

May 9, 2013



Dear Prospective Partner,

As we celebrate **40 years** of service and advocacy on behalf of America's children, the **Children's Defense Fund** (CDF) is proud to announce a new initiative designed to support those interested in sponsoring CDF Freedom Schools® programs, foster the professional development of program alumni, and advance efforts to ensure program expansion and long-term sustainability. Since 1995, CDF has provided quality summer and after-school enrichment for children from low-income families and underserved communities through our *CDF Freedom Schools* program—an intergenerational educational initiative founded by CDF President **Marian Wright Edelman** and the **Black Community Crusade for Children** that emphasizes literacy, youth leadership development, parent involvement, civic engagement, and social action. Founded in 1973 as a direct result of the American Civil Rights Movement, CDF is committed to restorative social justice through education and advocacy for our nation's most valuable resource—its children.

This year, we are inviting investors, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, K-12 educators, community organizers, members of the business community, and *CDF Freedom Schools* program alum to participate in our inaugural **Funders Initiative** (FI). This professional development and informational opportunity is one of the exciting new program elements being featured at our **18th annual Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute** in **Knoxville, TN**, from June 2 – 9, 2013. The *CDF Freedom Schools* Funders Initiative is an intensive, one-day professional development and training seminar designed to provide participants with an opportunity to evaluate this dynamic program, and strategize how to seed and sustain it in local communities throughout the country. Special emphasis will be placed on public-private community partnerships, resource and relationship development, and long-term strategic planning around program sustainability. Participants will learn about various components of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program, visit CDF Haley Farm, and engage dynamic speakers on the subjects of social entrepreneurship, organizational development, and how to build successful partnerships between families, communities, schools, and diverse stakeholders in education. Participants will also have an opportunity to hear Marian Wright Edelman speak about the vital role of *children and youth as movement builders and change agents*.

Most importantly, this event will prepare organizations, institutions, and individuals interested in sponsoring the *CDF Freedom Schools* program to plan, fund, implement, and sustain this innovative educational enrichment program that is changing the lives of children throughout the country. Research has shown that the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is making a significant impact. In fact, the program was one of 14 innovative national programs highlighted in a **Harvard Family Research Project** report entitled "Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success" (2011), which demonstrated success in providing quality learning opportunities for youth. Moreover, a four-year study of children enrolled at *CDF Freedom Schools* program sites in Charlotte, N.C., reported that 90 percent of the children tested did not suffer summer learning loss, and 65 percent improved or showed gains in independent reading by the end of the program. Another multi-year study conducted for the Kauffman Foundation reported that in 2008, students enrolled in Kansas City's summer *CDF Freedom Schools* program demonstrated significant improvements in reading. This history of success demonstrates that by funding the *CDF Freedom Schools* program, you can make a tremendous difference in the lives of underserved children.

In 2012, *CDF Freedom Schools* programs across the country served more than 11,500 children at 170 program sites in 82 cities and 25 states (including Washington, D.C.). We partnered with 114 sponsor organizations to bring our Integrated Reading Curriculum to children in urban and rural communities nationwide. Furthermore, over 1,225 college youth and adults served as servant leader interns (SLI) and site coordinators (SC) at our program sites last summer. Since 1995, approximately 100,000 children have had a *CDF Freedom Schools* experience and 9,000 college students have been trained to deliver this empowering model. For these reasons, the *CDF Freedom Schools* approach to literacy, youth development, and parent involvement has been recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education

Arne Duncan as a model strategy of child engagement that fosters the development of positive attitudes toward reading and a commitment to lifelong learning, service, and leadership.

The overarching goal of the **Funders Initiative** is to encourage, equip, and empower participants to bring the *CDF Freedom Schools* program to their communities. By partnering with diverse stakeholders in early childhood and youth education, CDF hopes to enlist your support in advancing our mission to close achievement gaps and *ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities*. Ultimately, the **Funders Initiative** will enable participants to become leaders in the *CDF Freedom Schools* movement.

For more information about how to register for this event, please refer to the enclosed materials and contact our Operations Coordinator, **Ms. Dana Hall**, at your earliest convenience.

Ms. Dana Hall
Operations Coordinator
Children's Defense Fund, *CDF Freedom Schools*® program
p (202) 662-3555
e dhall@childrensdefense.org

If you have specific questions about the Funders Initiative, please contact me directly. We hope you will join us in **Knoxville, TN on Thursday, June 6, 2013** as we explore the *CDF Freedom Schools* program together.

For more information about the *CDF Freedom Schools* program, and the positive impact it is having on the lives of children and youth across the country, please visit our website at www.freedomschools.org, or email us at freedomschools@childrensdefense.org.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. We look forward to your participation in the **2013 Funders Initiative**.

Sincerely,



Cameron Van Patterson, Ph.D.
Director of Internal Operations and Quality Assurance
Children's Defense Fund, *CDF Freedom Schools*® program
p (202) 662-3654 | f (202) 662-3580
e cpatterson@childrensdefense.org
www.freedomschools.org



The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective and independent voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations.