



The Leader Council

Empowering Youth Through Education

Within the safety and structure of our full-time residential environment, Mercy Home cares for kids in crisis. Our program of therapy and mentorship helps young people understand past traumas, make positive life changes, and build healthy relationships with others.

In order for children to achieve lasting success in their lives, they must also be given tools beyond shelter, guidance and therapy. It is essential that we equip them with a solid academic foundation and the means to access opportunity. A quality education can help a child break the cycle of abuse, neglect or poverty.

To help us build this foundation for every child at Mercy Home, we forged a partnership with a group of prominent women in the business and civic communities known as the Leader Council. Leader Council members are dedicated and committed advocates for children who work to help us bridge the education gap faced by so many of our young people.

Background—The Education Gap

Before children come to Mercy Home, many struggle with personal challenges that have taken a serious toll on classroom achievement. One out of every four youth accepted into our residential programs has special education needs. Some display learning disabilities that have been ignored or have gone unrecognized for years. Children come to us, on average, at least two years behind their peers academically. Many are three to five years behind. Unsafe environments, poor study habits, and general neglect have contributed further to this alarming gap in learning.

Leader Council Mission

In 2002, a group of professional women in greater Chicago, including founding chairman Mary Dempsey, Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, joined together to help us break down barriers to academic success. Today, the Leader Council improves access to educational and vocational opportunities for children living at Mercy Home and former residents in its AfterCare program.

Leader Council members donate time, talent, financial support and professional resources to open doors to learning and achievement for our youth. Thanks to their efforts, more young people from severely disadvantaged circumstances have gone on to success in higher education and are securing good jobs and building brighter futures.

The Leader Council is critical in securing funding for private schools and specialized learning centers that offer our children smaller classes and more personalized attention. Many young people who come to Mercy Home show remarkable academic improvement when placed in a new school where they can receive a fresh start and are allowed to catch up to their appropriate grade levels.

Our significant investment in education empowers our children to create lifetimes of success. Leader Council members are powerful engines of change in the lives of our youth. They act as ambassadors for Mercy Home, and advocate on our children's behalf within their communities. They utilize their personal and professional networks to benefit our young people. And, they help identify and secure corporate sponsorships for their signature event, the Leader Council Graduates' Luncheon.

The Leader Council draws members from among the premier ranks of numerous industries and is currently chaired by Sue Bettman, Executive Vice President, General Counsel, Corporate Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer, RR Donnelly. These highly accomplished and motivated volunteers have achieved unprecedented success in advancing education for disadvantaged young people.

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