

# TIME TO PASS THE BATON...

Dear HOME WORKS! family and friends,

*In response to the enormous need for school-home connection in low-performing schools, and for parents of struggling students to be engaged in their children's education, I founded HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program. That was 14 years ago, and now it's (past) time to turn HOME WORKS! over to new leadership. I'm thrilled to announce that Colleen Polak, our current Director of Program Operations, will be the next CEO on July 1.*

*Colleen brings a passion for the work of engaging parents and teachers, and has a bold vision for our future. She has been overseeing our work in the schools and has played a critical role in building an even stronger relationship between HW! and our schools. I will remain with HW! as the Director of Philanthropic Partnerships until we find a new person to raise the financial support that Colleen needs to fulfil the vision and mission of HOME WORKS!. After that I will be Chief of GSD – Get "Stuff" Done!*

*I'm proud of having started HOME WORKS!. We need ALL our children to come to school ready to learn, stay on or above grade level, graduate and go on to college or some other post-secondary institution and graduate from there ready for a job or a career or more education. And it starts at home. It's about school and home working together. We are so lucky that you share this vision and have partnered with us to make it happen. I'm proud that HW! is in a strong position to go even further.*

*Because of you, our board, staff, and donors, we have trained and paid hundreds of teachers who have made tens of thousands of home visits in 116 schools since we began. Our work is more important than ever. So many problems in our schools and communities would be solved if moms, dads, grandparents, and teachers were on the same page and could learn from each other. Families can't do this work alone, and neither can teachers. They need each other to help our students succeed in school and in life.*

*I know Colleen will continue HW!'s reputation for excellence and innovation in parent teacher relationships. Please join me in congratulating Colleen and in welcoming her as HW!'s next CEO.*

Sincerely  
**Karen Kalish**

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## LOOKING AHEAD



I am excited to introduce you to Colleen Polak, our new CEO of HOME WORKS!. She brings a wealth of compassion and experience to the position, not to mention that she is the mother of two adorable little girls.

Colleen has worn several different hats in her career, from defense attorney for indigent clients, to nonprofit legal department director, to nonprofit program executive. As you can see, the focus of her career has always been to offer a hand up to individuals so that they, too, can have a chance of reaching their dreams.

On behalf of the entire Board, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Karen for seeing a need and starting this organization. She has nurtured it and grown it and is now doing the hardest thing a founder can do: entrusting it to the next generation of leadership. We are also grateful that she will continue on in her new role.



**Harriet Blickenstaff**  
*HW! Board Chair*



**Colleen Polak**  
*HW! New CEO*

I'm honored to lead such an important, respected, and impactful organization. HOME WORKS! is critical to the long-term health of our region. The students our work supports today are the leaders of tomorrow, and by strengthening the link between school and home more families and schools will have what they need to support children in reaching their potential.

Over the past year with HOME WORKS!, I've seen the power of relationships, the generosity of our community, the promise and resilience of youth, the love parents and families have for their children, the strength of brilliant educators, and the potential of strong connections between school and home. With the support of our passionate staff and Board, I'm excited to build upon Karen's work of the last 14 years and support even deeper engagement between school and home. Together, we can empower families, schools, and communities to work together to ensure success for every student.



### HOME WORKS! Teacher

Attendance is a big struggle. These kids are really checked out and burned out. I scheduled a virtual meeting with one student who wasn't coming to school at all. After the visit he started coming to class regularly — his attendance went from 0% to almost 90%. His grades and mental health have also improved now that he's in school.



*Program Leader Betty Tobler leading a virtual home visit training for Eagle College Prep Fox Park teachers and staff on Zoom.*

## GETTING PATRICK HENRY CONNECTED

Since 2015, HOME WORKS! has partnered with Patrick Henry Downtown Academy in St. Louis Public Schools. Last spring, we realized that the pandemic would be catastrophic for the students and families at Patrick Henry, many of whom had no access to the internet and were already behind and facing substantial barriers to their success before COVID-19.

At Patrick Henry, the pandemic laid bare some of the educational and resource inequities facing families across the country. The achievement gap is widening and this year many of the most vulnerable students, like those at Patrick Henry, have been forced into the least desirable learning situations, with inadequate tools and support systems to navigate them. This pandemic school year has pushed teachers and administrators to the brink as they struggle to attend to all of the additional challenges.

That is why, in August of 2020 we launched the Getting Patrick Henry Connected initiative (GPHC). Its mission is to ensure that students, parents, and teachers at Patrick Henry Downtown Academy have the resources, volunteer support, and relationships they need to address the burdens caused by COVID-19 and to strengthen the support structure for future challenges.



**Of Patrick Henry teachers reported that HOME WORKS! was critical to the success of getting students connected to the internet for virtual learning.**

Since August, GPHC has rallied a community of support around the school and its families. Our charge has been to meet whatever needs emerged this school year. This has resulted in over 800 volunteer hours donated, distributing over \$3,500 in groceries, as well as hundreds of books, headphones, iPad stands, desks, and other supplies that allowed students to fully participate in virtual learning. We provided technology training to parents and teachers. We led a number of interventions to improve attendance and engagement in school. We hold bi-weekly parent resource workshops on Zoom. While there have been many wins and learnings along the way, the most valuable product of GPHC is a school and its surrounding community that is more trusting, communicates better, and is more connected to each other.



*Patrick Henry parents attending school orientation where they picked up supplies including a training manual for the Apple iPad developed by LaunchCode for HW!*

**WOW!!!**



### Joy S., Volunteer

My experience volunteering with HOME WORKS! has renewed my hope in the power of connection. It has been a gift to get to know my student Buddy and his wonderful foster mom and to be allowed into their lives. With the help of his Patrick Henry teachers and HOME WORKS! staff and volunteers, my Buddy is now reading above grade level! On his last report card he got all As and Bs, as well as the highest marks for citizenship. I am very proud of him!



*Patrick Henry student enjoying a Zoom reading session with his Buddy.*



# SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

## Patrick Henry Downtown Academy, St. Louis Public Schools (St. Louis City)

Total number of students: 219

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 193

*"The Getting Patrick Henry Connected initiative made virtual learning actually possible. From getting parents to attend orientation, to calling home to ensure kids were set up on the iPad and connected to the internet, real virtual learning would not have been possible without it. All of the additional burdens of virtual learning would have been placed on teachers, without HOME WORKS! working in the background." Dr. Deborah Rogers - Principal | Patrick Henry Downtown Academy*

## Stix Early Childhood Center, St. Louis Public Schools (St. Louis City)

Total number of students: 501

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 547

*"Virtual home visits cultivate a deeper relationship and build bridges between students, their parents, and teachers. I had a student who wasn't focusing academically. When I shared this with the mom at the home visit, we became a team. The three of us had a conversation about the importance of paying attention in class. When the student came back to school the next day he had a whole different outlook. He wanted to do his best to prove to his mom and me that he had listened to our discussion. I saw his reading scores go up. In fact, he jumped five reading levels!" Teacher | Stix Early Childhood Center*

## Beasley Elementary, Mehlville School District (St. Louis County)

Total number of students: 240

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 244

*"Before the virtual home visit one of my students would pick and choose which assignments she completed on the virtual days. During the virtual home visit I showed my student and her mom how to find things and made mom aware of this situation. Since the virtual home visit, she has completed every assignment she's needed to and now gets weekly acknowledgement for completing all assignments on time."*

Teacher | Beasley Elementary

## Hannah Cole Primary, Boonville (Public School - Rural)

Total number of students: 340

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 303

*"I had a kindergartener struggle to remember content. It took six weeks just to remember her bus number. She didn't know any of her letters or sounds. I used the virtual home visit to show mom how to use online learning resources offered by the school at home. By December, the student knew all her capital and lowercase letters and sounds, and could find her own bus!"*

Teacher | Hannah Cole Primary

## Eagle College Prep, Fox Park (Public Charter School - St. Louis City)

Total number of students: 193

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 197

*"Opening the communication with certain parents has been the greatest, positive moment. I'm new to the school and not having known the families before was challenging. Every home visit has helped those relationships tremendously. After having their virtual home visit, parents are asking for more. I have seen kids' grades and attendance improve."*

Teacher | Eagle College Prep Fox Park

## Henderson Elementary, Francis Howell School District (St. Charles)

Total number of students: 693

Total number of first and second virtual visits: 624

*"It's so encouraging to have the second visit and see that a student has accomplished the goal we set at the first visit."*

Teacher | Henderson Elementary

*yes!*

## SCHOOL-HOME ENGAGEMENT:

A partnership between school and home where families, students, teachers, and school personnel are aligned around common goals and shared values to ensure student success.

For nearly 14 years, HW! built our program around in-person engagement and connection opportunities between school and home. When school buildings shut down and in-person interactions came to a screeching halt last March, we immediately pivoted to virtual home visits, changed our materials and training, and worked with teachers and families as deeply as technology would allow. We asked our schools “what do you need for your teachers, students, and their families to be successful this year” and did our best to meet those needs, from providing water bottles and hotspots to moving our training and school support online. We allowed ourselves to think differently about how our program is implemented and looked deeply and thoughtfully at our measures of success. We examined our organizational strategy. We connected with families in ways we hadn’t before and learned new ways to enhance our programming.

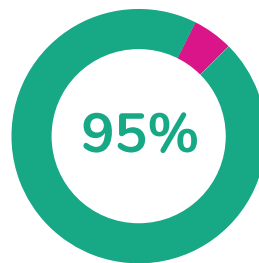
Innovation is one of HW!’s core values and we believe in meeting people where they are. This year we certainly put that into practice.

**IN A COMPLEX EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE, OUR BEST HOPE IS TO LEVERAGE THE SCHOOL-HOME CONNECTION.**

### GO DEEPER WITH DATA

From the beginning, we knew the importance of data for continuous improvement and to measure our success. Every fall, we receive an outside, independent evaluation of our programming for the prior school year. These reports enable us to reflect on our measures of success.

This year, instead of our training evaluations and post-visit and workshop parent surveys being collected on paper and going to our outside evaluator for end of the year evaluation, we digitized those items and took them in house. This allowed us to share surveys through new mediums, such as texts and email, ask more impactful questions, look at responses more frequently, and make in-year adjustments to program implementation.



**Of parents reported feeling more confident about how to support their child’s learning as a result of the virtual home visit.**

Next year, we are excited to go even deeper with data. Thanks to a generous donation from the Tilles Foundation, our team worked closely with a web development group to plan for, design, and build a proprietary web-based data system that will allow us and our schools to capture, analyze, and act on student and teacher data in near real-time. We are excited to launch this new program management database in the fall.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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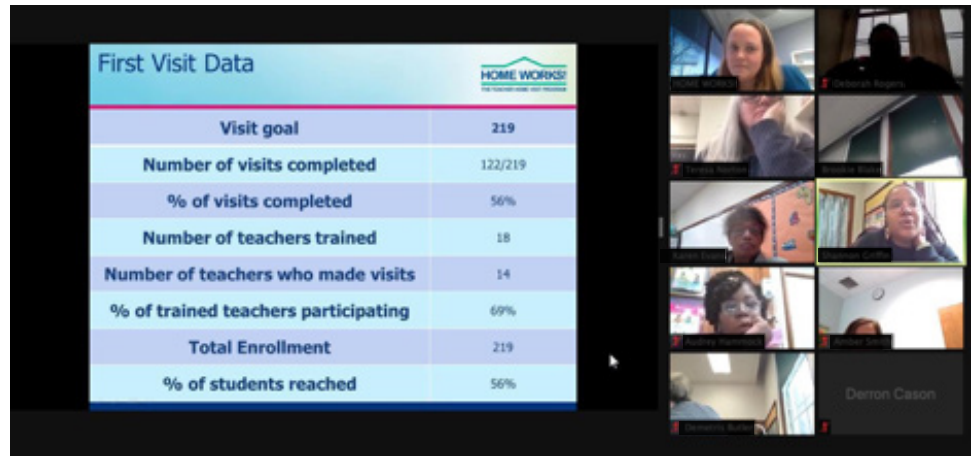
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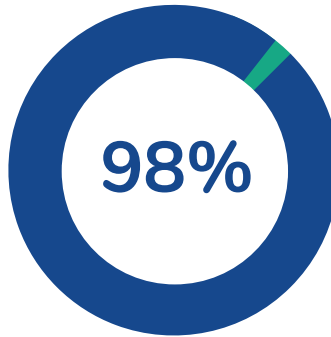
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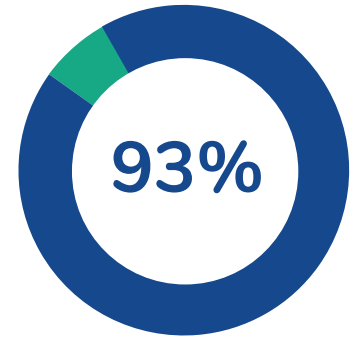
**Founder: Karen Kalish**



Program Leader Anna Gardner-Andrews reviewing performance metrics with teachers on Zoom.



Of parents reported spending more time practicing reading or math skills with their child as a result of the virtual home visit.



Of parents reported the Parent-Teacher workshops helped them review their child's progress in school.

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



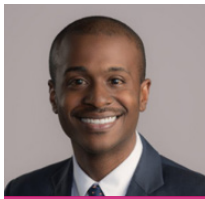
**Thomas Walker**



**Constance Taylor**



**Melissa Garcia**



**Christopher Bedell**



Patrick Henry proudly displays their HW! sign.

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT: MICHAEL STAENBERG



At the height of virtual learning, when students were learning from home, some of the teachers at Patrick Henry were noticing that many of their students were in bed trying to balance their Apple iPads. Others were lying on the floor looking at their devices in awkward positions. Our teachers polled their students to see who needed a table or a desk to work on. There were so many they turned to HOME WORKS!. We sent out an email to lots of people asking, "Who has a little table or desk they want to get rid of?" Two things happened: one – several people did and either brought them to my garage so we could take them to the families or took them to the school themselves, and two - one person – Michael Staenberg – told us to call his friend Dave Singer, the President of STL Warehouse of Fixtures that sells office furniture. Then Michael said the magic words, "Have him make as many as you need and I'll pay for them." And he did. - Karen Kalish

*(Note – The same thing happened with Michael a few years ago. I was looking for helmets for a class at Vashon H.S. who had just gotten bikes donated to them. "Call my friend at Big Shark, get what you need, and I'll pay for them." And he did. That's who Michael is.)*



Patrick Henry student enjoying her new desk at home.



**Of parents who attended a Parent-Teacher workshop said they were likely to use the tools and resources they received to support learning at home with their child.**

### IN THE NEWS



HW! selected as 2021 What's Right with the Region Honoree



HW! named the KMOX "Voice of Caring" Partner for February



"I just want the chance to talk': Kids struggle to stay connected with virtual learning"



"HOME WORKS! Connecting teachers, parents and students in a virtual world"



**Jenna Hutson - Teacher** | Beasley Elementary

It is amazing how much a virtual home visit - just 30 minutes of laughing and talking together - can open doors and unite people.





**HW! IN THE NEWS**  
Recognition for our  
important work.  
(pg. 7)

**DONOR SPOTLIGHT**  
Thank you  
Michael Staenberg.  
(pg. 7)

**DATA OBSESSED**  
Thank you Tilles  
Foundation for our  
new database.  
(pg. 5)

**WOW!!!**

**CHANGING OF  
THE GUARD**  
Welcoming a new CEO  
(pg. 1 & 2)

**SPRING  
NEWSLETTER**  
THE TEACHER HOME VISIT PROGRAM

**FEWER BUT MORE**  
Fewer schools, more  
visits, increase  
by 117%.  
(pg. 4)

**yes!**

**NEW CONNECTIONS**  
Parent groups, reading  
puzzles, and wrap-around  
virtual learning support  
at Patrick Henry.  
(pg. 3)

