

## You Are the Village: How Your Gifts Support Children and their Families



You are the village supporting the Gramajo family, so the children have a chance for a better life.

Finances are tight for the Gramajo family, as for so many families in Paterson. Dad's active military service means he's often away from home. Mom works hard as a home health aide. Despite challenges, the Gramajos are determined to give their children a better life.

The mom, Beverly, first came to Oasis as a student studying to improve her career. When she found work as a home health aide, she enrolled her daughters in the Oasis After-School Academy.

This program is a lifeline for this family.

Oasis picks up the girls from school every weekday and gives them a hot dinner, homework help, and academic enrichment. When the public school told Beverly her daughter was struggling with reading, she immediately turned to Oasis for help. The Oasis reading specialist worked intensively with the child, and today, the girl is reading at grade level.

When she learned her eldest daughter was being bullied at school, Beverly again turned to Oasis. The Oasis social worker connected with the school counselor, who intervened to stop the bullying.

The family faced severe hardship when Beverly was forced to take a leave of absence for the birth of her fifth child. No work means no pay. Again, Beverly turned to Oasis, and received baby formula and food bags to ensure the children were fed.

The Oasis staff is like an extended family for the Gramajo family, investing in the children's future and providing them with opportunities they might not otherwise have.

These children are succeeding at school because you support this family through the Oasis After-School Academy. They, and so many other children and teens, look forward to a brighter future because of you.

**"It takes a village to raise a child."**

**Children thrive when they are supported by community.**

**Economic pressures, demanding work hours, and family stress isolate parents and leave children without the support they need.**

**YOU ARE THE VILLAGE that nurtures the Gramajo girls and so many other children.**

## A Message from Executive Director Jennifer Brady

Dear Friend,

As I reflect on the past year, I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for your unwavering support. Your generosity has made a profound impact on the lives of countless women and children.

While I can report on the number of meals served (91,451) or food bags distributed (5,667) in the past year, it's harder to describe Oasis's less tangible impact: The ways in which just being a part of the Oasis community changes the lives of women and children.

This newsletter, with the stories of Leo, Kymyrah, and the Gramajo family, gives you a sense of how Oasis offers women and children a community where they belong and feel respected and valued. I can't put a number on this or measure it precisely. But it's there. Because of your support.

I look forward to a new year in partnership with you as we continue our shared mission: To help women and children rise out of poverty.

Wishing you a joyous and prosperous new year.

In gratitude,



Jennifer Brady  
Executive Director

## Mary Ellen, You, and The Power to Choose



Women "shop" (free of charge) for the toys that you donated. The toys are placed on display over weeks of preparation by a team of volunteers overseen by Mary Ellen.

Mary Ellen is the amazing woman who has spearheaded the distribution of over 5,000 toys to children of Paterson every Christmas for the past 24 years. She's been an Oasis volunteer for even longer. (See the results of her dedication above.)

"I started helping Oasis women and children celebrate Christmas when Oasis was still a small soup kitchen. We handed out coloring books, crayons, and candy canes to the women and children coming for a hot meal."

Since then, Mary Ellen has helped develop the unique Oasis Christmas gift program. Every December, she leads a team of volunteers who sort the thousands of gifts Oasis supporters like you donate. They display the toys on long tables in the Oasis Wellness Room, unwrapped and organized by children's ages.

Once the Oasis "toy store" is set up, women are invited in (on two very special and joyful days) to choose toys for their children.

"It's important for mothers to freely choose toys for their children. They can see what their child would like and pick it for themselves." The autonomy, the ability to choose, makes women feel respected. "Oasis empowers women with nowhere else to go in everything it does."

Mary Ellen's dedication is inspiring. But she is only one shining example among so many of you—Oasis donors and volunteers—who participate in this compassionate community that aids and empowers women, children, and families in need at the holidays and throughout the year.

# How You Helped a Boy by Teaching his Mother

Kymyrah left high school in her junior year. She was pregnant with her first child, a son.

Her son struggled increasingly in school as he grew, and it pained her to watch his struggle. He was placed in a remedial classroom. She couldn't help him with his homework, having left school so early herself. She felt helpless.

One day, two years ago, she and her mother came to Oasis for a hot meal. She learned about the free GED program and enrolled, motivated by a desire to help her son. She wanted to show him that she, too, struggled to learn. And that she could overcome.

She began doing her GED homework by his side, often asking for his help. She had always watched his frustration, and she told him, as they worked together, that she got frustrated, too. "I'm like you are," she would say. He told her he was proud of her.

A year later, her son's teacher called. His grades had improved so much that they removed him from the remedial program and placed him in a regular classroom. He's now 12 years old and flourishing in school.

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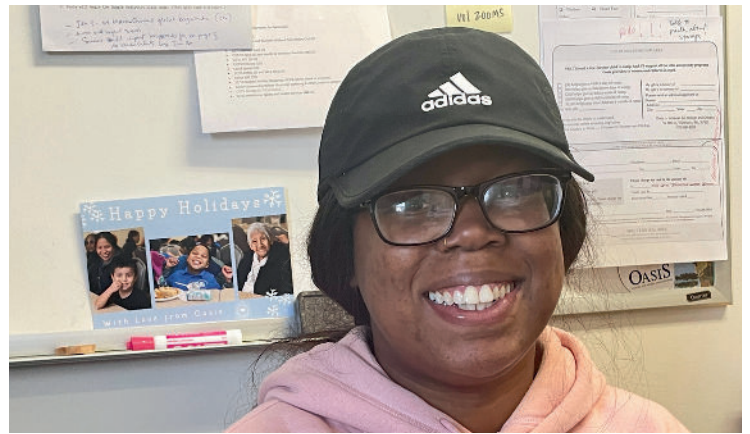
# How You Helped a Boy by Giving Him a Mentor

Christian has been an Oasis After-School student since he was in kindergarten. He entered the Oasis Teen Boys Program as an eighth grader this year. Leo, the program coordinator, mentors Christian.

Says Leo: "He's come to me for guidance over the past few years. His parents divorced last year, and Chris' heart was broken. I worked with him a lot. We talked. He was angry, but he's not angry anymore. He doesn't hold it against his parents now. He understands it's life. It's an adult thing."

Says Christian: "Leo has made a big impact on my life. My dad left last Christmas, and I was so sad. He moved to California. Leo talked to me. He talked to me a lot."

"Leo teaches me life lessons. He taught me how to change a tire, for example. He took his own tire off his



Your gifts to support the Oasis GED program have changed the lives of both mother and son.

Although Kymyrah entered the GED program to help her son, the learning process gave her new confidence. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a doctor. Now, she plans to pursue a radiology certificate once she earns her GED. Her dedication to her son has ignited her own aspirations.

Kymyrah exemplifies everything Oasis is about: She is humble, sweet, and articulate. She is selfless and devoted to her children.

Thank you for offering Kymyrah the opportunity to change her son's life, while, at the same time, changing her own.



Your support of Oasis after-school programs gives young men, like eighth-grader Christian, mentors who guide them to adulthood.

car here at Oasis and showed us boys how to replace it. I can change a tire now.

"I like Leo because he's funny and he's reliable. Even if you're sad, he can make you laugh. He has a good personality. When the teachers give me a lot of homework, he helps me to do it.

"Leo teaches me how to be a proper man."

# Poverty Persists Will You Help?

In the wake of the pandemic, child poverty across the US has doubled. The count of individuals grappling with food insecurity has grown to 3.5 million. Despite a long war against poverty, women and children continue to lead lives of hardship.

The statistics reveal a harsh reality lived by the women and children who come through the doors of Oasis every day.

There is, for example, the woman who recently came to Oasis hoping for a food bag. Having lost access to Food Stamps (for reasons she couldn't understand), her family was without food. She had gone to several food pantries and was told repeatedly that she'd have to wait until her registration paperwork cleared before she could be given a bag of food. Meanwhile, her children were hungry.

And there is the woman who came to Oasis for ready-made food. She had been evicted from her apartment and was living in her car. She came asking for food pantry items that didn't require cooking or preparation—she needed snack foods she could eat in her vehicle at night.

Every day there are children who receive a hot meal in Oasis after-school programs who might not otherwise eat dinner. Teenage boys who participate in the Oasis Teen program, partly



Because you support the Oasis hot meal program and food pantry, women and children living in poverty receive a respite from hunger.

because they know they'll be given a hot dinner. And workers toiling in nearby factories who eat their noon meal at Oasis because even though they work, they can't afford lunch.

Will you help these women and children?

Your support matters greatly to those who struggle.

## You can shape the future.

Have you considered:

- A gift in your will?
- Beneficiary Designations?
- Qualified Charitable Distributions?

For more information, please contact Laetitia at 973-881-8307 x 105 or [laetitiacairolino@oasisnj.org](mailto:laetitiacairolino@oasisnj.org).

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YES, I'll provide a hot meal or a bag full of healthy shelf-stable foods, such as tuna fish, beans, and cereal, to a women and child facing the extraordinary challenges of poverty. And I'll support all Oasis programs that fight poverty.

- \$30
- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- \$500
- \$1,000
- \_\_\_\_\_

To give with a check, please use the enclosed envelope. Check payable to:  
Oasis — A Haven for Women and Children

You can use this QR code or give securely at [oasisnj.org/donate](https://oasisnj.org/donate).

Thank you for your generosity.

