



**Kurn Hattin Homes**  
*for Children*

Kurn Hattin Homes transforms the lives of children and their families forever.

[www.kurnhattin.org](http://www.kurnhattin.org)

### *Who We Are and What We Do*

- Established in 1894, Kurn Hattin Homes for Children is a charitable home and school for boys and girls, ages 5-15, who are affected by family tragedy, poverty, homelessness, abuse, or other family hardship.
- Children come from throughout the Northeast when their families, for whatever reason, are unable to care for them and meet their needs, be it temporarily or for the longer term.
- Kurn Hattin provides a safe home and a nurturing environment where boys and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds or adverse family circumstances can live, learn, grow, and thrive, while their families get the support and help they need. Our aim is to work with the whole family with a view to reunite children with their parents for a better future.
- Kurn Hattin Homes is a philanthropic organization and serves children in need regardless of their families' ability to pay tuition. Families pay only what they can to support their children.
- Kurn Hattin Homes' primary funding source is charitable donations. It is the oldest childcare institution in the Northeast to be continuously funded primarily by philanthropic support.
- Kurn Hattin Homes' programming is not specifically geared toward serving children with severe behavioral or emotional challenges, nor toward special education or learning disabilities.

## *Origins and History*

Kurn Hattin's founder Charles Albert Dickinson grew up on a farm in Westminster, Vermont. Dickinson worked with homeless and neglected boys while serving as Pastor of Berkley Temple in Boston in the late 1800s. It was through this work that Dickinson developed his vision to create a home where children in need could experience the kind of life he

himself had enjoyed as a child. Dickinson felt that the rural New England farm life instilled in children all of the values and strength of character necessary to lead a successful, productive life. He returned to his hometown to set about procuring the property necessary to manifest his dream. The official "Articles of Association" were signed on August 18, 1894.



**The Farm on Kurn Hattin Campus**



**Mr. Fontaine's Science Class**

## *Campus*

Kurn Hattin Homes' 280-acre campus is located in the town of Westminster in Southern Vermont. The Homes can accommodate up to 106 children concurrently. The campus includes a working farm, several athletics fields, a swimming pool, hiking and cross-country ski trails, a horse barn and riding ring, an apple orchard and maple sugar grove, and numerous acres of land devoted to other types of agriculture.

## *Mission and Programming*

In keeping with Charles Dickinson's original mission, programming focuses on the academic preparation, extracurricular and community involvement, and social skills necessary for success in life, as well as providing a stable home atmosphere and essential emotional support, enabling youth to grow up to be active members of their communities and make positive contributions to society.

## *Academic Approach - Features*

- **Multi-aged Ability Grouping:** Students are grouped by academic ability rather than by grade, allowing children to feel both challenged and successful while working at their own pace.
- **Small Class Size:** An average teacher-to-student ratio of 1:11 allows teachers to provide individualized support in order to meet each student's needs.
- **Social Skills Curriculum:** Integrated throughout all programs at Kurn Hattin, the social skills curriculum focuses on developing essential skills for successful interaction with others, such as making friends, dealing with transitions, coping with emotions and stress, and handling peer pressure.

## *USDA Healthier School*

In May 2013, Kurn Hattin Homes for Children was awarded the USDA's Healthier US School Challenge (HUSSC) Bronze Level of Distinction. The HUSSC initiative supports First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign by recognizing schools that are creating healthier school environments by promoting nutrition and physical activity.

From supporting children's mental health, to encouraging healthy hygiene habits and providing ample opportunities for physical activity and time outdoors, to serving wholesome, organically grown produce in our cafeteria, Kurn Hattin is 100% committed to helping to raise healthy and health-conscious children.



**Bean Picking on the Farm**



**The Horsemanship Program**

## *Therapeutic Riding Program*

Kurn Hattin's horsemanship program helps children learn essential coping strategies, build empathy and trust, and gain self-esteem and leadership skills—skills important for all young people, especially those going through a time of uncertainty in their lives.

The program applies a curriculum based on the principles of the Centered Riding™ approach, which combines elements of physical therapy and martial arts.

## *Farm/Agricultural Science Program*

Since its inception in 1894, agriculture has been an integral part of Kurn Hattin's curriculum and programming. From spring planting, to summer weeding and nurturing, to the autumn harvest time, the Kurn Hattin children play a central role in making it all happen from field to table. Be it fresh eggs, and Vermont maple syrup drizzled on steaming pancakes at breakfast, crisp greens on the salad bar at lunch, or hand-pressed apple cider to drink at snack time, every meal served in the cafeteria features produce grown and harvested by the children themselves.

Teaching children in need about self-sufficiency and sustainability as they learn to grow their own food plays a role in breaking the cycles of poverty and hunger that are all too close to home for many of the children served by Kurn Hattin.

In the Farm Science program, an apple orchard and maple sugar grove provide opportunities for students to develop analytical skills through hands-on experience. In the Agriculture program, as well as in the Therapeutic Horsemanship program, students learn responsibility and empathy through nurturing and caring for animals. Having a hand in the growing process gives at-risk children a sense of accomplishment and empowerment and a direct connection to nature that many of them have never had before.



## *Award-Winning Music Program*

Music has played an essential role in life at Kurn Hattin since the school's beginnings over a century ago. Today, all 106 students participate in one or more aspects of the music program, and all students in grades 4-8 learn and perform on band instruments. Students have the option of joining the marching band, jazz ensemble, and the choir, or any combination of those. The children perform over thirty public concerts in an academic year, and Kurn Hattin also hosts annual invitational concerts attended by jazz bands and choruses from area schools.

Among Kurn Hattin's notable alumni musicians is Dick Nash, trombonist for Henri Mancini and Emmy Award winner for the score of the TV series *The Thornbirds*. (Dick's original Kurn Hattin trombone hangs on the music room wall). Another graduate of Kurn Hattin is Herman Robinson, who performed with the Metropolitan Opera. Over the past 30 years, the program has continued to grow and flourish under the direction of its current director Lisa Bianconi.

2013 was a banner year for the Kurn Hattin music program. Music Director Lisa Bianconi became one of 217 quarter-finalists, selected from 30,000 nominations, for the first-ever Grammy Music



**Kurn Hattin Choir Performing at Fenway park**

Educator's Award. In addition, the school's Select Choir appeared on stage with Grammy-winning fiddler Natalie MacMaster and won top children's gospel performer in public television member station WGBY's "Together in Song" choral competition.

In 2015, the Select Choir had the chance of a lifetime when they were asked to sing the National Anthem at Fenway Park, opening for a Red Sox game. They also had previously performed the National Anthem at a Portland Pirates Hockey game. In 2016, Music Director Lisa Bianconi was honored by Western New England Public Television Station WGBY as one of the WGBY's American Graduate Champions. Lisa Bianconi's work with Kurn Hattin Homes' children was profiled in a November 2015 WGBY episode of "Connecting Point".

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## *Reducing our Carbon Footprint*

In 2013, Kurn Hattin was proud to be recognized as one of thirty-one out of sixty-nine participating businesses and organizations that successfully met Efficiency Vermont's Energy Leadership Challenge to reduce energy use by at least 7.5% over two years.

In addition to recycling, composting, and employing other measures to reduce waste and energy consumption, in 2015, Kurn Hattin engaged in a partnership with Whitney Blake Company and Integrated Solar in a solar energy project. An unused portion of Kurn Hattin property was developed for an array of 648 energy-producing solar panels. Each panel produces 310 watts of energy apiece. The results of the solar project will limit the impact of future electricity price increases and save Kurn Hattin thousands of dollars per year.

## *Charity Navigator 4-Star Rating*



Kurn Hattin Homes receives the top-level 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator, the largest independent charity evaluator in the

U.S. The rating is the highest an organization can receive in recognition of sound fiscal management practices and a commitment to accountability and transparency. Only a quarter of the highest performing charities listed by Charity Navigator hold the four-out-of-four star distinction.

## *Scheduling a Visit*

Kurn Hattin Homes invites you to visit our campus, and meet our dedicated staff and the remarkable Kurn Hattin children.

Contact Kim Fine at (802) 721-6914 or **[kfine@kurnhattin.org](mailto:kfine@kurnhattin.org)** for more information or to make an appointment to visit campus.

See us on the web at **[www.kurnhattin.org](http://www.kurnhattin.org)**

We will be happy to supply additional information on any programs or topics of interest to you. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely Yours,

**Kim Fine**

*Director of Development & Public Relations*

Kurn Hattin Homes for Children

