudly serve. We hope to inspire personal growth and self-improvement within ourselves, and radiate that outward, infusing our community with these values in order to create a more harmonious future for all.

Safety stands as the cornerstone of our values, demonstrating our dedication to the well-being of everyone we touch. We are dedicated to providing a secure and nurturing environment where individuals and families can grow, learn, and thrive without apprehension.

Equity, as the second pillar of our values, reaffirms our pledge to fairness and inclusivity. We work tirelessly to eliminate disparities that hinder progress. Our goal is to create an environment where everyone, regardless of their background or barriers, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Relationships are at the heart of our work in the community. The 'R' right in the middle of SERVE signifies the importance we place on building strong and meaningful connections. Our commitment to fostering relationships among community members, partners, supporters and stakeholders fuels collaboration, understanding, and shared growth.

Vibrancy is the lifeblood of our community. By infusing energy, creativity, and enthusiasm into all that we do, we aim to cultivate a dynamic and thriving environment that sparks positive change. We choose to focus on the bright side, find joy in everyday moments, and approach challenges as opportunities.

Empowerment, the final element of SERVE, emphasizes our belief in the transformative power of giving individuals the tools and confidence to shape their own futures. We are committed to fostering self-sufficiency, nurturing leadership, and providing resources that enable every person to realize their full potential.

As we embrace these new values, our commitment to serving the community only grows stronger. The SERVE framework will guide us as we continue to offer vital programs, services, and initiatives that align with our core beliefs. Together, we are working toward a future where safety, equity, relationships, vibrancy, and empowerment are the cornerstones of our shared journey.

Mission

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

Vision

Our vision is for Greater Price Hill to be a vibrant, thriving, and self-sustaining community.



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Helping Families Help Themselves Since 1897

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