



Constitutional Rights  
Foundation Chicago



*We Stand at a Critical Crossroad*



Annual Report 2015-2016



## CRFC Gives Students Voice + Agency

*“Everyone has something important to do in the community.  
We all have a purpose to make something better.”*

– Student, Carl Von Linné Elementary School, Chicago, IL



### Our Mission

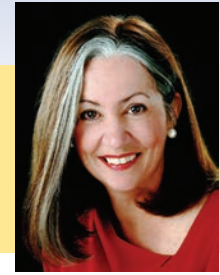
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) strengthens American democracy by providing elementary and secondary students with hands-on learning about the Constitution to prepare them for informed civic engagement. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, CRFC develops and delivers interactive programming, classroom-tested professional development, and problem-based curricula that address rights and responsibilities, law, and policy. Founded in 1974, CRFC is an independent 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Chicago.



## Letter from the Chairman and Interim Executive Director



Benjamin Ghess



Kathleen Ann Miller

Decisions made today will shape our nation for decades to come. This presidential campaign season's bitter rhetoric, the many controversies surrounding the political race, and the current political environment in America have reinforced CRFC's mission that citizens must be prepared for informed civic engagement. Without an understanding of what it means to live in a democratic society, it becomes impossible for citizens to engage in meaningful self-rule or to protect precious constitutional freedoms.

Constitutional rights and liberties are endangered when people neither know nor value them. Results of a 2015 Newseum Institute survey, "State of the First Amendment," show that too many Americans know too little about the Constitution and its significance in their lives. The survey found that only 10 percent of respondents knew the First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press. Only 19 percent knew it guarantees freedom of religion. Only 2 percent understood it guarantees the right to petition. Thirty-three percent of respondents were unable to name a single right guaranteed by the First Amendment!

CRFC and the work it does is more crucial than ever. It is an important time in our country for young people to be informed about our government, democracy and constitutional freedoms. CRFC offers students an opportunity to engage, discuss and debate about controversial issues with family, friends, other students and especially others with different views and to do it with knowledge and respect. CRFC fills the void in America's civics education of young people. There is value in an educated electorate. Our democracy is stronger when our citizens engage constructively.

The desire to understand our democracy is observed even in our youngest students. We know because we're in their classrooms. Engaging young people to become active and responsible participants in our society requires intention and attention. Children in CRFC programs learn how to think

critically and act responsibly. We instill the importance of living in a lawful society, respect for others, and cooperative problem-solving skills. CRFC's Kids & Police Connect program fosters at an early age mutually positive youth-police relations. CRFC's Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in the Classroom program links students with more than 600 lawyers throughout the Chicagoland area. In CRFC's action-based, participatory curricula, students join in meaningful discussions about issues that impact their lives. They determine ways to address those issues through civic engagement and work with policy makers to effect change.

CRFC also provides professional development training to hundreds of teachers, expanding their content knowledge. Our expert staff has developed classroom curricula that help teachers help students acquire a comprehensive grasp of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Our programs present complex issues in understandable ways at the appropriate grade level. Many CRFC lessons are taught by CRFC-prepared lawyers using storytelling, popular cultural references, thoughtful questioning, and analysis of real and imaginary cases and situations.

There may be no more important time for Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago than now. Many people stand with us. With this report we thank the teachers, lawyers, police officers, government officials, volunteers, board members and members of the community who through CRFC programming help children learn about and celebrate our Constitution and its Bill of Rights. We wish to express our gratitude for the generous individual, corporate and foundation donors who assure CRFC is a beacon for democracy's virtues.

At CRFC we believe all children should be prepared to participate responsibly in our democracy because the Bill of Rights and the Constitution are not self-enforcing. As Judge Learned Hand emphasized, "Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin Ghess".

Benjamin Ghess  
Chair, Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen Ann Miller".

Kathleen Ann Miller  
Interim Executive Director

## In 2015-2016 CRFC worked with



**17,799** Elementary, Middle, and High School Students

**432** Teachers in Chicago, across Illinois, and throughout the United States



**871** Attorneys and Professional Volunteers

**306** Elementary, Middle, and High Schools



CRFC recognizes young people are central to the future of our democracy.

Young people need tools and opportunities to practice clear and disciplined thinking in order to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

CRFC helps students realize their civic agency and capacities and add their voices to our democracy. By bringing our Constitution to life, CRFC enables young people to decide for themselves what it means to them and to American democracy.



## CRFC Makes A Difference

- **CRFC AND STUDENTS**

CRFC provides elementary and secondary students with hands-on learning about the Constitution to prepare them for informed civic engagement.

- **CRFC AND TEACHERS**

CRFC provides professional development programs and institutes for elementary and secondary school teachers that are designed to meet the evolving needs of educators in a rapidly changing civic landscape.

- **CRFC AND THE COMMUNITY**

CRFC recruits and places experts with real world experience who bring civics to life and demonstrate the power of law as an instrument of self-government for students throughout Illinois.



*“ I love meeting new people and discussing issues with students who were passionate about their views! ”*

– Student, Maine West High School, Des Plaines, IL

# PROGRAMS

## ABC Project: Action-Based Communities

ABC Project engages 4th-8th grade Chicago students in “civic learning through doing.” After teachers attend a workshop presented by CRFC, participating students explore their community; identify,



research and write about a problem; consider public policy options; design and implement a civic project; share their recommendations with local experts and policymakers; and reflect on what they've learned. The program provides students the opportunity to create and exhibit web-based presentations of their work, and promotes civic participation among students, their parents, and members of the community. Nixon Elementary 5th grade ABC participants in Chicago worked to create a safer area for play around their school in 2015-2016. Here's what they had to say about what they learned from the process:

**“We learned to be more confident by talking in front of other classes. We learned that we can change our community by helping each other and working together as a team/community/family. We can make a difference in our community by at least trying and not giving up on our ideas. We can do action steps like adults do when they are working on a plan.”**



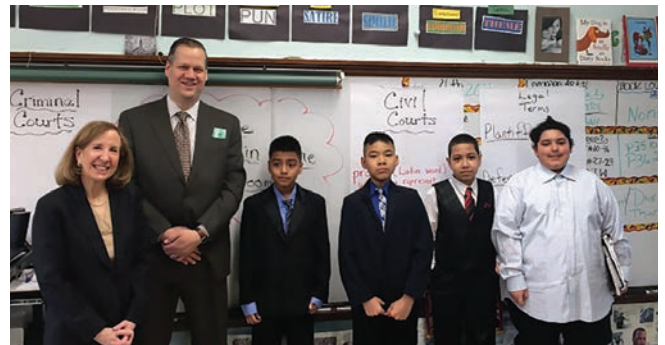
## Annual Conference for Teachers in Civics, Law & Government

At this conference high school teachers are able to attend a day-long, state-wide professional development conference to stay abreast of law-related, legal and

political issues. This annual conference brings nationally-recognized presenters, fresh interactive teaching methods and innovative classroom-ready materials for teachers to take back to class. Geoffrey R. Stone, former Dean of the University of Chicago Law School, offered the 2015 conference keynote presentation.

At this year's conference, CRFC recognized outstanding law-related education teachers in Illinois who are leaders in their field, encouraging students to think critically and act responsibly. Honored were:

- Andrew Trenkle of Maine South High School (Park Ridge) was presented with the 2015 Barbara O'Donnell Teacher of the Year Award for Illinois LRE High School Teachers.
- Deann Koster-Fester of Calhoun Middle School (Hardin) received the 2015 Edward J. Lewis II Teacher of the Year Award for Illinois LRE Elementary and Middle School Teachers.



## Edward J. Lewis II Lawyers in the Classroom Program

In our Lawyers In the Classroom program, attorneys provide students with knowledge about constitutional rights based on real life experiences, help develop their critical thinking skills, and offer young people an opportunity to have a variety of positive

*“When you walked in the room you were strangers to my students...but when you walked out you were allies, showing them the power they hold in their Constitution.”*

– Lawyers in the Classroom Teacher

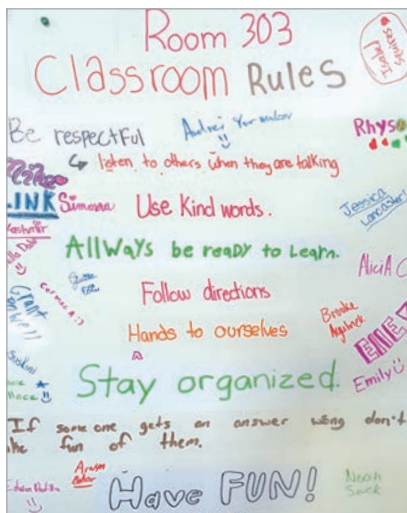


role models. Teams of volunteer attorneys and law students are partnered with elementary and middle school classes where they make multiple visits to lead interactive lessons about our legal system. CRFC provides the materials, trains the teachers and attorneys, and matches the volunteers with schools.

## Engage: School, Community, World

Engage: School, Community, World is a program that fosters community and civic engagement among 4th and 5th graders in the Chicago Public Schools. Based on a curriculum created with Chicago Public School teachers, Engage focuses on developing students' civic "toolkits" by encouraging problem-solving, decision-making, collaboration, and participation. Each year CRFC works with a cohort of Chicago Public School 4th and 5th grade teachers, providing them with professional development and support during the summer and school year as they implement the curriculum. Cohort members also have the opportunity to participate in a culminating civic experience at their school through *State v. Bean*—an interactive jury experience based on *Jack and the Beanstalk*—led by attorney volunteers.

**"It was my first year teaching 5th grade social studies, and this cohort helped me bring service learning and a civic-minded attitude to life in my classroom,"** said one of the 2015-16 participating teachers.



## Equal Justice Under Law

High school teachers of law and government classes often report that their students have difficulty connecting a constitutional legal question to public policy. *Equal Justice Under Law*



(EJUL) provides students with opportunities to make this connection by studying a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision and then applying that understanding to a related public policy question.

In 2015, students examined the decision in the First Amendment case, *Walker v. Texas Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Inc.*, to determine whether specialty license plate messages are government speech or private speech. Over 1,200 high school students from 13 high schools statewide studied the case. During the culminating conference, over 170 student delegates acted as both justices and legislators to analyze relevant public policy and share their recommendations with legal experts and policymakers.

**"What impresses me most about students participating in Equal Justice Under Law is their interaction with experts and the considerable thought they put into their questions. Students ask questions that are on point, insightful and focused."**

— James S. Whitehead, Senior Counsel, Sidley Austin LLP

## Professional Development

CRFC conducts workshops, day-long seminars, and multi-day institutes for schools, school districts, and networks of teachers who are interested in developing their civics knowledge and classroom skills in a collegial, hands-on format. **New Birth of Freedom** and **Supreme Court Institutes** serve our high school partners and **ABC Project, Engage: School, Community, World, Mock Trial, More Perfect Union** and **Primary VOICE** serve our middle school partners.

# PROGRAMS



## Illinois Youth Summit

Illinois Youth Summit provides hundreds of high school students with opportunities to partner with adult policymakers to address current—often controversial—issues that affect youth. The 2016 Summit invited participating students to discuss a roster of current issues via an online discussion board. With over 500 votes cast, the 2016 Summit students selected the following policy questions:

- Should the U.S. Congress amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity illegal?
- Should Illinois offer up to four years of free tuition to full-time in-state students enrolled in its public colleges and universities?

Over 1,300 high school students at 16 high schools selected and explored these policy questions, sharing information and recommendations through position statements, service projects, and presentations. These students involved over 1,500 of their peers in a survey on the Summit issues and reached nearly 7,000 other students and community members through Summit service projects, such as Chicago's Mather High School's public service announcements on amending the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity. During the culminating Summit, student delegates shared their recommendations with state and federal policymakers and were recognized for their service by the Executive Director of the Serve Illinois Commission.

## Kids & Police Connect

In spring of 2016, CRFC partnered with the Chicago Police Department to pilot a new program called Kids & Police Connect. Recognizing communities

and police must work together to gain confidence in each other, Kids & Police Connect uses on-site interactions between students, police officers, and recruits. The day-long experience, preceded and followed by CRFC lessons at school, allows 4th and 5th grade students to learn through role-play, conversation and simulation. The goal of Kids & Police Connect is to have children understand what police officers do as their jobs and their role in the community. **“We got to see and feel like what it would feel like to be in a [police] situation and how to solve a problem,”** wrote one student. **“Something that surprised me was how nice the officers were. On TV, it makes it look like they are all mean. They were also funny in a way, too,”** wrote another.



## New Birth of Freedom

In 2015, CRFC launched New Birth of Freedom for high school teachers across Illinois in collaboration with Mikva Challenge and with major funding provided by Boeing. New Birth of Freedom combined in-person professional development for teachers, curricula tied to major policy issues, the 2016 presidential election, and online interaction among students. Eighty-five teachers and their students participated representing 64 high schools.



## Primary VOICE: Linking Civics and Literacy

Primary VOICE is a program that fosters literacy and encourages civic learning among 2nd and 3rd graders in the Chicago Public Schools. The program promotes understanding of participation, responsibility, conflict resolution and more. Through stories and classroom simulations, students experience familiar problems and see them in a new light. Role plays and reading games provide opportunities for developing leadership and cooperative learning skills. Participating teachers also have the opportunity to participate in a culminating civic experience at their school through *State v. Wolf*—an interactive jury experience based on *The Three Little Pigs*—led by attorney volunteers. **“I learned so much from the [PV] cohort meetings. I adore the literature involved in PV and I now enjoy integrating civic education with literacy,”** wrote a 2015-16 cohort teacher.



## Public Protest and the First Amendment

CRFC marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a high school student seminar on “Public Protest and the First Amendment” co-sponsored and hosted by John Marshall Law School.

Forty-two students represented nine high schools

examined whether different public protest demonstrations are protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and discussed possible rules or patterns for legal and illegal protests. To better understand public protests and the Civil Rights Movement from a youth perspective, volunteer attorney Lindsey Draper cited lesser known activists, including Ruby Bridges, who as a 6-year-old integrated the schools of New Orleans, and Claudia Colvin, a 15-year-old teenager who helped overturn bus segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama. Draper demonstrated how young people are the backbone of protest movements and drive change. Students left the workshop with knowledge on how to use their rights to promote nonviolent change.



## You(th) Decide

You(th) Decide is a forum for high school students in Chicago and the metropolitan area to explore and deliberate a pending case before the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2016, 32 students convened at the IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law Institute on the Supreme Court of the United States (ISCOTUS) to deliberate *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, a U.S. Supreme Court case concerning the use of race as a consideration in the admissions process at the University of Texas at Austin. The question high school students addressed was whether *“the University of Texas’ use of race as a consideration in the admissions process violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.”*

With help from CRFC, IIT Chicago-Kent law professors, and IIT Chicago-Kent law students, You(th) Decide students reviewed the constitutional issues, examined precedent setting cases, and discussed the key constitutional question. They then deliberated to reach a decision in the case.

# Funders & Contributors

Thank you to our supporters, without whom CRFC could not do its vital work. Your investment ensures that children and teachers have access to high-quality civic education that strengthens democracy one classroom at a time.

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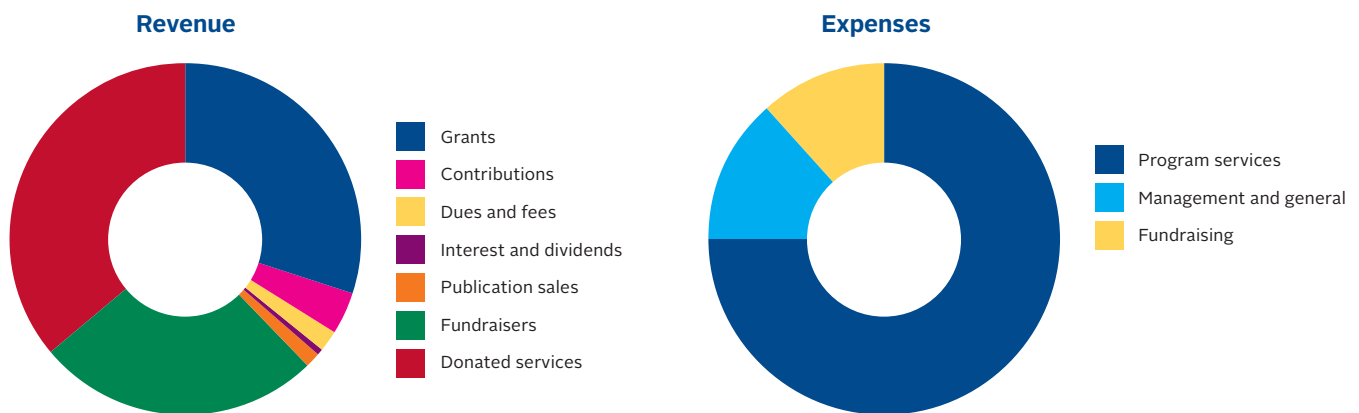
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*If we have inadvertently omitted your name, let us know and please accept our apologies.*

# Statement of Activities (Years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014)

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago	2015			2014		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
<b>Revenue</b>						
Grants	\$91,331	\$198,808	\$290,139	—	\$232,100	\$232,100
Contributions	15,951	130	16,081	\$83,374	1,475	84,849
Dues and fees	43,607	—	43,607	63,081	—	63,081
Interest and dividends	23	—	23	97	—	97
Publication sales	4,519	—	4,519	3,369	—	3,369
Fundraisers	247,549	—	247,549	250,358	—	250,358
Donated services	342,000	—	342,000	308,950	—	308,950
Net assets released from restrictions	302,784	(302,784)	—	320,002	(320,002)	—
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>1,047,764</b>	<b>(103,846)</b>	<b>942,804</b>	<b>1,029,231</b>	<b>(86,427)</b>	<b>942,804</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Program services	862,643	—	862,643	923,339	—	923,339
Management and general	151,698	—	151,698	153,233	—	153,233
Fundraising	123,788	—	123,788	151,092	—	151,092
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,138,129</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,138,129</b>	<b>1,227,664</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,227,664</b>
Revenue over (under) expenses	(90,365)	(103,846)	(194,211)	(198,433)	(86,427)	(284,860)
Realized and unrealized gains (losses) on investments	(1,301)	(7,088)	(8,389)	24,424	27,220	51,644
Increase (decrease) in net assets	(91,666)	(110,934)	(202,600)	(174,009)	(59,207)	(233,216)
<b>Net assets</b>						
Beginning of year	372,720	887,335	1,260,055	546,729	946,542	1,493,271
End of year	\$281,054	\$776,401	\$1,057,455	\$372,720	\$887,335	\$1,260,055



These financial statements were abstracted from the organization's December 31, 2015 financial statements, which were audited by Ringold Financial Management Services. Because the information does not include all disclosures required by the U.S. generally accepted accounting principals, it does not purport to present the organization's financial condition or results. A copy of the audited financial statements will be provided upon written request to the organizational office.



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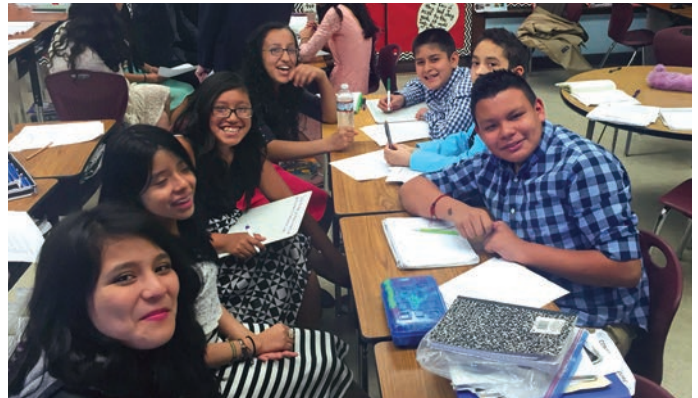
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