



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 Noon CT on 1/8/15**  
January 8, 2015

**Contact:** Naush Boghossian  
Larson Communications  
(818) 209 - 2787

## **New Citizens of the World Charter Schools in Kansas City Receive \$2.65 Million Foundation Boost**

*Ewing Marion Kauffman, Walton Family and Hall Family foundations support groundbreaking partnership between Kansas City parents and high-performing national public charter school network*

**Kansas City** – [Citizens of the World Charter Schools](#), a national public charter school network, today announced that it has received a total of \$2.65 million in funding from three philanthropic foundations to launch new schools in Kansas City through what is believed to be a first-of-its-kind partnership with parents who originated the effort to start new schools.

The [Kansas City Midtown Community School Initiative](#) (MCSI), a group of Midtown parents and community members, committed a year ago to providing better public school options for families in the Midtown neighborhoods of Kansas City. They issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a high-performing public school model representing their values, and ultimately chose Citizens from the applicants.

Citizens, which focuses on serving economically and racially diverse student populations that reflect the demographics of their communities, aims to open two K-1 elementary schools in August 2016, adding a grade each year. They intend to be operating four schools including elementary, middle and high schools, at a full capacity of 1,650 students in the area bounded by State Line to the west, Prospect to the east, Union Station to the north and Brush Creek to the south.

“We are proud to partner with so many parents who have taken the initiative to give even more families high-quality public school options and now with foundations who are giving back to strengthen communities,” said Kriste Dragon, co-founder and CEO of Citizens of the World.

Citizens is a public charter school network that currently serves more than 1,300 children across five schools in California and New York, 60 percent of whom are students of color, half qualify for free and reduced lunch and a quarter are English Language Learners.

“We are thrilled for the opportunity to provide Kansas City with a school model that reflects the inclusiveness and diversity as well as the academic rigor parents value, all while helping students realize their full potential and become true citizens of the world,” added Dragon. “This foundation support will benefit generations of students to come.”

This is believed to be the first time in the nation that an independent group of parents spearheaded a grassroots effort to bring a quality public education option into their neighborhood by directly issuing an RFP.

MCSI launched in the fall of 2013 a public search for a partner to open up a new school in Kansas City when it became evident that in spite of a desire to establish roots in the community, a critical mass of Midtown families were considering leaving because of the lack of quality school options. Their goal was to build a school in the historically segregated community that not only reflected the socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of their town, but also used that diversity to cultivate character and understanding in all of their students. Midtown Kansas City is 49 percent White, 36 percent African-American and 12 percent Latino, more than half of the population makes under \$40,000 and 20 percent makes more than \$75,000. MCSI members believe that quality schools are critical to vibrant neighborhoods because they promote economic development, neighborhood stability and community growth.

The group ultimately chose Citizens for their academically rigorous public school model, which seeks to give students the tools to learn at high levels and reach their potential. Citizens of the World Hollywood's last state achievement scores put it in the top 6 percent of all Los Angeles public schools. The schools attribute their success to a model that focuses on the whole child, promoting not just students' academic but emotional growth as well. Instruction focuses on teaching children how to develop self awareness and work productively and respectfully together through personalized, project-based learning, which cultivates both a strong classroom community as well as critical thinking at high levels.

"Today's announcement is a testament to the fact that when the power of community and parents is bolstered by the generous support of foundations, we can fuel change in our neighborhoods and city at large" said Kristin Littrell, co-leader of MCSI. "This collaboration, with schools and foundations that value community, excellence and diversity, is great news for Kansas City as well as for the many families who are deciding to stay and invest in this neighborhood, because of these new schools."

The Kansas City-based Kauffman and Hall Family foundations contributed \$1 million and \$650,000, respectively. The Walton Family Foundation contributed \$1 million. The total \$2.65 million funding will be used to ensure a successful launch of the first Citizen schools in the 2016-2017 school year. Citizens' immediate priorities include applying for the charter, establishing a local board, identifying affordable facilities, and continuing to engage families and local leaders.

"The Kauffman Foundation has been committed to great public schools since day one," said Wendy Guillies, Kauffman Foundation acting president and CEO. "A key component of our new education strategy is promoting access to quality public school options in Kansas City. We are pleased to collaborate with other funders and partners to help bring Citizens of the World Charter Schools to our community."

"We feel that Citizens of the World is a very promising model for this community, and by supporting this network of quality public schools, we are thrilled to be contributing to the larger

efforts of the broader school system in Kansas City to bring change to our schools,” said Tracy McFerrin, vice president of the Hall Family Foundation. “We are committed to seeing that students and parents in Kansas City have a number of quality school options.”

**About Citizens of the World Charter Schools**

Citizens of the World Charter Schools are free, high-performing public schools that serve student populations that reflect the socioeconomic, cultural and racial diversity of the communities in which they live. Our mission is to impact and expand the conversation about what an excellent education contains, requires and accomplishes. We believe that a key outcome of a quality public education is to help students realize their full potential and become effective citizens through joyful, rigorous learning environments that develop students’ self-awareness, empathy, and sense of responsibility for the broader world. We serve more than 1,300 children across five schools in California and New York and will be expanding to Missouri in 2016. For more information, please visit: [www.citizensoftheworld.org](http://www.citizensoftheworld.org).

###