

## You Helped a Bullied Child Now, She's Pursuing her Dreams to Become a Doctor



You gave Mahfouza refuge throughout her childhood, and this contributed to her stability and resilience and ability to thrive as an adult.

Mahfouza is a brilliant 28-year-old, now completing a master's degree in biomedical sciences. She attended the Oasis After-School Academy as a child and returned recently to visit. When we asked how she believes Oasis impacted her, she told a story:

One day at school in the second grade, I was given Yoo-hoo chocolate milk. When the class went outside to play, another child pushed me into the dirt and kicked the Yoo-hoo out of my hand. When I told the teacher, she yelled at me—not the other child. I was covered with dirt and my chocolate milk was gone.

Mahfouza couldn't cry at school, because the teachers didn't help her. She couldn't cry at home either, because she didn't want to burden her parents, who worked grueling factory jobs to support five children.

So, when I got to Oasis that afternoon, I ran through the door and burst into tears. One of the teachers sat down and listened to me. Then, she gave me chocolate milk.

For years, Oasis was Mahfouza's sanctuary. "At school, I was bullied because I was the only child there from Bangladeshi heritage. Kids called me 'dirty face.'"

And life at home wasn't easy either. She was a translator for her parents, a caretaker for her younger siblings.

But at Oasis? "If I was hungry, I could tell a teacher and she'd get me something to eat. At home, I couldn't tell my parents, because I knew we just didn't have enough food.

"At Oasis, I wasn't just the child who could translate or clean the house or take care of my parents or my brothers and sisters. I was me."

All these years later, Mahfouza remembers clearly how Oasis *made her feel*.

**You gave Mahfouza the emotional support and sense of belonging she needed to survive a difficult childhood.**

And in doing so, you helped her develop into the successful young woman she is today: A young woman, with a graduate degree, and plans to attend medical school.

Thank you.

## A Message from Executive Director Jennifer Brady

Dear Friend of Oasis,

**"It's the love,"** says Sierra.

You might not realize it when you send in a donation to support Oasis, but your gift doesn't just provide groceries, hot meals, and education. Your gift gives women and children a sense that they are loved. Valued. Seen.

And this makes all the difference. The stories about individuals that you read here are just a snapshot of your impact. Every day, 1,500 women and children come through the Oasis doors. All of them feel your kindness.

And, you impact not only these 1,500 individuals who walk into the building. Your support improves the lives of their children, parents, siblings. This entire community.

The families you help face a daily struggle to purchase enough food; to pay the rent; to keep their households afloat. Your generosity helps them face these difficulties and it does more: It gives them strength and stability, so they can move ahead.

With my deepest gratitude,



Jennifer Brady  
Executive Director

## Your Gift of Community Is Like Medicine to a Woman in Need

Ten years ago, Sierra first walked through the doors of Oasis with her ten-year-old son. She had lost her job and was homeless. She had no money for food.

Today, at 39, Sierra continues to face unthinkable challenges. And she relies on Oasis for help.



Sierra suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure. She works cleaning floors from 7 to 3, while raising five sons in transitional housing. She worries constantly about money, childcare, the physical strain of her job, and about her sons, who are bullied at school.

Sierra knows the *real* difference Oasis makes: "It's not always about the food or the clothing that you give me here. **It's the love.** I talk to people here—to Wanda, Thelma, Jim [Oasis staff]. They help me get through the day.

"People here help me get from point A to point B. [Sierra is now applying for a better job with the help of the Oasis Job Specialist.] Here I get motivation, strength, and wisdom.

"Coming here helps me keep my head on my shoulders. It makes me feel more stable. It gives me strength, and I need to be strong for my kids."

Your support provides the human connection critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. You've given Sierra a community that helps her heal and helps keep her stable for her children.

Thank you.

Research shows that the chronic stress of financial uncertainty, housing instability, and social isolation damages mind and body. It literally sickens people.

But social support reduces stress hormones and changes brain chemistry.

When Sierra talks to Oasis staff, it's as if she's receiving medicine.

Thank you for offering social support to Sierra and women like her.

# You Helped a Mother Save Her Son And Send Him to College



You helped Marcus move from isolation to college acceptance, filling out applications he never thought he could complete. Marcus is one of just 80 teens you've helped achieve, or continue in, college this year.

Marcus was just 15 when his world shattered again: The third eviction notice for his family, the third move in as many years.

Marcus, a high school freshman then, stopped going to school. He retreated to his bedroom, endlessly playing video games alone. The relentless stress had triggered severe anxiety, making school impossible for him.

His mother, Carmen, was drowning too. The evictions had drained her savings. She knew Marcus was in serious trouble. She had no where to turn: Marcus's public high school wouldn't help.

But you did, through Oasis.

Oasis social workers helped Carmen navigate the school system to get Marcus an IEP for his learning differences. They connected him with medical support for his anxiety and arranged home schooling while he couldn't cope with the traditional classroom setting.

Oasis helped Carmen tackle the practical stuff—utility bills, housing assistance, the maze of paperwork that comes with eviction.

Even while Marcus was not attending school, he continued to come into Oasis and check in with the Oasis teen social worker and the Oasis guidance counselor. They helped him pass his driving test. They found him a summer internship.

Then, last fall, something amazing happened: Marcus walked back into a Paterson high school as a senior. The Oasis teen program social worker (who works at the school) was right there to support him.

Over this past year, working with the Oasis guidance counselor, Marcus has earned a scholarship to attend Ramapo College.

You gave a teenage boy his future back.

## Your Impact Through Oasis Guidance Counseling

Service Provided	# Served
<b>New College Applicants</b> Complete application process, essays, FAFSA, financial aid search	39
<b>Returning Oasis College Students</b> FAFSA renewal, major selection, college navigation support	34
<b>Elementary Students</b> High school choice guidance	4
<b>Alternative Pathways</b> Career exploration beyond traditional college	3

**One Oasis guidance counselor. Eighty futures changed. Your donations made every single success possible.**

# 11-Year-Old Lucas Shouldn't Have to Feed his Father Will You Step In?

Lucas is eleven years old and looks like a prototype of a pre-adolescent boy. He has the gangly height of a sudden growth spurt and the round soft face of a child. His hair is too long and his bangs curl upwards.

Lucas has been attending the Oasis After-School Academy since first grade. He's bright and creative. At a recent Oasis after-school celebration he grabbed a microphone and sang a Johnny Cash song. A perfect rendition.

Lucas lives in a two-bedroom apartment with his grandmother, father, and uncle. The grandmother does everything in her power to keep them afloat. The family is troubled. Lucas is deeply affected by their struggle.

One Saturday morning before classes began, the Oasis program manager watched Lucas fill a paper plate with breakfast foods—eggs, muffins, bread—in the Oasis Soup Kitchen. He carefully covered the plate with a napkin and headed for the door.

"Lucas, why are you leaving?" she asked.

"I need to bring my father breakfast," he said.

**"He's hungry. There's no food in the house."**



This eleven-year-old boy bears the weight of feeding his father.

**Your \$50 gift can provide a food bag that will feed Lucas's family.**

Lucas's household is barely holding it together. The cupboards are empty.

**Will you help lift this burden from Lucas's shoulders?**

**Your \$50 gift will fill provide groceries.** Lucas shouldn't have to feed his father—but you can help feed them both.

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**YES! I will help fill Lucas's empty cupboards with groceries. And I'll help support Oasis's critical antipoverty services.**

- ☐ \$50 to provide a food bag for Lucas's family
- ☐ \$100 to help two families like Lucas's
- ☐ \$150 to provide food bags for three families
- ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ My best gift to help as many families as possible

**You can give securely online at [oasisnj.org/summer](https://oasisnj.org/summer)**

**You can give by check to Oasis – A Haven for Women and Children.**

**You can give a gift of stocks or through a Donor Advised Fund at [oasisnj.org/givebetter](https://oasisnj.org/givebetter)**