

SANTA MARIA COMMUNITY SERVICES

Helping Families Help Themselves Since 1897



Fall Newsletter 2024

CATCH UP WITH H.A.



H.A. Musser, Jr.
President & CEO

Dear Santa Maria Supporters,

As the weather is cooling off in Cincinnati and we approach the end of the year, we want to pause and offer our thanks to you for your sustaining gifts of time and money that make our work possible. Next month marks our 127th anniversary of service, but we have never been more relevant than we are today—strengthening families to reach their goals for themselves and their children. Their goals are many and varied—

from getting their children ready for kindergarten to seeking education and career opportunities that lead to financial stability. Whatever the goal, we are here to walk with families and help them remove barriers to their success.

In this edition of our Fall Newsletter, we celebrate wins, both big and small. Read on to discover the empowering, hopeful story of Destiny and Myra, a recap of our proudest moments throughout the year, an inspiring legacy gift, and more. The milestones and memories from this past year would not have been possible without your support. On behalf of our team, we sincerely thank you for believing in Santa Maria's mission and vision. Together, we will continue to work towards building a better Price Hill for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H.A. Musser, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

H.A. Musser, Jr.
President & CEO



DESTINY AND MYRA

Destiny and Myra's story may be a familiar one to many readers, as it made local news headlines in December of last year, and again last month. Suffering a severe and traumatic brain injury, 6-month-old baby Myra was airlifted to the hospital for emergency surgery. Myra's mother, Destiny, took quick action during the tragic event, saving Myra's life, but doctors would go on to say that Myra's chances of having brain activity or even surviving were slim, initially giving her three days to live. Despite this, Destiny never gave up hope on her little girl. "Myra's a miracle baby," says Destiny, now age 20. "I have always believed in her." Destiny's faith was substantiated, and Myra miraculously survived.



Myra has had several surgeries to treat her injury, however, she will need additional surgeries and is unfortunately suffering from a lifelong brain disability, including loss of motor skills on her left side. Destiny and her Every Child Succeeds (ECS) Family Support Worker, Bonnie, are doing everything they can to help Myra progress and meet her developmental milestones while Mom and baby get back on their feet. Bonnie has worked with Destiny and Myra for almost seven months so far to provide support, including helping Myra practice her therapy exercises, assisting with groceries when possible, and providing a lightweight stroller when Destiny was struggling to get the previous one up and down their 3rd-floor walk-up.



For months, Myra was unable to sit up or turn over on her own, but thanks to Destiny and Bonnie's dedication, she is slowly but surely improving her range of motion and muscle use. Having been through so much, Destiny and Myra do their best to maintain positive attitudes. "She has a good attitude; she keeps me laughing. She's always been strong. People say I'm strong, but we get it from each other, me and her," says Destiny with pride. Though Myra, currently 18 months old, is now able to sit up on her own, Destiny and Bonnie are working together to get her crawling and eventually walking. "[Destiny] is just a great mom, she's a go-getter, and [Myra] is incredible," says Bonnie. "We just want to make it as easy as possible for Destiny to be able to care for her child." After being nominated by Bonnie for the United Way Wish List, Destiny and Myra were selected and will be featured in *The Enquirer*, able to tell their story on their own terms for the first time. With support from our community, Destiny and Bonnie will be able to continue helping Myra on her journey while enrolled in ECS.



CONGRATULATIONS, CLASSES OF 2024!

This year at Santa Maria, we proudly congratulated all of our outstanding graduates from the High School Equivalency, Work Experience, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. These programs have empowered individuals to continue progressing and advocating for themselves in their professional careers and daily lives.

Additionally, we honored 27 three-year-old graduates of the Every Child Succeeds (ECS) program, ensuring that these little ones and their families have the foundations needed to continue their development.

Finally, we celebrated the graduation of 45 five-year-old graduates of the Promoting Our Preschoolers (POP) program, marking an exciting step toward kindergarten readiness.

These milestones showcase our community's deep commitment to nurturing young minds, strengthening families, and building bright futures. By emphasizing the importance of a strong foundation for learners, we not only support their growth but also inspire hope and optimism for their journeys ahead.

Congratulations to all of the graduates, their families, and the dedicated home visitors who supported them in so many ways. Together, we celebrate these achievements and the promising future of our community.

Flip onward to see photos of our esteemed graduates!

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY & WORK EXPERIENCE

CLASS OF 2024





ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

CLASS OF 2024



EVERY CHILD SUCCEEDS

CLASS OF 2024



PROMOTING OUR PRESCHOOLERS

CLASS OF 2024





MAUREEN'S GIFT

Longtime friend of Santa Maria, Maureen Maxfield, has graciously and generously decided to make a legacy gift to Santa Maria Community Services. A board member since 2017, and later Development Committee Chair, Maureen has supported and will continue to support Santa Maria with her leadership and generosity. [Read her story below to learn more about her gift.](#)



“A Legacy gift? Me?”

I never thought about leaving a legacy gift after I die or even giving a meaningful legacy gift during my lifetime until a few years ago when my husband and I were updating our estate plans. Being of modest means and both of us working in the nonprofit sector most of our lives, leaving a gift wasn't on our radar at all. I thought only wealthy people did that. Yet my mother's credo, "Give Back What God Has Given You" keeps coming back to me. So... a planned gift over five years for a major project that is in process. This "Giving While You Live," comes as a qualified charitable contribution from my IRA. It is a meaningful gift given our resources. Recently, I also changed the beneficiary for one of my individual retirement annuities to Santa Maria, so there will also be a gift to Santa Maria after my lifetime.

Why Legacy Giving to Santa Maria?

From my heart, I see what difference Santa Maria makes in the lives of the families they serve. Their credo is and has been "helping families help themselves" since their inception in 1897. They have a "whole family" approach – whatever is needed for that family - partnering with over 100 organizations. I have known Santa Maria since the late 1980s when I visited their daycare center at Seton High School for a Christmas party. As a long-term program volunteer and now board member, I have become more humbled by the staff's passion for strengthening WHOLE families, for their compassion, and for the impact on families as families work toward sustainability and self-sufficiency in areas they identify. I am honored and humbled to support Santa Maria's mission. ”

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you, Maureen.

PASSPORT TO SUCCESS: ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Our annual fundraiser, Passport to Success, was indeed just that...a success! Held at the all-new location of Aston Oaks Golf Club in North Bend, we were honored to have emcee Lauren Minor, local news anchor of LEX18, and guest speaker David Da Silva, Mental Performance Coach of FC Cincinnati, guide us through the evening with warmth and insight. The event included raffle baskets, a silent auction, networking, and a story of resilience featuring our very own Stable Families Coordinator, Francesca, and her client Ana Luz.

To those who made it out to the party and those who supported in other ways, thank you for your dedication and support, which are vital to Santa Maria's mission. **We even broke our record for funds raised, over \$100,000!** Your generosity enables us to strengthen our community and help our neighbors thrive. Your commitment truly makes a lasting impact, and we are grateful for your kindness. Together, we are making a difference for all in Greater Price Hill.





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

of this year's Passport to Success fundraiser

Ambassador Sponsor



Jet Setter Sponsors



Navigator Sponsors



Voyager Sponsors



JOE WILLIAMS FAMILY CENTER: WHAT'S THE WORD?

Read below to see what some of our Joe Williams Family Center students are saying about their experiences, and some photos from their Halloween Party on the right!

5th Grade Student:

"The Joe Williams Family Center has had a positive impact by helping me get out more and hang out with my friends. I like to game, play ping pong, and cook. I come here because of all the activities. Then I like to hang out with my friends."

10th Grade Student:

"The Joe Williams Family Center has changed my life for the better. I feel way more connected with my community. Even more so with my peers. Meeting the amazing staff and volunteers as well. In short I feel at home here!"

7th Grade Student:

"Joe Williams Family Center has a positive impact on my life because every Tuesday and Thursday I have somewhere to go and when I do come I feel comfortable enough to be myself here. And I don't feel like that about many places and I have a very good connection with their staff and they treat me like family. And I like helping them clean after hours to make their lives easier."

9th Grade Student:

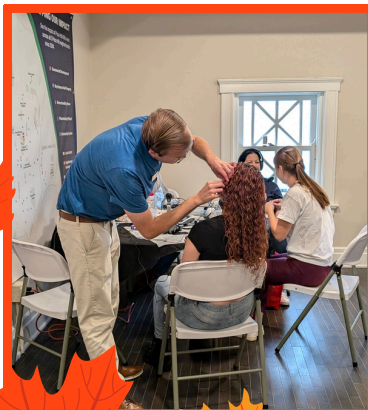
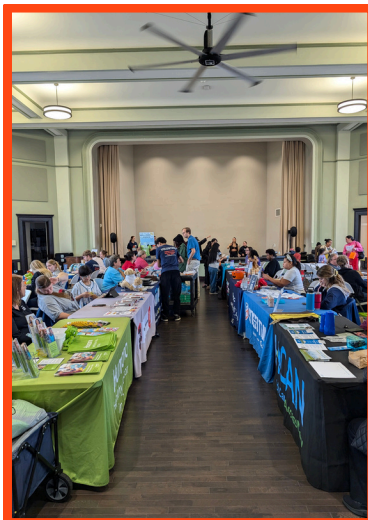
"I like coming to the center because...there is a lot of activities to do. I like playing and teaching ping pong with Jim, helping the little kids to play. I also like playing in the game room also help the little kids in need. I help the people that actually work here like Miss Nancy, Bri, Amelia, and Jessica. I try to calm down kids. I help clean up people's messes for example. If nobody's here to do the dishes on their day, me and somebody else will take over. I sometimes play air hockey with the kids and if they win I compliment them."





BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

In August of this year, Santa Maria held its very first Back to School Bash. This event, held at Joe Williams Family Center in Lower Price Hill, provided backpacks full of school supplies and first-day-ready haircuts for the kids along with take-home groceries for parents and a pizza lunch for the whole family. Back-to-school season can be a challenging time for families who are struggling with accessibility and resources, so we are ecstatic to be able to provide a way to ease just a bit of that pressure. We're looking forward to this upcoming year's second edition!



FALL HEALTH FAIR

Despite the dreary weather from Hurricane Helene in September, this year's Health Fair resulted in a turnout of 67 participants! By having the Price Hill Wellness Community Action Team present to provide dance fitness classes, we were able to keep the energy up.

We'd like to thank our 30 providing partners, who brought vital resources and information to the community, as well as our Health Fair sponsors:





SANTA MARIA COMMUNITY SERVICES™

Upcoming Events

7
Dec.

Cookies with Santa - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

📍 Price Hill Library, 970 Purcell Ave.

Bring your little ones to snap a picture with Santa and Mrs. Claus as we kick off the season with some familiar holiday tunes, cookies, and hot chocolate!

7
Dec.

Toy Team 9 Drive - 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

📍 Walmart, 2322 Ferguson Rd.

Stop by the Ferguson Walmart to donate toys that will go to children right here in our community this holiday season!

1
March

Health Fair - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

📍 ARCO Cincy, 3301 Price Ave.

Join us in spreading the word about our next Health Fair, which will offer free health screenings, free food, fitness workshops, local vendors, and activities for all ages.

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

1. Donate online

Use our QR code or website to leave a donation at <https://santamaria-cincy.org/give/>



2. Donate through your IRA

If you are 70½ or older, making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA is a great way to support Santa Maria's mission. This is a tax-savvy way to make a difference, as it allows you to donate directly from your IRA, potentially lowering your taxable income and fulfilling your required minimum distribution (RMD). Contact a tax advisor to learn more.

3. Stock Donation

A donation of appreciated publicly traded stock may help you to maximize your tax savings. Contact Nune Sargsyan at Nune.Sargsyan@SantaMaria-Cincy.org or 513-557-7267 to learn more.

4. Leave a legacy gift, like Maureen.

Inspired by Maureen Maxfield? ([See Page 8](#))

Contact Nune Sargsyan at Nune.Sargsyan@SantaMaria-Cincy.org or 513-557-7267 to set up your own legacy gift.



5. Donate to Santa Maria Community Services at no cost with Kroger's Community Rewards program.

Kroger shoppers who are signed up for a Kroger Plus Card have the ability to allocate donations to Santa Maria. Signing up for a Kroger Plus Card is free, and the Community Rewards are donated at no cost to the shopper. Sign into your account on the Kroger website. If you don't have an account, you can create one for free. Next, visit Kroger.com/account/CommunityRewards. Type "Santa Maria" or "FE571" into the search bar. Click the "enroll" button, and you're done!



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