



January 9, 2012

Dear Community Leader:

The Children's Defense Fund–Ohio invites you to participate in our Beat the Odds® Scholarship Program by nominating a 2012 scholarship recipient.

Founded and led by Marian Wright Edelman, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a national non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for nearly 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. CDF's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage into adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. We champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education, and a moral and spiritual foundation. Supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations, CDF has worked in Ohio since 1981.

The CDF *Beat the Odds* program honors outstanding high school students who have overcome tremendous adversity, demonstrated academic excellence, and given back to their communities. Started in 1990, the program identifies and rewards young people who have experienced significant hardship in their lives and supports and trains them to become future leaders in adulthood. CDF holds high-profile awards events to send a clear signal that someone does care and understand what it takes for students to stay in school and succeed while coping with adversity in their lives. Not only do these awards events celebrate the scholarship recipients, they demonstrate that behind each successful child is at least one caring adult. They also are meant to inspire community leaders and citizens who want to help children struggling to overcome adversity.

Ohio high school seniors are eligible and must be nominated for the *Beat the Odds* program by a teacher, counselor, caseworker, or other adult in a student's life who can speak to his or her character, academic success, community service, and the tremendous odds he or she beats every day. Ten students will be selected from the nomination pool for interviews scheduled during March 2012. Based on the interviews, the *Beat the Odds* Selection Committee will select five finalists who will receive the following:

- A \$5,000 scholarship for the expenses of higher education
- A laptop computer for use in pursuing higher education
- Leadership training at CDF's Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee
- Access to CDF's network of opportunities

The five recipients will be honored at the *Beat the Odds* Awards dinner in Cincinnati on Monday, July 23, 2012, held in conjunction with CDF's national conference. It is important that recipients understand the public nature of this scholarship award and feel comfortable sharing their story. Professional, autobiographical films of each finalist's story will be shared publicly for the benefit of other young people who are struggling to overcome similar obstacles. You can find videos of recent *Beat the Odds* Honorees at www.youtube.com/childrensdefense.

Please see the attached Application Packet for additional information. Applications must be received by Friday, March 16, 2012 in order to qualify.

Thank you for your assistance with the Ohio *Beat the Odds* Scholarship Program. We greatly appreciate you distributing this information widely and making this opportunity known to deserving students. Should you have any questions, please contact Linda Bess at Children's Defense Fund–Ohio at 614-221-2244 or LBess@cdfohio.org.

Sincerely,

Renuka Mayadev
Executive Director