

Charles Coe of Incredible Kids Learning Center in Philadelphia Exemplifies Leadership in the CACFP

The Child and Adult Care Food Partnership is one of an array of tools Incredible Kids Learning Center uses to empower the Philadelphia community.

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Even before the pandemic, Charles Coe, Executive Director at Incredible Kids Learning Center, (IKLC) was already leading a truly exceptional childcare center with unique and necessary service offerings. IKLC specializes in providing high quality education, early intervention, and social support services to a diverse group of children from different ethnic backgrounds, children with disabilities and historically marginalized groups. Coe ensures that there is an equitable distribution of resource allocation in the communities IKLC serves.



Incredible Kids Learning Center is a CACFP provider, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition to that, it provides families and community members with food and personal care baskets and created the Incredible Kids Food Pantry to continue meeting the needs of the incredible people they serve.

And then the pandemic struck.

With these systems and beliefs in place, it's no surprise that Coe was prepared to pivot and improvise when Incredible Kids Learning Center families were struck low due to the pandemic. IKLC's existing social service offerings were launched into overdrive to better provide for their children and families. Coe began by increasing hours of operation and staff. While some providers were rolling back, IKLC was digging in.

Coe ramped up food and nutrition operations. Incredible Kids Learning Center prepared and delivered over 150 food and personal care baskets for families on a weekly basis. Many of its unhoused families are not able to make it back to their shelters in time for dinner. For those instances, IKLC offers a private dining room with meals already prepared from their on-site food pantry, ensuring that families have an opportunity to bond together over a meal, even in difficult times.

Housing is another area in which Coe elevated Incredible Kids Learning Center's support of families. Fifteen parents nearly lost their homes in the pandemic, and IKLC stepped in by contacting their mortgage companies, setting up payment arrangements, and secured the funding needed to save their homes. It provided one-on-one assistance with utility applications, rental assistance, subsidy applications and supportive services referrals. IKLC transitioned children and families who were living in shelters to transitional and HUD housing that was fully furnished by their organization.

The families of Incredible Kids Learning Center were even able to receive career and business support. As a result of the pandemic, IKLC had 54 parents lose their jobs. It provided job placement and referrals, and single-handedly helped all 54 parents secure employment by serving as headhunters and an employment referral database. Staff transported parents to and from interviews. It commissioned barbers, hairstylists and tailors who cut and styled parents on premises for job interviews. IKLC's philosophy was that by investing in them now, they were investing in their future. Its efforts grew, and even extended outside their attendees. IKLC staff updated resumes and conducted mock interviews with up to 200 community members per week; under Coe's leadership they helped 18 community businesses secure grant funding as well as PPP and EIDL funding by guiding them through the application process.

Even though the scope of his efforts is enormous, the work of Coe at Incredible Kids Learning Center's work can be summarized simply: pay it forward without expecting anything in return because it is just the right thing to do. Coe himself describes it this way: "Having belief in someone is a very powerful thing and will have a very profound impact on the person to whom we are so blessed to work with. This level of responsibility should never be taken lightly but held in such high regard."

Since 1986, National CACFP Sponsors Association has served as a national platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Community. The mission of [NCA](#) is to bring members information on legislation, regulation and advocacy issues, share resources among the entire CACFP community, and provide an engaging, informative annual conference offering the largest CACFP networking and training opportunities in the nation. CACFP is an indicator of quality care. When children and adults are cared for by providers who participate in the CACFP, they are receiving the best nutrition available.

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