

ANNUAL REPORT

2018



CHAT

Culture of Health - Advancing Together

Customs • Traditions • Language • Health • Acculturation

OUR MISSION



Foster the health and well-being of immigrant and refugee communities through education, arts, advocacy, and access to care.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2018 was another amazing year for Culture of Health - Advancing Together (CHAT). Thanks to our dedicated staff, donors, supporters, and volunteers, we were able to expand our services to more immigrant/refugee families while strengthening our resources and programs. We brought after-school and summertime educational support to immigrant and refugee children. We provided social and developmental support to women and girls. Also, we brought new public art to the Gulfton community.



Every day, 45,000 new people flee persecution and wars in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe, seeking asylum at the hands of international mercy. Houston has emerged as the United States' most welcoming city for refugees. Houston, specifically Harris County, welcomes 30 of every 1,000 refugees that the United Nations resettles around the entire world. Unfortunately, the challenges do not end when these refugees find refuge. Even though Houston has a booming economy, a world-class medical center, an affordable housing system, and diverse racial/ethnic communities, Houstonian refugees face language barriers and have a deficit of knowledge for navigating their new culture. CHAT fills a critical gap by helping guide refugees through these barriers.

Our Girl's Club for Success ("Girl's Club") addresses this gap by bringing together girls from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and offers them interactive workshops on personal wellness, physical and mental health. Our Girls Club offers positive cross-cultural communication in an open, discussion-based format. This valuable format allows them to re-establish a social and peer community in which they can benefit from each other's experiences and backgrounds as well as from their discussion leaders, adult American women. The Girl's Club expanded to two schools in 2018 and is expected to continue growing.

We are proud of the many educational support programs CHAT offers for children of all ages, from on-site school initiatives and after-school tutoring to summer camp activities and creative projects. In 2018, CHAT celebrated its third year of CHAT Academy, an afterschool program that offers both tutoring services and enrichment activities to foster the educational development of immigrant and refugee youth in Gulfton. Our Summer Camp integrated film and theater into a fun-filled series of learning opportunities for our students. And our volunteers and staff worked to ensure the ongoing success of every child enrolled.

This year also saw the creation of The Gulfton Story Trail, a series of twelve murals that represent the community. This project involved inviting school children and community members to write poetry and design murals based around their submissions for the public to enjoy. The main vision of the project is to highlight the stories of Gulfton's residents through poetry, public artwork, and photography. The project also aims to elevate the spirit and unify the Gulfton community through celebratory events.

We look forward to the next year, and the one after that, and the one after that, as we continue to grow our programs and services. We are continually looking for ways we can make a positive impact on the Gulfton community, its culture and its diverse population.

Thank you!

Dr. Aisha Siddiqui
CHAT Founder & Executive Director

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The financial year 2018 was another year of growth and positive evolution for CHAT on all fronts. The ongoing programs that include CHAT Academy, CHAT Summer Camp, and Girls Club For Success continue to provide pre-eminent contributions to our community. CHAT's continued robust volunteer presence, inclusive of interns and Schweitzer fellows, is constantly bringing intelligent, progressive, and energetic thinking to the CHAT enterprise. This is maintaining our relevance and responsiveness to our community's needs and is consistently catalyzing innovative solutions. In this vein, CHAT continues to foster partnerships with academic institutions in Houston, including the University of Houston Community Health Worker program and the University of Texas Master of Public Health program. A feather in our cap was the Gulfton Story Trail that raised CHAT's profile within Harris County and put the community of Gulfton 'on the map' (literally). It was gratifying to see CHAT featured in at least a dozen newspaper, TV, and radio stories. CHAT has 'arrived!'



CHAT continues to mature as an organization. Our board is energized, infused with a cadre of exciting new visionaries to lead the next strategic phase. Our 2019 board exemplifies our 'next generation' with an agile repositioning for the future. Evidence of this new vitality is demonstrated in CHAT's fiscal health with a continued and vital upward financial trajectory. The list of our donors and partners continues to swell. It is an honor that CHAT is recognized through tangible support from the generous and socially-aware corporate partners and individuals whose contributions keep this good work going.

CHAT's future is bright. We are now positioned as a hub for outreach to immigrant and refugee families in Gulfton, and as a front-line organization addressing social determinants of health in this underserved population. We are a training forum for the next generation of caring health professionals and teachers and a research partner with foundations and universities. Importantly, we are an oasis for immigrant and refugee families who seek to reach their full potential in their new home. Thank you to all who have supported CHAT in this important mission.

We look forward to continued growth and more good work well into the future.

Sincerely,

Ross Shegog

Ross Shegog,
CHAT Interim President 2018

Associate Professor, University of Texas Health Science Center Houston

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THE GULFTON STORY TRAIL

With a community representing more than 100 different cultures and speaking more than 50 different languages, Gulfton is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Houston. It is culturally rich, multilingual, and multicultural, and it boasts a long history of welcoming newcomers to Houston.

With a multifaceted approach targeting the social determinants of health through support, networking, and community engagement, Culture of Health Advancing Together (CHAT), is able to improve immigrant and refugee health and well-being by reducing isolation, facilitating acculturation, and connecting resources unlike any other existing organization in Houston.

CHAT partnered with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs and the Houston Arts Alliance to bring to Houston a series of 12 new murals highlighting the international diversity and cultural history of the Gulfton area. The series titled *The Gulfton Story Trail* is part of a pilot program 'Visit My Neighborhood' embarked under Mayor Sylvester Turner's Complete Communities Initiative.

The Gulfton Story Trail is an immersive art experience of twelve murals that tell the story of Gulfton and its people by highlighting their diversity. The murals represent important aspects of the lives led in Gulfton. Muralists were chosen from an open call for local artists and each mural was paired with one of twelve poems chosen from a community contest. More than 400 hours, 61 gallons of paint, and 259 cans of spray paint were used to complete the art.

The murals can be found on the walls of several schools, apartments, restaurants and businesses. The trail spans the entire Gulfton community, starting from Ashford Crescent Oaks and ending at Q-grill Halal by Westpark Tollway and Hillcroft Ave. They help remind refugees that the stories and cultures of where they came from are still relevant and part of the tapestry of their new community's story and culture.

The Gulfton Story Trail murals

"Moment of Brilliance" by Lindsay Burck

"Celebration of Diversity" by Jesús Sánchez

"Garden of Paradise" by Natalia Victoria

"Introspection of Self Reflection" by Sylvia Blanco

"Ethereal Vision" by Deanna Santiago

"They Come Here for Their Children" by Zavala Eliud

"All Your Dreams Come True" by Jesús Sánchez

"Harvey" by Alex Arzú & Jesse de Leon

"Worlds Collide" by Alex Arzú & Jesse de Leon

"There's So Much to Explore" by Jesús Sánchez

"Infinite Future" by Vivienne Dang

"Fun" by Alex Arzú & Jesse de Leon



"Celebration of Diversity" by Jesús Sánchez
at 5905 Rampart St. (on Gulfton St.)



"Harvey" by Alex Arzú & Jesse de Leon at
5930 Bellaire Blvd. (on Mullins Dr.)



"Infinite Future" by Vivienne Dang
at Jane Long Academy, 6501 Bellaire Blvd.



CHAT ACADEMY

CHAT Academy initiatives work to foster the educational development of immigrant and refugee youth, integrating them into the community and improving their chances of academic success. Through the program, school-age children are provided after-school tutoring services and enrichment activities. These include arts, photography, theater, music, language development, STEM workshops, and games and sports, including soccer.

The key purpose of the after-school tutoring program is to create a "space for success" by setting up the physical environment, providing supplies, and managing daily schedules in ways that help students learn. In 2018, 20 volunteers assisted CHAT staff in supporting the goals of CHAT Academy students.

There were 66 students enrolled in CHAT Academy in 2018. Most of the students were in elementary school (62.5%) with the remainder from middle school (37.5%). With an equal mix of boys and girls (50% of each), students comprised a diverse mix of cultures and languages.

20 Volunteers

66 Students

CHAT SUMMER CAMP

During the summer months, school-age children suffer from a decline in reading ability and other academic skills, making summer educational activities and continued learning essential to their ongoing success. CHAT Summer Camp provides a fun-filled program that includes academic activities such as workbooks and assessments to improve their skills in basic subjects. These are paired with creative projects including learning to create a film, acting, writing, and poetry to help combat the summer slide.

CHAT held a student film project in collaboration with Little Big Planet Theater Company, where students learned the basics of filming including lighting and acting. Theater class was one of the most enjoyable and successful Summer Camp projects. CHAT also hosted a creative writing competition that was open to Summer Camp students and the general public. The competition had multiple winners based on age group, offering as a prize free admission to a creative writing workshop taught by Writespace instructors.

CHAT Summer Camp had 30 students enrolled in the program in 2018 and 5 volunteers assisting. The students' ages ranged from kindergarten to 8th grade. The Camp was offered at minimal cost to participating families, with support coming in large part from CHAT donors and sponsors.

 **30** students  **5** volunteers



GIRLS' CLUB FOR SUCCESS



The Gulfton community in Southwest Houston houses a predominantly immigrant and refugee population. Unfortunately, the children in this community often have difficulties in the first few years upon arrival. Frequently, external stress factors including prejudice and pressures to assimilate add to internal stressors like developing identity while caught in conflicting cultures. These challenges affect girls in particular, since they often experience problems in social and emotional development.

CHAT's Girls' Club for Success ("Girls' Club") began in 2017 with funding from the Rich Family Endowment Grant. Girls' Club started at CHAT Academy with just 12 girls. Later that year, CHAT received a generous grant from the Menninger Foundation that made it possible to offer the program at Las Americas Middle School for Newcomers. The new site allowed CHAT to work with 45 participating girls from various backgrounds.

PARTICIPATION

- **Students: 45**
- **Volunteers: 6**

CHAT's goal was to create a program to engage and empower immigrant and refugee girls through social and emotional learning workshops. The workshop topics offered included storytelling, self-image, culture, community engagement, mindfulness, resilience, nutrition, wellness, and goal-making. CHAT collaborated with the Houston Center for Photography (HCP) to include a photo journaling component, called the 'Girls Own Story.' After the program concluded, HCP displayed the portraits at their exhibition.

In Fall of 2018, Girls' Club extended into Sutton Elementary. This increased the reach of the program to two school campuses. Student participants took part in weekly workshops, with FotoFest delivering their Literacy Through Photography curriculum on alternating weeks.

Girls' Club has seen many successes since it began. Participants have been enthusiastic about each workshop and show interest in the topics presented. Many students faced language barriers and were not able to fully express themselves through writing. The best results came from approaching each topic through discussion, visual and performing arts, and physical activity. Because Girls' Club participants spend most of their time in school completing assignments, CHAT worked to ensure Girls' Club was as engaging as possible.

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER COURSE

Community Health Workers (CHWs) serve as effective liaisons between health organizations and high-risk groups including immigrant and refugee populations. To better connect the Gulfton community's families to health resources, CHAT partnered with the University of Houston's Honors in Community Health (UH HiCH) organization to create a Community Health Worker course. CHAT trained seven volunteer students and seven Gulfton women in community health engagement and advocacy as part of this course.

Weekly sessions were held at the CHAT Academy during the 14-week long course. The sessions integrated lectures with discussions, group activities, and experiential opportunities. During the course, students learned CHW core competencies: communication skills, interpersonal skills, service coordination skills, capacity-building skills, advocacy skills, teaching skills, organizational skills, and information based on specific health issues. To better equip those who lacked technological resources, CHAT awarded two students with a laptop scholarship. By the end of the program, three UH students and five Gulfton-area women accumulated enough hours to receive a certificate of completion.

CHAT-UH's Fall 2018 CHW program served as a valuable pilot for grassroots CHW training in Gulfton. Overall, this CHW course succeeded in engaging immigrant and refugee women alongside second-generation immigrant female college students. The program developed participants' understanding of community health and exposed them to its numerous applications at the macro and micro levels. While most students did not pursue formal certification from the State of Texas, they gained skills and knowledge that will assist in their future health advocacy roles in community organizations and events.

SMALL FITNESS ROOM

Amongst the five goals of CHAT, "supporting Houston's immigrants and refugees in adopting healthy and productive lifestyles" stands as number one. This desire to expand on members' knowledge of health and well-being prompted the creation of the Small Fitness Room. In a room that stands 11ft 10in x 10ft 4in, several pieces of exercise equipment have been made available to support CHAT community members' health & wellness. The exercise equipment includes four yoga mats, ten two-pound weights, one workout mat, one Pro-Form Treadmill, one Exerpeutic Cycle Machine, and one Whole Body Vibration Plate Trainer Machine.

A social assessment of CHAT's Gulfton community by Texas Woman's University students found that community members did not have a strong understanding of fitness. Despite this lack of knowledge, they also held a desire to learn more about physical activity and the different exercises in which they were able to participate. As a result, the CHAT Small Fitness Room was created.

Access to CHAT's gym equipment and CHAT's health clinic with physicians enabled members with better options to improve upon their physical activity. Members found that the support of peers who kept them accountable helped them maintain physically active lifestyles. There was a significant increase in wellness and the confidence of those participating in physical activities. CHAT's achievement of providing education for the immigrant and refugee community on physical activity and its health benefits has proven to be successful.

VOLUNTEERS

CHAT acknowledges the many volunteers whose dedication and hard work made CHAT's accomplishments possible.

Jessica Abad
Sarah Abobaker
Hala Abood
Ayda Abraham
Areeba Ahmed
Hiba Ahmed
Nazeefah Akhter
Mahek Ali
Neha Ali
Rihab Alnahhas
Anas Alshawa
Stephany Alvarado
Saira Anjum
Crystal Arellano
Bex Arif
Mauricio Arriaga
Khalid Ashoor
Kainat Aziz
Lucinda Ba
Hannah Bonner
Tamam Bushnaq
Veda Charthad
Chelsea Cheung
Cora Davis
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Yvonne Annabel Oyeka
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Jeannie Shao
Saleha Sherwani
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Harris Siddiqui
Hiba Siddiqui
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Aisha Wani
Jacob Williams
Gabriel Yeung
Maggie Yip
Marcus York
Majda Zaied
Abdulrazzak Zarifa
Emerald Zaw
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Michelle Zhao

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Fatima Bari
Aisha Basra
Rosbel Brito
Karina Cavanaugh
Daniela Garcia
Mechie Gbolli
Christian Guzman
Bayli Hill
Chidera Ilochi
Sharon Joy
Shelby Khajarian
Karen Ordenez
Edith Pizano
Simi Randhwa
Hiba Siddiqui
Aisha Wani

Schweitzer Fellows

Jennifer Koshy
Sanjana Puri
Anjitha Sajhi
Sarah Sdrindola
Fatema Shipchandler

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University of Texas
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CHAT Board
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Leadership

Dr. Aisha Siddiqui,
CHAT Founder &
Executive Director



THANK YOU!

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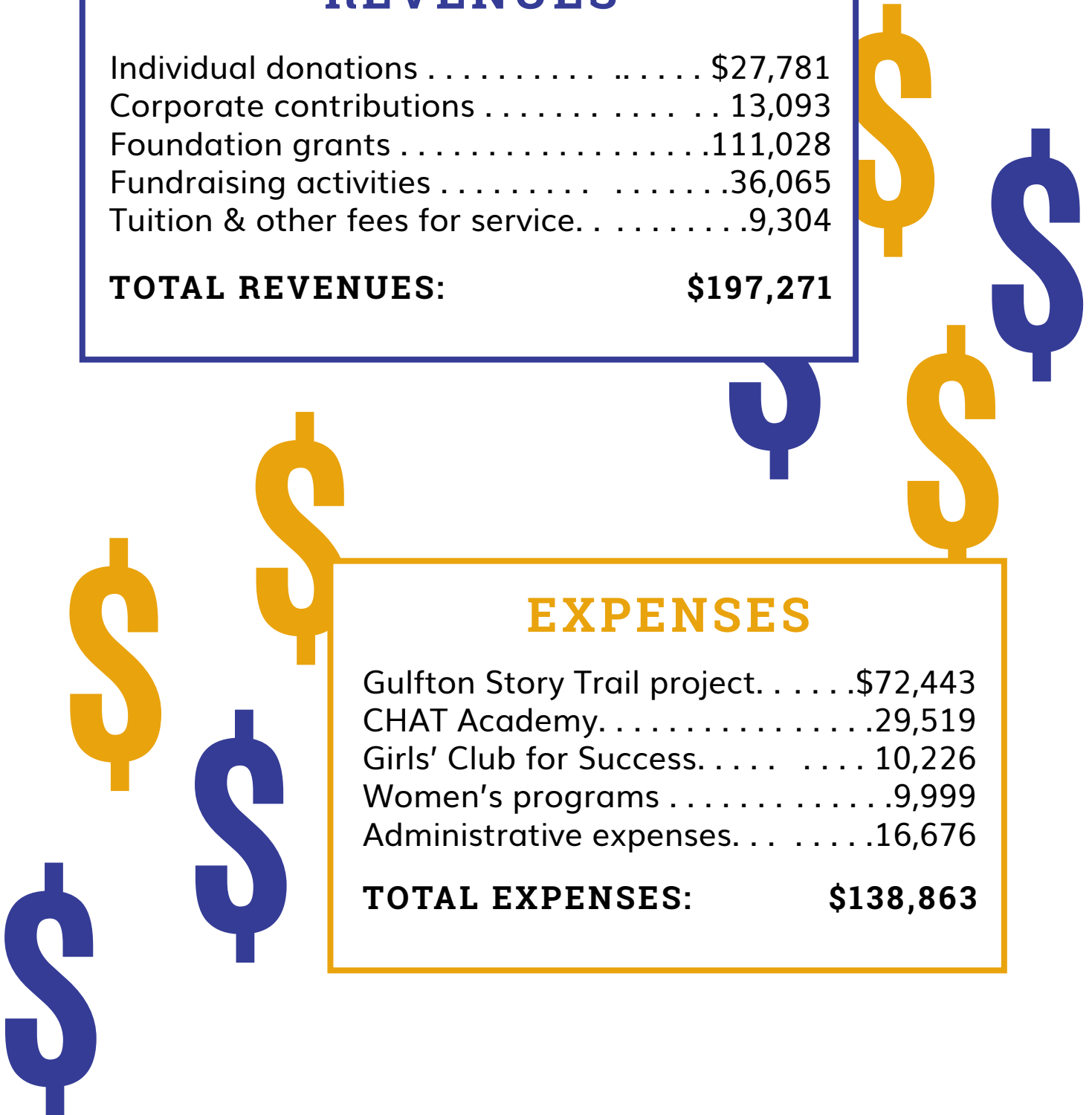
2018 FINANCIALS

REVENUES

Individual donations	\$27,781
Corporate contributions	13,093
Foundation grants	111,028
Fundraising activities	36,065
Tuition & other fees for service.	9,304
TOTAL REVENUES:	\$197,271

EXPENSES

Gulfton Story Trail project.	\$72,443
CHAT Academy.	29,519
Girls' Club for Success.	10,226
Women's programs	9,999
Administrative expenses.	16,676
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$138,863



DONORS & PARTNERS

Khalid Adhami
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Teresa Southwell for
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graphic design.

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Houston Arts Alliance

Vasif & Zakera Humayun

Athar Imam

Sabir Jamal

Mahmood & Kahkashan A Jawaid

Mid American Arts Alliance

Mohsin Mirza

Sabeen Najam, M.D., PA

San Miguel Investments, Inc.

Network For Good

Aisha Siddiqui & Salah U. Qureshi

Yusra Siddiqui

Mehr A. Tariq

United Psychiatry Institute

Lubna Zaidi

Asma Zainab



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