The Big Night

Our 2010 Honorees (left to right): Richard Gaccione, Robert Wann, John Cook, Frank Macchio.

Last March 20th, more than 350 of The Child Center’s nearest and dearest gathered for our annual dinner dance at Terrace on the Park in Queens.

Four successful and generous businessmen were honorees: John Cook, President of Cook & Krupa; Richard Gaccione, President of Pay-O-Fours Corporation; Frank Macchio, President of Construction Services Company; and Robert Wann, Senior Executive Vice President and COO of New York Community Bancorp.

COMING OUT...

For a day of fun and sun. Our annual Raymond J. Cook golf outing takes place on Monday, September 27, 2010. In our long-standing tradition, we offer you the opportunity to help kids and play at the exclusive Old Westbury Golf and Country Club at the same time.

To purchase tickets, consider sponsorship opportunities, or get more info, please visit our website: www.childcentery.org

In the Heat of It
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sandra Hagan, Executive Director

For The Child Center, warm weather brings summer camp, where we keep thousands of children off the streets and enriching opportunities for learning and fun. Summer also brings our new fiscal year on July 1. As you may know, it has been a time of budget wars, both city and state. This year has been one of the toughest I’ve ever seen, and much is still not resolved. We are working constantly to fill the growing gaps – seeking new foundations, corporations, and donors to invest in our work. It is during this uncertain time I feel all the more gratitude to our supporters. You are the people who have made a commitment to children – whether you’ve mailed a small donation, attended an event, or made a huge gift by naming one of our programs. Your kindness enables us to do our best. Thank you for being there and standing by us.

We are determined to do the exact same thing for our kids – stand by them – whether times are bearish or bullish. This is our special calling, and we are committed to the core. On behalf of all of us at The Child Center, I offer a million thanks for your interest in children, your love for them, and your support of us.

From the Executive Director

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Brighter Beginnings

The Child Center of NY has just received word that its long-awaited license is finally approved for a new Early Head Start program. Located at the Macari Family Center in Flushing, the new center will open its doors in September. For 32 families on our waiting list, a dream will come true. The newly renovated space provides four bright and cheerful classrooms where children, ages three and under, can play and learn and grow.

Founded in 1965 by the federal government, Head Start serves economically poor children, ages three to five. In recent decades, scientists have built consensus that crucial brain development occurs much earlier – before birth and during the first year of life. Early Head Start was created specifically to intervene during this critical window of opportunity: pregnancy to age three.

Dr. Barbara Greenstein, The Child Center’s deputy executive director, developed the first Early Head Start in New York City in 1995. She is a national expert on early childhood development and parenting and oversees the program. The Child Center has been delivering Early Head Start since 2001.

The new program in Flushing will provide high-quality childcare, parent education, case management, and other supports that help at-risk children and their families succeed in life. We put special emphasis on building the secure and loving parent-child bonds that are the foundation for all early childhood development.

The Child Center provides Head Start programs to 450 children annually. The federal government funds 80% of costs; the rest comes from private sources.

We are extraordinarily grateful to the Joseph and Katherine Macari Foundation and the Ficalora Family Foundation for investing in our work with very young children.

During the weeks leading up to the event, Mr. Gaccione’s company named The Child Center as a featured charity at each of its 130 check-cashing sites across the city. At the dinner dance, he presented a check for $45,000, which included matching funds from Western Union.

John Cook received our prestigious Sonia Stumpf Humanitarian Award. He has taken on the role of passionate Child Center supporter from his late father, Ray, who championed our golf outing for many years.

In a special appearance, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall spoke movingly of the value of The Child Center’s work to the community and New York. The event raised a record-breaking amount – more than $360,000 – for our vital services.

A million thanks to all our committee members, with special gratitude to Sher Sparano, our dinner chair.

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The Child Center is a 57-year-old nonprofit multiservice children’s agency whose mission is to help at-risk children and youth to succeed in life. We serve 17,000 children a year and their families.

We are part of the solution

Here’s just a small sample of how we made the world better in 2009.

Child Abuse Prevention:

942 At-Risk Children
About: Our therapists help keep children safe. With intensive therapy, parent guidance, and supervision, we intervene and strengthen families to prevent the need for foster care.
Results: 91% of families served had no new reports of abuse or neglect; 99% were able to safely remain in their homes.

Therapy and Counseling:

5,214 Children and Families
About: We help children and their families who are struggling with trauma, clinical depression, substance abuse, and other emotional and behavior problems. We also advocate for health care, food stamps, job training, and other resources that stabilize families.
Results: Through one counseling program, Single Stop, 619 families accessed an average of $3,069 per family in unclaimed resources.

Youth Development:

8,500 Young People, Ages 3 through 21
About: After-school recreation, educational enrichment, drama, dance, tutoring, mentoring, dropout prevention, vocational training, and Beacon programs, which offer a community resource center for families.
Results: In one of our after-school tutoring programs for children reading below grade level, 99% improved in vocabulary; 93% improved in comprehension; and 94% improved in total reading score.

Crisis Intervention:

337 Seriously Emotionally Troubled Children
About: A highly specialized intervention for children whose severe problems put them at risk of being placed in lock-up psychiatric wards.
Results: For 83%, we prevented the traumatic experience of hospitalization.

About:

The Child Center’s Beacon Program at MS 236 where Sahercoordinates programming.

I look forward to going out to the community with these very talented young people. Their voices are the real voices of The Child Center.”


Saher Mahmood began working at The Child Center’s Beacon Program in South Ozone Park four years ago. Born in Kuwait to Pakistani parents, she went through harrowing times during the first Gulf War, including a seven-hour trek through the desert to escape an army ambush. The experience was especially terrifying for the family because Saher’s sister was suffering from a serious heart disease. Saher was just three years old.

In 1992, the family got a medical visa to the U.S. so they could seek a cure for their daughter. Saher’s parents also hoped to find a good education for their children and a better life. Her father, formerly an engineer in Kuwait, became a taxi driver, and her mother took work as a school aide. After three months in the ICU, her sister was finally healthy. Years of hardship and adjustments followed. But today, the family lives in their own house in Richmond Hills, Queens, and they are a success story by any measure.

“I’ve always wanted to advocate,” says Saher, “because I’ve seen so much. There was one time in our program so much trouble that the police took him out in handcuffs. A year later, he wanted to focus his life on the game, and asked for an opportunity. Now he’s volunteering to help others. If my one site can have that impact, imagine what the whole agency can do.”

As an Ambassador, she will recount the transformations she has witnessed as a youth worker, as well as the structured, safe fun offered at our after-school programs. “It’s a great feeling, she says. “I know my voice can be heard.”

Saher is now pursuing a degree in forensics psychology at John Jay and plans to work with teens in the juvenile justice system.

“My whole career decision has changed based on my experience here,” she says.

Spotlight: Ambassador Saher Mahmood