In the Field
In addition to a hard-working staff and volunteer base, Homewood Children’s Village is powered by a group of the School of Social Work’s Center of Race & Social Problems (CRSP) fellows.

Functioning as interns within the village, CRSP fellows teach elementary school students social skills they’ll need to be successful in all aspects of life—from building and maintaining relationships to dealing with emotions.

Tyler Hendricks and David Cromer, both first-year master of social work students and fellows, say the experience is just as beneficial for the fellows, too. For them, it provides the opportunity to apply theory and formal instruction in the real world.

Hendricks says the experience has been an eye-opening one—and that he’ll be a better social worker because of it.

“Having the [Pitt] students be exposed to this stuff in real time, with all the messiness that goes with it—that’s part of what they’ll do if they want to pursue this line of work.” — John Wallace, Professor and the Phillip Hallen Chair in Community Health and Social Justice, School of Social Work

Cromer says he believes it’s a privilege to connect with the community through HCV.

“CRSP has encouraged me to positively stretch my personal limits, has valued my input, constructively influenced my areas in need of improvement, and has strengthened my competencies and skills,” he added. “It offered me a safe space to build upon my challenges, and the importance of healthy self-confidence.”

“The most rewarding aspect is the feeling you get when the children at the school all know you by name, and you can tell that you are having a positive impact on them,” Hendricks says.

A native of Homewood, Wallace has engaged students from the School of Social Work and other local schools to assist in research and service projects that benefit children and their families.

By tracking and analyzing data describing the Homewood Children’s Village’s services and the resources provided to our partners and the community at large, its staff is able to measure its impact while developing tailored programs that benefit the Homewood community.

Behind the Numbers
The Homewood Children’s Village was founded in 2008 by John Wallace, a professor and the Phillip Hallen Chair in Community Health and Social Justice at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work, and Aliya Durham, Pitt Social Work alumnae and former executive director of Homewood nonprofit Operation Better Block.

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Contact Us
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A History of Commitment

A love of community and a passion for social work.

Two elements that, when united with the right resources, have the power to create meaningful change.

At the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, those two factors are in abundance—and are especially apparent at the Homewood Children’s Village in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

The Homewood Children’s Village is the brainchild of John Wallace, professor and the Phillip Hallen Chair in Community Health and Social Justice, and Aliya Durham, Pitt Social Work alumnae and former executive director of Homewood nonprofit Operation Better Block.

Troubled by the lack of vitality in Homewood, the neighborhood where he grew up, Wallace enlisted the collective knowledge of local leaders and School of Social Work faculty, students and Dean Larry E. Davis. The team researched evidence-based best practices for various components, such as the best early childhood initiatives and the best after-school programming.

In 2008, the Homewood Children’s Village was established.

Inspired by Geoffrey Canada’s acclaimed Harlem Children’s Zone, the Homewood Children’s Village partners with residents, government, schools, philanthropic foundations, and faith- and community-based organizations to revitalize the neighborhood in hopes of making it a place where children can thrive.

The Village’s work extends beyond the streets of Homewood. Wallace now teaches a course in Homewood, and fellows from Pitt’s Center on Race and Social Problems serve in the schools. The village represents a unique opportunity to simultaneously fulfill the three components of the school’s mission—research, teaching and practice—and is yet another embodiment of the School of Social Work’s commitment to engage, empower and enlighten.


In Our Schools

One of the essential functions of the Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) is to build relationships with schools that educate the children of Homewood.

By creating partnerships with organizations serving those who live and learn in Homewood, HCV forges connections between the schools and the community, enabling the two to work together to meet the needs of students and their families.

In Our Communities

The Homewood Children’s Village aims to not only serve the children of Homewood, but their families and neighbors as well.

By coordinating and managing various outreach and engagement programs such as back-to-school block parties, an annual coat drive for kids, a health and wellness fair, and a day of giving campaign, the organization works to bridge the families of Homewood with the neighborhood and the larger Pittsburgh community.

In Our Futures

The Homewood Children’s Village works to prepare students to graduate from high school and qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise Scholarship—financial aid for Pittsburgh Public Schools students with at least a 90 percent attendance record and a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA—and then fulfill that promise by earning their college or trade school degree.

Whether through its Bridge to College after-school and summer program or the Promise Fulfillment Network, building close relationships with both students and with colleges and universities is a critical component of HCV’s work.

Engage

Our mission is to simultaneously improve the lives of Homewood’s children while reweaving the fabric of the community in which they live.

Empower

Our vision is to develop a community of learners in which every child succeeds.

Enlighten

Our goal is to identify ways to increase our impact in the community, which we accomplish by evaluating our progress and performance as an organization.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for the University to be involved in a project of this type, particularly the School of Social Work, where we actually have a chance to put our thinking and ideas into place.”

— Larry E. Davis, Dean, School of Social Work