

Getting College and Career Ready

Jelani Pusey's two favorite subjects are science and global history: "Science because you can find out new things about the world. History because you get to learn how far people have come." This past spring, the ninth grader, who hails from the country of Jamaica and grew up in Queens, was able to visit colleges where he might study those subjects in a few years.

Jelani and other students from our Teen Action and NDA (Neighborhood Development Area) High School Reading/Internship Program visited Vaughn College, St. Francis College, and the University of Connecticut. They got to see everything from a simulation lab where mannequins speak about their symptoms to film students recording a production scene of a soap opera. They also were able to see what college life looks like, and picture themselves a part of it.



While the University of Connecticut was Jelani's favorite, Trevor Pollard, who also went on the trip, was impressed by Vaughn College. "I don't need to see any other schools," the Guyana native said. "I am going to Vaughn." The 14-year-old wants to be an aircraft repair technician when he grows up, and he was thrilled that Vaughn has an aviation program. "We went to the place where you actually fix the planes," he said. "It was exciting."

The first trip was to Vaughn and St. Francis, followed a month later by the visit to the University of Connecticut. In between the two visits, participants from the Teen Action and NDA programs competed in a game of "College and Career Readiness Jeopardy." Students worked in teams to answer questions on such topics as college terms, know your degrees, financial aid, and name that career. "The students were very enthusiastic as they competed for bragging rights," reports NDA Director Frances Keogan.

NDA and Teen Action work collaboratively on college and career readiness and also work separately on different fronts to prepare adolescents for their futures. NDA is an academic internship program that provides academic support and also works with kids on work readiness and job internships. Teen Action focuses on empowering teens to impact their communities on social issues. "We empower students through voice and choice," says Jemila McPhee, Teen Action's Program Coordinator.



**THE CHILD
CENTER OF NY**

Strengthening Family. Building Community.

**In our Workforce
Improvement Program
for impoverished 11th
and 12th graders,**

100%

**of juniors were
promoted to
12th grade,**

94%

**of seniors
graduated, and**

91%

went on to college.

From the CEO and Executive Director Traci Donnelly

Talk of resilience is everywhere these days. It's a big question in child development and education circles: How do we get children to bounce back from defeat and the inevitable setbacks that are a part of life?

The children we serve at The Child Center of NY have seen more than their fair share of adversity—which makes their ability to bounce back and not only survive, but thrive, all the more inspiring. Every time I walk into one of our programs, I am deeply moved by each child's and family's story of how they got here, where they were when they started, and how far they have come. I leave knowing exactly why we do what we do.

The pages of this newsletter are full of such stories. In them you'll meet Franny, who suffered unimaginable trauma as a young child and now, after participating in therapy through one of our programs, is achieving things she never thought possible. You'll read about Jesse, who's giving back to the community where he once received help. And you'll learn about how we're growing our Asian Outreach Program, which serves hardworking immigrant families from cultures in which failure is often seen through the lens of shame, making it especially difficult for young people to deal with setbacks and ask for help—but you'll see how they are bouncing back, too.

All of them stand as testament to what our staff and supporters have long known: If provided the right opportunity, our families and children will rise above poverty and build for themselves—and their communities—a future full of promise.



Empire BlueCross BlueShield Foundation Supports The Child Center of NY Asian Outreach Program

Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in New York City. They often face unique and difficult challenges, including an unfamiliar language and culture, poverty, and conflict between immigrant parents and American-born or -raised children. These factors add up to significant risks for mental health and substance abuse issues—and language barriers and cultural taboos against mental health services mean many kids don't get the help they need.

That's why The Child Center of NY created the Asian Outreach Program, providing mental health screening, information, and counseling to Asian American public school students and their families in Queens who live below the poverty line. The program overcomes stigma and language barriers by partnering with schools

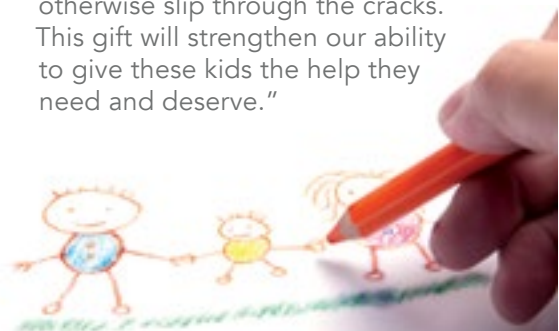
to identify troubled and abused children, offering therapy in the neutral space of their schools, and providing information and counseling to families in their home languages.

Results are strong: Over the last year, 191 children received counseling through the program, and 87% achieved one or more goals they set with their therapists. Program staff have educated hundreds of parents, teachers, and community members, leading to fewer incidents of abuse and increased referrals to our mental health clinics.

To help us meet demand, we applied for funding to the Empire BlueCross BlueShield Foundation, which is committed to enhancing the health and well-being of individuals and families in the diverse communities that the

company serves. The Foundation responded with a generous grant to enable us to reach more students and expand AOP's efforts.

"We are grateful for the Empire BlueCross BlueShield Foundation's support of our Asian Outreach Program," said The Child Center CEO Traci Donnelly. "Since its inception, Asian Outreach has played a crucial role in reaching troubled, abused, and neglected children who would otherwise slip through the cracks. This gift will strengthen our ability to give these kids the help they need and deserve."



The Magic of a Match Challenge

What's better than donating to a great cause? Donating to a great cause and having your donation go twice as far. That's why Russ Carson, a supporter of The Child Center and a founder and partner at private equity firm Welsh, Carson, Anderson and Stowe, established a match challenge, whereby he pledged to match any gift up to \$1.5 million—turning an already generous \$1.5 million donation into a \$3 million gift.

"The Child Center does amazing things, and I wanted to find a way to make as big an impact on its work as possible," Carson said. "Creating a match challenge was a way to get a whole community of supporters involved, and help twice as many kids."

Fundraising studies have shown that people are very responsive to matching gift campaigns. Carson's campaign has been extremely successful and is nearly complete.

In recognition of this gift and Carson's tremendous impact on the agency, The Child Center created a new award in his name: The Russell L. Carson Visionary Award. The first one was given at our annual gala this spring by Carson himself.

"We are so grateful to Russ for coming up with this innovative way to double his already generous gift. It has been truly transformational in generating support and helping us serve the children and families in our programs," said Traci Donnelly, CEO at The Child Center of NY.

We encourage other donors—on their own or with a group—to create their own matching gift pledge. To learn how, or to donate to the Carson Campaign, contact:

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Dick Jay and Kay Howard

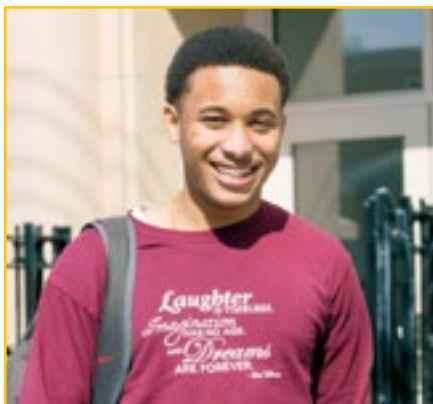


David Spungen, Traci Donnelly, Russ Carson, and Judie Carson.

Spring Gala 2015

Our Spring Gala on April 28 was a fun, inspiring success. More than 350 people attended. Board member David Spungen, CEO of Hillview Capital Advisors, was the event honoree, while Board President Dick Jay and staff member Kay Howard were honored with the inaugural Russell L. Carson Visionary Award. Guests heard from an inspiring alumna of The Child Center, our keynote speaker Jackie

Soto. "When I was 13, I could have gone down any number of different paths," Soto said. "I would have quickly fallen through the cracks if The Child Center hadn't come into my life." Today, Soto works as the Regional Marketing Rep for the East Coast/Midwest at Universal Music Group, representing clients like Def Jam Recordings and Motown Records. "It is a dream job and gives me a life I really enjoy."



Staff Spotlight

The Child Center has a longstanding commitment to engaging youth where they are—and encouraging them to give back to the community when they're able. Jesse Rogers has epitomized this tradition. As a child, Jesse Rogers attended one of our after-school programs. Then, as a teen, he began working through our Workforce Investment Act initiative at our COMPASS program at P.S. 273, where he gets to help kids realize and tap their full potential. This experience has helped shape his plans for the future. He's off to college in the fall, and he's planning to major in education. "I've always felt a passion for making a better way for kids," he says, "just like people made for me when I was younger."

Case in Point

At The Child Center, we do everything we can to keep families together. Sadly, there are times when that's not possible and we work with a child in the foster care system. In these cases, individual counseling with a caring therapist can make all the difference for the child.

"My mother believes in voodoo," Franny explained. "She set me on fire because she thought it would take the evil spirit out of me. She left me there for a day—I couldn't walk or open my eyes. Finally my aunt called the cops, and I came into the system of foster care."

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"The core of any successful therapeutic treatment lies in the capacity for a trusting relationship to develop between a client and his or her clinician," says Rose Lederman, Clinic Administrator of our Flushing, South Jamaica, and Woodside clinics. "For a child who has experienced abuse or neglect in his or her life, that key element of trust has been shattered."

That was the case with Franny, who came to us after being set on fire by her mother when she was six years old.

Franny had to wear a mask and special garments for her burns. But her wounds were much more than skin deep. "I was so angry and so hurt.... At school they called me monster. It was horrible. I didn't want to look in the mirror and see what everyone called ugly."

Although the road to recovery and healing was incredibly difficult for Franny, with the help of her therapist, she has made inspiring strides and has emerged stronger and more hopeful than she ever would have thought possible. "I am still hurt, but I am learning how to stand up for myself," Franny told us. "Therapy has been so good for me. To express your feelings to someone who is actually listening—it's amazing. I don't want a perfect family; I don't need everything to be perfect. I just want to be OK, like everyone deserves to be OK."



Franny used to think she wanted to be a doctor in a burn center when she grew up, "but I don't think I could handle the emotion," she explained. Now she's exploring many subjects that interest her. "I found out I have a love for poetry. I got an award for best writer in my school; I'm on the debate team."

Says Lederman, "Franny was able to overcome repeated years of abuse, familial abandonment, and neglect, through the healing experience of the therapeutic relationship developed in treatment. The latter allowed her to recognize her individual strengths and assets so that she could shape a positive future for herself, and no longer be mired with feelings of self-doubt and blame."

For a while, Franny felt like what happened to her when she was six defined her, but today, she's writing her own story.

Field Notes

COMPASS Protest and Update

Funding for COMPASS, the after-school program started by Mayor Bloomberg, was set to expire on June 30. But the city may have underestimated the importance of these programs, which were providing individualized tutoring, homework help, and enrichment activities in underserved neighborhoods. Seventeen locations served 1900 students citywide, including two—P.S. 96 in South Ozone Park and P.S. 273 in Richmond Hill—that are part of The Child Center's youth development programs.

When Mayor de Blasio's first budget didn't provide funding for the programs, our students mounted a campaign to save them. They wrote letters, painted posters, held rallies, marched on Queens Borough Hall, and shared videos and images online. Their efforts were even covered in an article in the *The Queens Chronicle*.

We don't want to take all the credit, but we are pleased to report that funding has been restored, and our programs were picked up for a three-year contract. "This is our home for the next three years," assures Saher Mahmood, program supervisor of the COMPASS program at P.S. 273.



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The Child Center of NY's New Image

The Child Center of NY has a new mission and look! As our dedication to the children we serve remains unchanging, we've updated our mission, vision, logo, and tagline to accurately capture the scope and spirit of our work. Our new mission statement is, "We strengthen children and families with skills, opportunities and emotional support to build healthy, successful lives." Our vision is now, "A world where every child and family thrives, creating healthy, vibrant communities." The sun is our new logo, made up of handprints collected from children, parents, and staff in our programs. Alongside it you'll find our new tagline: "Strengthening Family. Building Community." A heartfelt thanks to all those who help us make those words a reality!



Making Our New Logo

When we decided to make a new logo, we knew we wanted it to reflect the heart and soul of The Child Center: our staff and the children and families we serve. A terrific creative team at Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness donated its time and expertise to develop a logo that would do just that. Armed with sponges and paint, the team visited our Macari Family Center in Flushing to get handprints of kids, parents, and staff in our programs, and use them to make the rays of the sun in our logo.

"It was really cute," says Jennifer Dudley, Director of Development. "We asked the kids, 'Hey, do you want to participate in an art project with us?' At first they mostly didn't understand what we wanted them to do. But their parents were doing it, and so were family workers and other staff, and soon they

were all doing it together. By the end, everyone was saying, 'Let's do more!' It really brought everybody together in a fun way." The result is a bright and optimistic symbol that reflects the hope, potential, and sense of community that The Child Center stands for.





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