



From the Executive Director **Sandra Hagan**
A Different Kind of Call to Action

All parents want their children to be safe. I can't imagine what it's like to worry that letting your child play outside might mean injury or even death from stray gunfire.

That's why I was profoundly upset this summer, as I'm sure you were too, that gun violence left so many innocent children wounded or dead in our city. There are no words to describe the loss of a child for a parent, and nothing more tragic than a life full of promise being destroyed before it begins.

I was especially horrified that so much of the violence occurred in places that should be safe, nurturing zones for children. A three year old hit by a bullet in the sprinkler at a Brooklyn park. A four-year-old dead from crossfire on a Bronx playground. A talented young athlete killed on the tennis court, and three teens shot while playing basketball.

If we cannot keep our next generation safe, what kind of future do we have? With your support, we do a lot at The Child Center to make kids safer. We stop family violence so children don't grow up thinking that hitting and being hit is just the way it is. We heal young victims so their trauma-induced fear doesn't lead them to hurt others. We surround youth with caring adults and peers who have strong positive values, so the gang is less attractive.

In this issue of our newsletter, we've featured Claudette Thompson who, along with her team, works with teenagers whose lives are mired in violence and contain all too few messages that they are loved or cared for. Using an intensive family intervention model, her team works with each member of the family. Even when the youth is involved with a gang and crime, almost always the first step is to improve communication between parents and children. (Claudette's excellent family communication tips are inside.) Research shows that--by reducing family conflict and anger and by increasing parental messages of love, support, and structure--teens can, and do, leave violence behind.

But I worry that it's not enough. In my heart I believe that stopping violence, as with many other things, can begin with each of us. Every person can do something to tone down violence, whether it is to express love and settle family disputes calmly, or choose media that does not celebrate violence. We can each resist shouting, aggression, and labeling others as "bad."

Often in this column, I call upon you to help The Child Center. Of course we need your support. And I am grateful for it. But in this issue I want to make a different kind of call to action. I want to ask that we all remember that any child could be our child. And I want to ask that all of us take action—whether large or small—to make our city, nation and world a safer place for all children.

great results

Scores are in from our assessment of 61 children who attended our Head Start class in Woodside last year. Our independent evaluator found that between beginning and end of last year, there was significant growth in the average group score in many areas of development. For example, in social emotional ratings, the children improved 103%. In the cognitive domain, 98%, and in math, 85%. We are making an impact.



Backpacked and Ready

School supplies are costly and beyond the means of our families. But thanks to many inspiring acts of generosity, 2,000 of our kids were well equipped this year.

Our thanks go out to the Highwater Women Foundation, which donated 1,000 supply-filled backpacks to children who attend our mental health clinics. We are thrilled to be a partner with this organization.

JP Morgan Chase hand-delivered 500 backpacks filled with notebooks, pens, and pencils—just one part of the commitment the company has made to our kids in Far Rockaway and Flushing. Thanks to donations totaling a million dollars over the last four years, we've been able to offer stellar after-school programs that have measurably improved student success.

Finally, we had a newcomer this year. She was neither a company, nor a foundation, but a single individual named Amy Rappaport who took the initiative to start her own Internet fundraising campaign. The result: 555 supply-filled backpacks for disadvantaged kids who attend our after-school programs. Amy's approach reflects one of the hottest trends in philanthropy: peer-to-peer fundraising using the power of social media. Amy set up a donation page at www.crowdrise.com and then sent it to her contacts who

donated nearly \$6,000 to her cause. Her partner Garrett D'Alessandro, a Child

Center board member, doubled the impact by matching the total.

"I am very lucky that my network of friends and family realizes how important it is to provide education for children early on in their development," she said. "Having had a very blessed and easy life, it's time to give back to others who are less fortunate."

On the Road to College

Some children are told from the cradle that they will go to college and have a career. But for far too many NYC kids, there is no such predestiny, and getting through high school is challenge enough.

Thank you [UBS Bank](#) for investing in our innovative Ladders to Leaders project, which began this September targeting 40 failing seventh and eighth graders at two after-school sites. We will be providing these kids with a unique array of supports until senior year when a diploma and college or vocation plans are safely in sight. The project is intensive and requires a serious commitment from the teens. It features a research-proven group curriculum, community service projects, academic remediation, social emotional support, and extensive counseling on college and career paths. We've got to get kids ready for the future.



The Child Center of NY is a 59-year-old nonprofit agency whose mission is to help at-risk children and youth succeed in life.

spotlight

Claudette Thompson

Clinic Administrator, Evidence-Based Programs
Education: Master's in Social Work, NYU
Years at The Child Center: 15



Tell us about your work at The Child Center.

My staff and I work with very troubled teens. We provide intensive short-term intervention based on a research-proven model. It includes visiting the family at home, counseling each member of the family, coaching parents on discipline, and working closely with teens to create positive change. I make sure everyone is well trained. I also have a caseload of kids and families that I work with directly.

Why did you become a social worker?

Because I like people. I like to interact with people and have impact. I believed I could make a difference.

Tell me about the kids you work with.

These are kids who have been arrested multiple times. Some have mental health problems. Others live in crowded apartments and come from poverty-stricken families and high-crime neighborhoods. What most of them have in common is that they have no support or direction. They don't understand that the bad decisions they make now are going to impact their lives in the future.

How do you feel about working with kids who have committed crimes?

I want to hug them. I do not look at them as criminals. I never call them juveniles. I look at them as kids. After they've done something wrong they cry and say, "I shouldn't have done that." I'm not saying that all kids are great and just misled. But I think most of the kids we serve just need support and someone who is not going to be judgmental, negative, or blaming towards them. We do whatever it takes. We put in relentless effort.

What makes you feel good about your job?

We do follow-up calls six months after the kids leave treatment. When a family tells me that they are all still doing well, I am so happy. These are my proudest moments. That's when I know we are saving lives.

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If you use Amazon, you can ensure that a percentage of every purchase you make is donated to The Child Center. It costs you nothing but a few extra clicks. All you need to do is visit www.childcenterny.org, follow the Amazon links, and get ready to shop.

tips

family communication

We asked Claudette for some words of advice that any family could use. Here's what she had to say:

- **Listen.** Parents need to listen to their children. Couples need to listen to one another.
- **Change the meaning and see the strengths.** Try to see that there is a noble intent behind every behavior. For example, we help teens see that behind parents' strict rules are good intentions to keep their kids safe. Parents need to see that behind their children's poor judgments or rule breaking, there is probably a healthy desire to be independent and become an individual.
- **Use language that does not blame.** Instead of saying "You did this," or "You did that," begin your sentences with "I feel worried that ..." or "I am concerned to see ..."
- **Be present focused.** If a kid did something wrong a year ago and it was resolved, don't bring it up again. The same goes for marriage relationships, too.

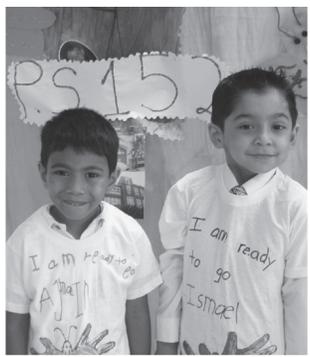
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To make a donation, visit: www.childcenterny.org or call 718.651.7770 ext. 301.

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Thank you



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...to all who participated in our **Raymond J. Cook Annual Golf Outing.**

We are especially thankful to our event co-chairs Gary Arcieri, John Cook, and Gary Tabackman, and committee members: Jason Auffarth, Paul Avvento, Sam Freed, A.J. Jin, Dennis Kehne, Frank Korzekwinski, Sal LoPinto, Frank McRoberts, R. Patrick Quinn, and Brian Tabackman,

Kudos to all who took part, including our Golf Outing sponsors:
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