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2015-16  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



CONNECTING CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH ARTS, LITERACY AND MINDFULNESS

**“I AM THE  
DAUGHTER OF A  
TEENAGE MOTHER,  
WHO IS THE  
DAUGHTER OF A  
TEENAGE MOTHER,  
WHO IS THE  
DAUGHTER OF A  
TEENAGE MOTHER  
WITH NO FATHER  
IN SIGHT.”**

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SERENA

AHHAH's story began in 2013 at Chester County Youth Detention Center (CCYC) with this poem written by a 16 year old girl and with one passionate leader, Jan Michener, who saw firsthand what happens when children in Chester County are denied access to tools and opportunities they need to achieve at their highest capacity. Since then, over 10,000 youth and adults in Chester County have participated in AHHAH's programs and been creating new futures for themselves filled with opportunity based on AHHAH's trauma-informed, collective impact plan which offsets the stressful effects of long-term poverty.

# AHHAH by the numbers

- 8,230 children, youth, parents/caregivers and seniors attended our programs/classes in 2015-16
- 354 classes and programs offered in 2015-16
- 335% increase over 2014-15
- 100+ volunteers
- 67 Pop Up Lending Libraries (P.U.L.L.) across Coatesville
- 5,000 books collected for P.U.L.L. Stations
- 1,092 on average 7 young adults attended 156 Mindfulness and Creative Arts classes at Chester County Youth Center

## Awards and Recognitions

- Won the 2015 National Detention Center and Alternative Programs Award for our work at CCYC
- Donte, 16 year-old, won the 2016 JDCAP National Poetry Contest for "A Diamond in the Ruff" written in our CCYC Creative Writing Workshop - see back page
- Published "Justice Restored: A Series of Writings and Poems from Incarcerated Youth," a collection of poems and writings written in AHHAH workshops at CCYC in partnership with ADC Kids.
- 2016 "Heart with Service" award from the Kingdom Wives of New Life in Christ Church, Coatesville

**"THE KICK-OFF TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM PROVIDED THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENTS TO BECOME EMPOWERED AS THEIR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHER AND GAVE STUDENTS AND PARENTS A FIRST GLANCE AT WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE." CRYSTAL LOWRY, SOCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR FOR BETTER TOMORROWS AT REGENCY PARKS APARTMENTS COMMUNITY CENTER**





## **WE ARE PLEASED TO REPORT...**

...that Arts Holding Hands and Hearts (AHHAH) had a momentous year in 2015-2016! With the participation, interest and support of many across the Chester County region, AHHAH continues to grow its programming to fulfill its mission of empowering youth, strengthening families, and mobilizing communities through arts, literacy and mindfulness.

AHHAH is a non-profit 501c3 organization that serves the most vulnerable youth in Chester County, with its primary focus on Coatesville, PA. Since 2013, we have been guided by our vision that every child in Chester County will have the tools and opportunities they need to achieve their highest capacity. We accomplish this through a trauma-informed, comprehensive, collective impact plan that addresses the whole child and engages the full community to empower youth and break the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and low expectations. The plan involves all who touch the lives of children – families, schools and community – because we know that we cannot address the many challenges alone, that it takes a village.

**“AHHAH IS A CONSISTENT, CARING, AND A TRANSFORMING POWER THAT BRINGS HOPE TO OUR YOUTH. AHHAH SERVES ALL CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH CENTER YOUTH PROGRAMS WITH THE MOST KIND AND COMPASSIONATE STAFF. WE CAN'T IMAGINE CCYC WITHOUT AHHAH!”**

**- CARRIE AVERY, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH CENTER.**

# OUR METHODS

We work through multiple intentional strategies (C.A.L.M.) to offset the stressful effects of long-term poverty. Our programs are designed to engage youth in mindful, artistic initiatives, building resiliency and establishing positive pathways for a productive and fulfilling future.

## Community Partnerships and Programs

connect and engage youth, families and seniors - creating lasting change in their lives and their communities.

## Arts Programming

encourages youth to explore and discover their authentic voice.

## Literacy Initiatives

enable youth to succeed in life by becoming powerful readers, writers and thinkers.

## Mindfulness Instruction

improves attention, self-awareness, self-control, and emotional resilience to offset prolonged exposure to childhood toxic stress.

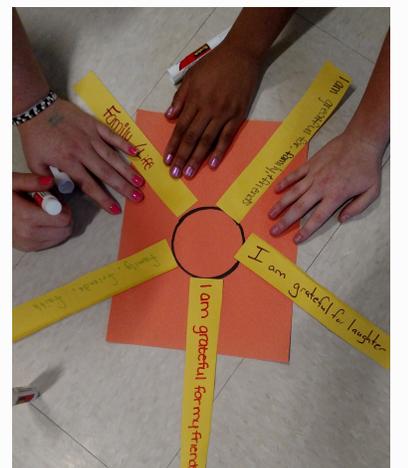
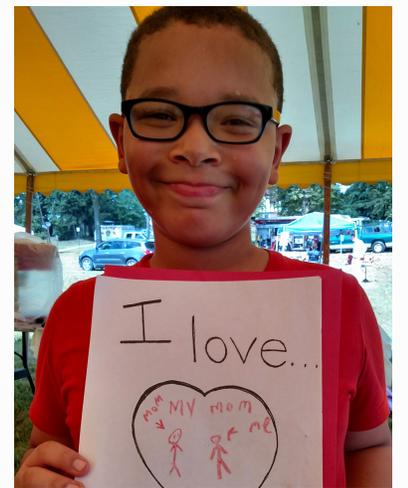


# OUR YEAR IN SERVING COATESVILLE

During the 2015-16 fiscal year, the number who attended our programs grew by 335% - making a difference in the lives of more children, youth, families, and seniors than ever before. Our programming is broken down in developmental stages to represent our vision of long-term social and emotional health for youth and the communities where they live. The following is a summary of 2015-16 activities:

## Pre-K (Families, Caregivers & Children up to age 5)

1. FAMILY STORY TIME YOGA- Caregivers and children 5 and younger learn mind/body/breathing skills through songs, movement, storytelling and yoga that empower families to connect with each other while learning positive and productive skills for managing stress and development of healthier, happier, and more resilient children while instilling the habit of reading together. This program has grown each year. We averaged 15 children and seven caregivers each week. This program is offered once a week at the Gordon Early Literacy Center.





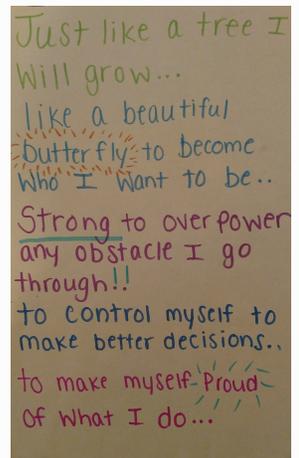
2. STORY TIME YOGA FOR HEAD START - Once a month each class in Head Start at the Gordon Early Literacy Center gets a 20 minute Story Time Yoga class lead by Amanda Daley, AHHAH's Director of Children's Yoga.

3. KICK-OFF TO KINDERGARTEN- Summer 5 week program that provides transitional support for children entering kindergarten and their guardians. The curriculum for this program incorporated the CASD checklist for school readiness of children entering kindergarten. AHHAH received a CCRES grant 2015 and 2016 and was able to offer this program at the Coatesville Area Library and the Regency Parks Apartments Community Center (Section 8 housing in Coatesville). 2017 we will be offering this program at 2 more additional sites, Gordon Early Literacy Center and Community Youth and Women's Alliance (CYWA).

### School Aged Youth

1. YOGA AND MINDFULNESS CLASSES AT THE CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH CENTER - For girls in the Shelter, boys in the Evening Report Center, and youth in the Detention Center once a week. These classes help youth build physical and emotional awareness and develop self-regulation skills.

2. CREATIVE WRITING AND EXPRESSIVE ARTS WORKSHOPS AT THE CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH CENTER - Twice a month workshops focused on releasing of trauma through writing, dance, song, and poetry. These programs develop inter and intrapersonal skills and foster healthy relationships through the sharing of stories and giving an avenue for each voice to be heard. AHHAH won the National 2015 Award from Detention Centers and Alternative Programs for our work at the Chester County Youth Center. 2016 one of the youth in Detention at CCYC won the 2016 National Poetry Award for his piece, "Diamond In the Ruff" that he wrote in an AHHAH expressive writing workshop. 2016 ADC Kids published, "Justice Restored: A Series of Writings and Poems from Incarcerated Youth," which is a collection of poems and writings written in AHHAH workshops at CCYC.



**"I GET A LOT FROM YOGA. I GET:**

**1. RELAXATION**

**2. MORE ENERGY**

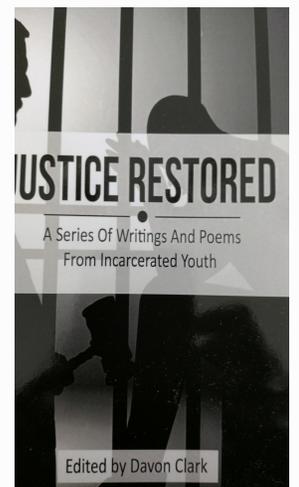
**3. STRENGTH...**

**I FEEL A LOT BETTER AFTER YOGA.**

**I FEEL FULL.**

**I FEEL BRAND NEW!"**

**-CCYC SHELTER FOR GIRLS (TEEN PARTICIPANT)**



3. THEATER INITIATIVES that transform great literature into great theater and inspire children to read, learn, and discuss through the creative arts.

AHHAH partnered with Enchantment Theatre Company and brought two productions to Reeceville Elementary School. Over 800 children attended THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR and THE BEAST IN THE BAYOU.

AHHAH also partnered with People's Light & Theatre with their 2016 Spring production of A SINGLE SHARD, an adaptation of Linda Sue Park's Newbery Award book of the same name. AHHAH arranged for over 250 youth from Coatesville to see the play and received a copy of the book.



**"WE JUST LEFT ENCHANTMENT'S SHOW... IT WAS AN EXCELLENT LITERARY EXPERIENCE FOR MY CLASS. IT WAS AN ABSOLUTELY AMAZING PERFORMANCE. THE KIDS WERE 100% ENGAGED! WE NEED TO HAVE MANY MORE ASSEMBLIES LIKE THIS ONE! THANK YOU FOR BRINGING THEATER BACK IN TO OUR SCHOOL!"**

## Community Engagement

1. INTERGENERATIONAL MONTHLY EXPRESSIVE ARTS WORKSHOPS - Youth and adults collaborated and explored their unique voices through workshops focused on creative writing and other expressive arts. These workshops were led by various guest artists and generated community dialogue around issues affecting the youth and the community. CCYC youth attended these events for a positive re- integration into the community where they were seen for their assets. These events were held at the Coatesville Public Library and at Lincoln University - Coatesville, average 25-30 youth and adults attended each month.

2. P.U.L.L. CAMPAIGN- Phase I: AHHAH initiated and spearheaded a campaign where 67 pop-up lending libraries (P.U.L.L.) were installed or placed throughout Coatesville in locations where children gathered indoors and outdoors. These P.U.L.L. Stations are in barbershops, laundromats, churches, health centers, various restaurants, banks, and community centers throughout Coatesville. The goal is to make books accessible to children 24/7, 365 days of the year. Youth are encouraged to not only read these books, but to share them with others by returning them to one of the 67 P.U.L.L. Stations in Coatesville. Currently there are 17 outdoor P.U.L.L. Stations, including locations in front of each of the 6 elementary schools and 3 middle schools. 2016 AHHAH had 3 community events where over 60 people from the community came to help build, design and paint the PULL Stations. Each of the 9 schools' art classes helped in the design and painting of their PULL Stations. There was a PULL Celebration where all the boxes were on display and children and families came together to celebrate art and literacy.

**ON AVERAGE, COATESVILLE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ARE ONLY READING AT 39% PROFICIENCY LEVEL.**

3. WOMEN'S GENTLE YOGA CLASS - offered once a week. The focus is on breath-work, relaxation, stress management, mindfulness, and restorative poses. The class also fosters relationships between women in the community, building bonds made of respect, love, and unity. This is a donation based class at the Coatesville Public Library with an average attendance of 15 women.

4. PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT - led trauma informed, self-care workshops for the Educating Hearts Conference for early childhood educators, CCYC and Bridge of Hope staff and support teams. In total, 250 teachers/educators/counselors/administrators were given tools to manage stress and create more caring and compassionate work environments.

## **OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Our community partners include: ADC Kid, Bridge of Hope, Chester County Intermediate Unit, Chester County Youth Center, Coatesville Area School District, Coatesville Community Health Center, Coatesville Head Start, Coatesville Public Library, Coatesville Rotary Club, Coatesville Senior Center, Enchantment Theatre Company, Goodworks, Kennett Area Senior Center, Library Laundry League Lincoln University- Coatesville Campus, Maternal Child and Health Consortium, People's Light, Regency Parks Apartments Community Center and Coatesville Y Early Literacy Center - Gordon Building.

## **OUR YEAR IN FINANCE**

AHHAH believes in maintaining fiscal responsibility by making wise and efficient use of all resources entrusted in us. AHHAH continues to balance its budget and finish in the black since the Company was created in 2013. In June of 2016, AHHAH made the decision to file for its own 501c3 and break away from Culture Trust of Greater Philadelphia, its fiduciary sponsor since 2014. AHHAH was granted its 501c3 designation from the IRS in November 2016.

AHHAH has been the recipient of major grants from many state and local organizations including the PA Council on the Arts, CCRES Grant, Staples Community Grant, Chester County Fund for Women and Girls, and a 21st Century Community Learning Grant. In addition to foundation and government support, AHHAH has received numerous awards and recognition from National Detention Center and Alternative Programs, Groundswell of Greater Philadelphia, and the Kingdom Wives of New Life in Christ Church, Coatesville.

In just three short years, AHHAH's evolution reflects our enduring commitment to continuous improvement. What began as a volunteer based, grassroots organization born of a bold idea to serve the most vulnerable youth in Chester County, has now become a small and powerful nonprofit organization. An organization that reaches out to thousands of youth exposing them to the beauty within themselves and the power they have to choose the direction of their life. Thank you!

# WINNER OF THE 2016 NATIONAL YOUTH DETENTION POETRY CONTEST

DIAMOND IN THE RUFF

BY D. H. 16 YEAR OLD MALE IN DETENTION AT CCYC

I AM A DIAMOND IN THE RUFF.  
IF YOU COULD ONLY SEE,  
MY FUTURE POSSIBILITIES.  
THE WAY I CAN REALLY USE MY BRAIN,  
SOMETIMES IT CAN DRIVE ME INSANE.  
I HAVE LOTS OF GREAT TALENTS.  
WATCH ME BALL AND SEE MY BALANCE.  
YOU'LL SEE THAT I'M VERY ADVANCED,  
IF YOU WATCH ME USE MY HANDS.  
WHEN I'M MAD,  
I REFER TO SPORTS.  
IT HELPS PULL ANGER FROM MY CORE.  
SOMETIMES I TRY TO SLEEP IT OFF.  
SOMETIMES I SIT DOWN AND DRAW.  
CLEAN OFF THE DIAMOND,  
WATCH IT SHINE.  
I WILL GRIND UP TO MY PRIME.  
I WILL FIX UP MY MISTAKES,  
WATCH AND SEE.  
YOU JUST WAIT,  
I WILL GROW AND GO TO COLLEGE,  
AND GET SUCCESS OUT OF MY KNOWLEDGE.  
I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT TO BE,  
BUT GIVE ME TIME AND YOU WILL SEE,  
THAT I'M A DIAMOND IN THE RUFF,  
I JUST NEED TO GET OUT OF THESE CUFFS.

\*(I REALLY LIKED THIS WORKSHOP, IT BROUGHT ALL THE ANGER OUT OF ME, AND  
CLEARED MY MIND)