

The Child Center Opens in Manhattan

The steps were steep, but Moses and his mother took them hand in hand. It was the beginning of the new school year at Escalera, The Child Center's newest Head Start and its first program ever in Manhattan. On three floors of the sunny brownstone, teachers tucked backpacks into cubbies. Within minutes Moses, who had never been to preschool before, was leaning on the lap of his teacher, Ms. Kim, intently studying the adventures of Spot the dog.

Escalera, which means "steps" in Spanish, was awarded to The Child Center this summer by the Administration of Children's Services. Located on the Upper West Side, the program serves 49 children, bringing our citywide early childhood population to nearly 400 children under age 5.



Moses and classmates at circle time, first day of school.



Come on in—it's time to learn!

"We are thrilled to bring our services to this important Manhattan location," said executive director Sandra Hagan. "Our new classrooms will offer the same holistic program model that has been so successful at our other Head Start sites in Queens."

In addition to a rich preschool curriculum, The Child Center's Head Start programs offer families access to counseling, health consultations from a staff nurse, and parenting classes—all to help impoverished children arrive at kindergarten developmentally ready to learn.

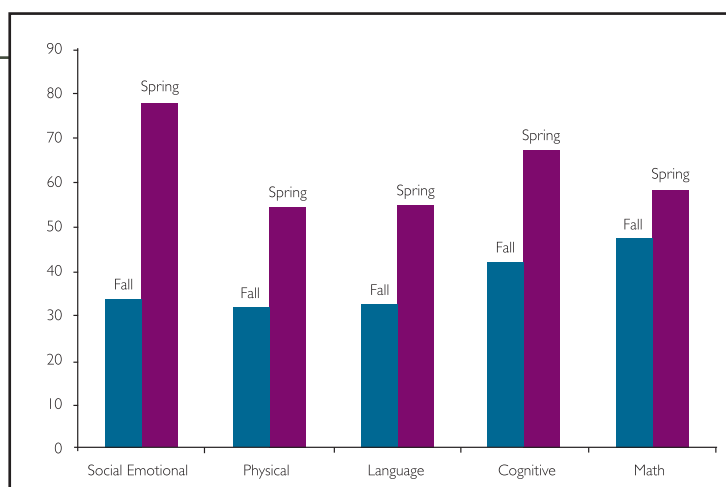
"Our approach promotes positive outcomes for these children as they move through life," said Linda Rodriguez, director of Early Childhood Education at The Child Center. "We are proud to be a support network to help these families succeed."

In the play area, Moses enthusiastically hammered while Ms. Kim rocked a doll. "Moses, my baby is sleeping!" she said. Grinning ear to ear, Moses gently tapped the hammer. His mother beamed. They lived in Harlem, she said, and were thrilled to have found a spot for him here. She rubbed his head. "He's going to do great."

How we measure up

Our Head Start children made great strides in just one year.

The percent of kids at our Woodside Head Start program who met national development norms increased dramatically from fall to spring last year.





From the Executive Director Sandra Hagan

For many kids, fall is the season of fresh starts, new shoes, and eagerness to learn. But for others, the season brings nothing but a familiar sense of failure. Imagine being in sixth grade and still struggling to read or do basic math. It's so much easier to cut class than to go and feel dumb and overwhelmed. Thousands of these kids come

to us each year. As the mother of a dyslexic child who cannot, even now as an adult, read well, their plight really speaks to me.

Middle school is often our last good chance to reach these kids. That's one reason why last year, we started a new program for seventh and eighth graders who seemed least likely to succeed. When I read their assessments I was stunned: *history of sexual abuse; living in shelter; history of being bullied; serious health problems; involved with gangs; explosive temper. Reads at a fourth grade level.*

With generous funding from UBS and New York Knicks forward Metta World Peace, we provided an innovative intervention: six hours of weekly support and personal tutoring, as well as community service (they loved it), college visits, a peer support group, and a youth advocate who really cared. Within a single year, more than two-thirds of kids seriously lagging in math improved by at least one grade level. More than three-fourths did the same in reading. This is critical: It means we stopped the cycle of failure.

But this is only the beginning. These kids, and thousands more like them, need much more from us to reach senior year, a diploma, and college or career. It will be expensive—but not nearly as expensive as doing nothing.

I know you agree. These youngsters, like all children, deserve a chance for a bright future. Your support for The Child Center makes it possible. Thank you for your faith in us.

Sandra Hagan



Rebuilding the Rock

When **Hurricane Sandy** hit in October 2012, the community of Far Rockaway suffered some of the area's worst damage and flooding. In the middle of the devastation, The Child Center's after-school program and Beacon community center at PS/IS 43 continued operation—spearheading relief efforts and offering a safe, welcoming gathering place at an incredibly painful time. The school was closed for a month. Many kids, already fragile academically, slept on relatives' couches and fell even further behind. The Child Center provided extra academic and emotional support to help students catch up by the end of the year.

"Now, the feeling is that we weathered the storm. There is a sense of hope," says site director Jacqueline Gutierrez, whose staff is undergoing "major hurricane preparedness training" with other Far Rockaway organizations to help avert future catastrophes. "The community's small size and isolation do make it vulnerable, but this is also a source of solidarity and strength."



First Day of School at Escalera in Manhattan

The Child Center Names *New* Chief Operating Officer



In July, after a long search, The Child Center hired Traci Donnelly as its Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Executive Director. Most recently Donnelly was a senior vice president and the New York State region director of Phoenix House, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation organization, which, like The Child Center, works directly with clients in many locations.

During her tenure there, Traci streamlined programs and operations throughout New York State, eliminating bureaucracy, improving efficiency, and designing strategic plans. She facilitated the smooth, cohesive function of the agency's treatment programs, assessment services and direct services, and New York State bonding projects worth \$60 million.

An expert in management by any measure, Traci took the job because she is deeply connected to the agency's mission. Earlier in her career, she was a special-education teacher. She earned a master's degree in education, and a bachelor's in psychology and criminal justice.

"Traci brings a record of proven success in management, as well as deep knowledge of education and behavioral health issues," said Richard Jay, president of The Child Center's board of directors. "We looked long and hard because we wanted to find the perfect match, and we have found exactly that."

THE NEW GIVING



A CHANCE TO REPAIR THE WORLD

For Manhattan attorney Cynthia Mann, celebrating her bat mitzvah as an adult meant rewriting tradition in more than one way. When Cynthia was a girl growing up in New York City, in the 1970s, she never made her bat mitzvah because her grandfather did not believe it was the right thing for girls to do. It was a generational divide, she explains, and it was relatively common at the time.

It wasn't until Cynthia's daughters were old enough to make their own bat mitzvah that she realized how much it meant to her. "I always felt like something was missing," she says.

Cynthia joined a class with 13 other adults, mostly women, and they celebrated their bat mitzvahs together in a group service. For her family and closest friends, Cynthia held a cocktail party.

Had this been the 70s, she might have been feted with gifts. But since then, a lot more than gender roles have changed. Her daughters, like many of their friends, had chosen Jewish charities and asked their guests to make donations in lieu of gifts.

"It just seemed appropriate that I would do the same thing," she says. She chose The Child Center of NY, of which she is a board member. "I acknowledged that The Child Center was not a Jewish charity," she says, laughing. "But since it's my charity, that's what I did."

Giving to help others is an important part of Jewish teaching, "inherent in the Jewish rite," she says. The Hebrew phrase is *tikkun olam*, which means "repairing the world."

"I don't need gifts," Cynthia says. "It's more meaningful to me to do this."

The Child Center can be named a beneficiary of donations made in celebration of a wedding, birthday, or any special occasion. We also deeply appreciate being selected in memorial giving as a suggested charity to honor a loved one. For more information, or help in facilitating, please contact Director of Development Jennifer Dudley at (718) 651-7770 x 301.

CASE IN POINT

“We Almost Lost Her” *One family's struggle to reach their daughter*

The Child Center's HALE (Holding Adolescents in Loving Environments) programs help teens come back from the darkest times of crisis. This intensive family intervention is funded in part by the Robin Hood Foundation, known for its rigorous evaluation standards.

Mia's parents were desperate. At age 13, their daughter was cutting school, hanging out with a wild crowd, and acting out with boys in a way that not only terrified them, but also deeply offended the religious values they'd brought from Guyana decades earlier. After Mia ran away a couple of times, her parents feared she was becoming involved with a gang, and her mother went to family court for help. Mia was placed in a group home.

When she was released after two months, the family was sent to The Child Center for help. Urania Castaneda—a master's level therapist with advanced training in Functional Family Therapy—was assigned to their case. Urania's first step was to give the family hope and engage them in the process. It was slow going at the beginning. Mia continued to lie and be defiant. Her mom doubted that therapy would ever work. Her father refused to be involved. “Despite your problems you are still a family,” Urania told them. “And you can still function as a family.”

Next, she helped them each become aware of their patterns of behavior. Mia's parents, they realized, argued often, which made things tense. Mia's mother couldn't stop lecturing Mia. Her father could be explosive. Mia tended to cry and withdraw.

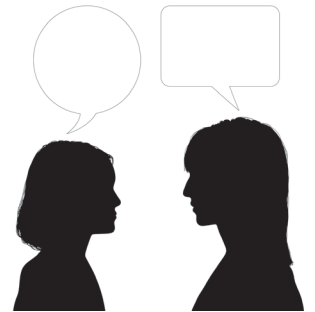
Urania helped them communicate better, and gave them coping skills to use when they got angry, like giving each other space and listening to music. She encouraged the family to find activities they could enjoy together, such as going out to dinner.

With Urania's encouragement, Mia tried a variety of positive social activities: an after-school program for teens; Zumba dance classes. “They were reluctant,” said Urania, “but they would always follow through and try it.”

A turning point came when Mia's mom was sick and needed surgery. Mia was scared. Her mom, she realized, “was like the light of the whole house.”

After that, Mia's behavior calmed down. She stuck to her curfew and checked in often by text when she went out. Bit by bit, her mother gave her more freedom. Ultimately, Mia apologized to her parents for her mistakes. “I look back now,” said Mia, now 16, “and I'm like, why did I do all this? All the trust I lost between me and my parents—even now, I still have to build it. Now my mom and I are so close. I can tell her almost all of my stuff.”

Before the family began working with Urania, Mia was failing every class. This spring, she completed the year with an A average. “I would tell anyone to do this therapy,” said Mia's mother. “Without Urania's help, I think Mia would have been lost.”



We give parents and children the tools to communicate better.



“Children are miracles of life. I want to make sure that those who cross my path are equipped with the coping tools that they need to thrive in today's society.”

—Urania Castaneda, MSW

The Child Center's HALE program for at-risk teens.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS BRIDGE MANY GAPS

Mastering Math

Gabrielle was one of those kids who seemed plenty smart but just didn't get with school. Last year as a repeat third-grader at PS-IS 43, she was disengaged and unfocused in class. When teachers called on her, "I don't know" was her usual answer.

We asked her to join our after-school Math & Money program, which pairs older kids with younger ones in a unique tutoring approach. Gabrielle surprised us.

She took a liking to her tutor and under his individual attention, she began to thrive. It turned out that she had a real aptitude for math. And she loved to challenge herself, eagerly completing the exercises and triumphantly announcing her high scores. By the end of the program, she was unrecognizable as the kid with the poor attitude.

The program had given her the individual attention and encouragement she so craved. It had also begun to change her perception of herself as a student. For the first time, she was eager to be called on; she was a part of things now.



Great work, Gabrielle!

But Is It Art? Helping Students Enter the Debate



"Is it art? Or is it graffiti?" Fourth- and fifth-grade after-school students at PS 182 in Jamaica studied an image of spray paint on a concrete wall. This was art class, with a twist: Presented with a question, students had to defend their opinion first aloud, and then on paper.

The question posed to the kids was part of the federally mandated Common Core curriculum called "Speaking and Listening." The goal is to help kids learn to write by thinking through an argument aloud.

"Children are so rushed these days that conversations are more like a tennis-match volley," said associate director of Youth Development Nick Ferreira. "An adult asks a question. The child answers, and the teacher moves on. Those are not discussions. This may be one reason why we have such literacy deficits."

Leyla Bermudez, the site director at PS 182, said that it was exciting to see the kids arriving at big concepts as they thought aloud. "They would say, 'So is it art because the creator calls it art? Or is it art in the eyes of the person who's viewing it? To me, this graffiti looks like art, and these are the reasons why.'"

Child Center To Partner with TASC & Harvard Ed Labs

The Child Center has been chosen by TASC (The After-School Corporation) to join an exciting new venture with Ed Labs at Harvard University and the NYC Department of Ed. The new pilot program will use an innovative model to extend the school day and offer intense literacy training for high needs middle school students.

The after-school program will be mandatory for all students, effectively extending learning time until 5pm each day.

"It's really very exciting to be part of this new expanded day effort, as joint partners focused on student success," said Deep Ghosh, director of Youth Development. "We bring expertise in engaging youth, parents and communities in quality enrichments, fun activities, and thoughtful community service opportunities—plus much more. This is a wonderful opportunity."



Thank you High Water Women Foundation and Astoria Federal Bank for equipping our students with backpacks. Thanks SDS Global Logistics for getting them there!

the **child center** of ny
HELPING AT-RISK CHILDREN SUCCEED

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Credit Illustration: Lauren Puchowski

Escalera on West 87th Street, our new Head Start.

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