SAFE DATES
Educating Teens on Abuse Prevention

The genesis of the new Safe Dates program is one of mutual inspiration. The Child Center of NY’s Executive Director, Sandra Hagan was inspired to apply for one of the Avon Foundation’s competitive grants when she first heard its Executive Director, Carol Kurzig, discuss Avon’s “Speak Out Against Domestic Violence” initiative. The Avon Foundation was inspired to award one of their prestigious grants to The Child Center because of its unique proposal: to provide a domestic violence curriculum entirely for middle school students, led by trained college students.

“We felt it was a particularly effective way to reach out to help stem the epidemic—to target the curriculum to 12-14-year-olds and have it led by college students who are so close to their own age and experience,” said Mary Quinn, Senior Manager of Operations at the Avon Foundation, who leads the domestic violence initiative. Emerging evidence suggests that patterns of violence and victimization often develop in this age group and then become difficult to reverse.

The idea for Safe Dates grew out of the Teen Impact Prevention Program (TIPP) at The Child Center, which is also led by college-age peer counselors, many of them graduates of the program. Since 2004, TIPP has offered workshops that teach creative, proactive protective strategies to teens at risk of contracting HIV, and has become one of The Child Center’s fastest growing outreach programs.

Safe Dates, originally developed as a classroom curriculum for teachers, is being offered in four Queens middle schools through The Child Center. It educates young teens on how to stop or prevent emotional, physical and sexual abuse in relationships and is intended for both male and female middle-school age kids. The curriculum involves role-playing, creative visualizations and parent materials.

The Safe Dates grant was one of 32 programs that Avon chose to fund in 2007—from a pool of over 650 applicants—in their domestic violence initiative. Avon’s grant reviewers “grade” each applicant to determine the quality of overall programming.

The Child Center of NY was ranked by the Avon Foundation as one of the top 50 agencies in the nation to offer quality teen programs to the community.

The Child Center of NY
serves more than 14,000 at-risk children annually from birth through early adulthood in more than 70 locations including classrooms, mental health clinics, after-school programs and day care centers.

Our programs empower children to make good decisions...help parents build skills to become better providers and nurturers...

...create connections to the mainstream through family intervention, child and youth development, counseling and home visiting to prevent psychiatric hospitalization.
Nearly one-third of American women report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives. Because Queens is the most culturally diverse “city” in the nation, child welfare professionals in the borough need assistance to better understand the effects of domestic violence on the ethnically diverse cases they encounter.

The multi-cultural staff of The Child Center—encompassing 34 different ethnic backgrounds and languages—offers a particular expertise in dealing with new immigrant families and the issues that arise from their diverse cultural norms. In a new collaboration with the NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) The Child Center provides essential expertise regarding mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues to more than 600 ACS caseworkers charged with investigating child abuse reports.

“Underlying a lot of domestic violence cases are undiagnosed mental health and cultural issues,” said Elise Wager, Project Director of The Child Center’s Clinical Consultation Program. “We help ACS take a close look at the whole picture to locate and understand the individual factors that contribute to each case.”

Wager cited a high risk case in which The Child Center program helped create a safe escape plan for a woman of South Asian descent who had been horribly abused, both sexually and verbally, for many years by her husband. After hospitalization for a severe stabbing by her spouse, The Child Center and ACS were able to transport her to a domestic violence (DV) shelter out of state and then get job training and permanent housing for her and her young daughter.

### Sponsor a Child

Whether it’s a month, a year, even a week, there are lots of ways to extend the possibilities for children suffering from neglect, abuse or lack of financial resources. When you sponsor a child, you underwrite the possibilities for healing through counseling and therapy... the development of academic and social skills through an after school program...You make it possible to take another name off our waiting list, sponsor an opportunity for a child to attend summer camp for the first time...and more.

For more information about how to Sponsor a Child and other ways to give, contact Linda Henley at 718-651-2220 X210 or lindahenley@childcenterny.org.

### Tools for Back-to-School

Staff at The Child Center prepare to distribute donated backpacks to community children.

Having the right tool can sometimes mean everything. A writer without a pen? A musician without an instrument? Beginning the year without basic school supplies can translate into loss of pride and even skipped school. Learning should not be hampered by a lack of materials in this abundant City. Over five years ago, The Child Center started a school supplies drive based on community need and the donations began flooding in. The Child Center’s Director of Development and External Affairs, Linda Henley recalls the story of one little girl who was forced to erase lessons so she could have room to write in her notebook. A brand new marble notebook can transform the experience of school for a child like this.

For more information on how you can get involved, contact Chris Colica at 718-651-7770 X301 or chriscolica@childcenterny.org.
Summer 2008 offers twice as many community children the opportunity to learn and have fun at The Child Center of NY...

Literacy, the arts, cultural outings, team building, tennis, socialization, thematic learning... All of these enriching opportunities are branching out to P.S. 223 in South Jamaica, P.S. 56 in Richmond Hill and P.S. 188 in Bayside this summer—providing places for an additional 450 more elementary and middle school kids to attend summer camp through The Child Center. Programs, which are free, begin on July 2nd and run from 8 AM - 6 PM for eight weeks. The highly sought after staff jobs at the camps are filled quickly by college students, many of whom attended after school programs at The Child Center as kids.

We are looking forward to making many new happy memories for children this summer!

“As we look to next summer and beyond, we hope we can bring camps to more locations across the community. The experience makes such a difference not only to the kids but also to parents without a lot of resources.”

—Deep Ghosh, Director of Youth Development Programs

More than 200 new and old friends gathered on Saturday night, March 29th at Terrace on the Park to honor the donors and volunteers that make possible the work of The Child Center of NY. The evening’s four honorees: Dr. Robert Aquino, Cindy Mann, Sunil Garg and Leonard S. Schwartz (pictured beginning third from left with Hank Auffarth, retired Board President) and are united as individuals in their commitment and involvement behind the scenes to grow and strengthen our outreach programs to kids at risk. The dinner was chaired by Paul Lamas (far left). The event marked the launch of our new community campaign to Sponsor a Child (see more about how you can get involved on page 2).

Kids celebrate at The Child Center’s summer camp at JHS 168 in Flushing, Queens.
Welcome to Our New Board President

As we step up our expansion and modernization of facilities and increase outreach programs across the community, we welcome new board members, contributors... and ideas. In that spirit, we welcome Dick Jay, a longtime supporter and talented businessman to lead us into a period of renewal and growth.

Describe your involvement as a board member.

We got involved as a company in growing the annual holiday party that The Child Center hosts for at-risk kids every year—working on invitations, donating and wrapping presents, even playing Santa!

It’s been over ten years, and we’ve grown the party from a small get-together in the basement of a church to a really pull out the stops event with contests and face painting and great treats for the kids. To see the joy in the faces of each one of the 250 kids makes it all worthwhile.

What brought you to The Child Center?

About ten years ago, I was walking along the beach talking to my wife about wanting to give back to the community. When she asked how exactly I would like to do that, I didn’t have to think about it. I immediately said I’d like to do something with kids. Coincidentally, the very next week, I received a call from Hank Aufarth (then Board President) asking whether I would be renewing my pledge to The Child Center. The timing was perfect and I told him I wanted to step up and get more involved. I was invited to join the Board.

What are your ambitions for the agency moving forward?

We are now looking to undertake a major fundraising plan targeted at increasing our unrestricted funds and we’re starting an endowment that will help sustain us through rainy days. Unrestricted funds are very important since they will allow us to upgrade many of our more than 30-year-old facilities, grow staff and bring more children in off our waiting list.

Dick Jay is Chairman and Chief Innovation Officer of Display Technologies, Inc. He has been married for 37 years and has two daughters. He lives in Connecticut and New York City.