

Hands-On Learning Launches “Dreams Take Flight” Campaign

#DreamsTakeFlight, an ongoing communications campaign aimed to create awareness of The Child Center’s multifaceted, innovative work, was launched in November and continues to draw attention and participation at childcenterny.org/dreamstakeflight and on our social media pages.

At The Child Center of NY, we want our children’s dreams to soar.



We started our campaign by taking what some might consider a mere time-passing activity — making paper airplanes — and turning it into a learning and sharing opportunity: We created an introductory aviation project for some of our students, an idea that we hope will continue to “lift off” and inspire other schools to follow suit.

Community Schools help youth thrive by providing high-quality academic instruction in their own neighborhoods and offering comprehensive services, including behavioral health, to students, families, and the entire community. Students from Jamaica’s August Martin High School (a community school), under the supervision of Child Center staff, visited another of

our nearby schools, P.S. 182, to participate in a joint afterschool Project-Based Lesson (PBL) and mentor the younger children there in introductory Aviation Studies. Small groups containing one or more service learning student mentor, a staff member, and the younger students created paper airplanes, discussing drag, lift, and other key elements in flight, and then wrote dreams, aspirations, or empowering statements upon and experimented with launching them. Images from this lesson are available on the campaign’s website.

Via Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, and utilizing the hashtag #DreamsTakeFlight, students and faculty at other schools were encouraged to create their own, similar lessons and upload their photos or videos to share. Building further on the “flight” theme, future activities will introduce students to other opportunities to learn about aviation and to share experiences with other students.

Said Traci Donnelly, CEO and Executive Director, who attended the PBL, “At The Child Center of NY, we strive every day to help children and families with wraparound, ‘whole child’ services — and we’ve been doing so for over 60 years. Dreams Take Flight reintroduces us to the public at a moment in time when we are particularly poised to accomplish even more by reaching even more children — and helping their dreams to soar.”



**THE CHILD
CENTER OF NY**

Strengthening Family. Building Community.

On the Record:

At our Corona Head Start/ EarlyLearn program, our 3-year-olds made significant gains in all six main areas of development.

93%

met or exceeded expectations for cognitive development, up from 30% in the fall

88%

met or exceeded expectations for social-emotional development, up from 27%

85%

met or exceeded expectations for language development, up from 29%

From the CEO and Executive Director

2016 was a year like no other. On that, I think we all can agree! One positive result of the presidential election is that social impact organizations are more energized — and receiving more support — than ever. I have never felt luckier to have this job where I can encourage staff and supporters, and the social impact industry, to move forward in our respective missions. And that's exactly what The Child Center is doing, on both individual and societal levels.

In these pages, you'll read about one client who didn't let mental health challenges stop her from getting valuable work experience through our internship program; she's now a student at Duke University. You'll meet a family ending a generations-long cycle of abuse; and you'll see how we're helping children's dreams to soar.

At the same time, we remain committed to achieving results on a larger, measurable scale. For example, Deep Ghosh, senior vice president of external affairs and community engagement, was awarded last year with an Annie E. Casey Foundation Children and Family Fellowship, a results-oriented leadership program that asks — and expects — fellows to make a major contribution to the broader population within 16 months. We are focusing on Queens' District 27, where 46 percent of students are chronically absent or not attending. Our initiative aims to reduce this by 30 percent. In the spirit of collaboration that the election brought to the fore, we're leading a taskforce that includes Councilman Donovan Richards, schools, and other CBOs (like the Police Athletic League and a grassroots group called Rockaway Rising). As always, we will use data as our compass to ensure we are truly moving the needle.

It's an exciting time to be in the social impact world. Thank you for joining us on the journey.



Traci Donnelly
Traci Donnelly



Robert Cizma,
Vice President of
Health Homes and
Integrated Care

Introducing: The Health Home Program

As we all know too well, it's sometimes difficult for even a relatively healthy person to navigate the health care system. Factor in multiple chronic conditions, life below the poverty line, and, often, parents who aren't in their native country, and you create a perfect health care storm. Children may not see doctors regularly, or at all — until a crisis happens, and addressing it becomes medically complicated, emotionally distressing, and expensive.

That's why we are excited to announce that The Child Center of NY is now a care management agency in New York State's Health Home Program. A Health Home is not a physical location, but rather an innovative model for coordinating critical health and other services to support a child's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It's for Medicaid-eligible individuals who have multiple chronic conditions — be they physical, emotional, or environmental —

and works by ensuring regular care, as well as communication and coordination among providers. Each child is assigned a Resource Coordinator, who manages all of the child's services and makes certain the child's needs are met in the first place — whether that means connecting him to therapy or finding a safe place for the family to live.

"This is an exciting opportunity to really integrate the care of children," says Robert Cizma, The Child Center's new Vice President for Health Homes and Integrated Care. "The Health Home Program means fewer trips to the emergency room, less time spent in the hospital, and a healthier, happier child leading a normal life." That's the overarching worry that parents of high-needs children frequently have, Cizma says: "Parents ask, 'Can my child grow up to have a normal life?' I can tell them truthfully that in the vast majority of cases, yes, they can."

Noteworthy

- **Crain's New York Business** published an op-ed by our CEO, Traci Donnelly, calling for fully funded government contracts. "By refusing to define as necessary such investments as quality assurance, the measuring of data, and the technology that enables us to do our work most effectively," wrote Donnelly, "underfunded contracts subtly but definitely encourage the status quo and punish dynamic, innovative organizations." The article was covered by other publications, including **Nonprofit Quarterly**, and **Crain's** later published a letter to the editor by Donnelly.
- A big thanks to the **Pinkerton Foundation**, which doubled its support for our Parent-Child Home Program in South Jamaica, enabling 25 more low-income families to participate in the nationally recognized literacy and parenting program; and to the **William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation**, a new funder that awarded us \$50,000 for PCHP in Astoria. Both were impressed by our outcomes: On assessments measuring the quality of parent-child interactions and kindergarten readiness, 84 percent of families had a mean score of 3 or 4 (out of a possible 4) as did 83 percent of children, indicating they were kindergarten ready. The NYC average for children of all incomes is 75 percent.
- Congratulations to M.S. 72 Beacon students, including **Jayden Boyd**, seventh-grade winner of the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development Young Poet's Society competition, and members of our **Beacon Dance Team**, selected out of 100 groups to participate in DYCD's Performance Festival. Many thanks to staff members **Tiffany Atilles**, **Sonia Goode**, **Alicia Harris-Moore**, and **Amber John**, whose support helped make these achievements possible.



To attend

The Child Center's gala

on **May 9, 2017**
at the **Lighthouse**
at **Chelsea Piers**,
or to help with event
planning, please contact:

Barbara Paxton
Chief Development Officer

718-651-7770 ext. 6825

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Supporter Spotlight: Katie Brennan

When Katie Brennan was first introduced to The Child Center of NY, it was a particularly difficult moment in her life. Her second child had just been born and had to go back in the hospital with an illness, her first was still young, and like any mother at least occasionally does, she was grappling with some stress.

Katie's friend Charlotte Bolland, a member of the Board, brought her on a visit to the Ficalora Family Foundation Head Start Center in Woodside; as they toured the space and met some of the clients there, Katie had a revelation. How could she help The Child Center give kids stronger footing to get some of the same opportunities her own children had?

"I had more resources than many parents do, like health insurance, native English speaking skills, and an apartment that my family didn't have to share with others, making simple things like nursing an infant much easier. I felt the need to support other moms."

Katie, now a Board and longstanding Gala Committee member, helps put together our biggest annual fundraising event. The challenge, she says, is to make a gala program that is balanced on all fronts — compelling so that more people will want to contribute, and above all, respectful to the clients.

"The fact that the population we represent is frequently immigrant speaks to me. In a way, we are all the children of immigrants. And we all want the same things for our kids. They just need help navigating through some of the things we might take for granted."



Staff Spotlight: Through Groups, Individuals Thrive

Diane Menzel, in over 15 years with The Child Center, has often utilized her teaching background to better serve clients. At the South Jamaica Clinic, she recognized two challenges: 1) many children facing behavioral health problems have difficulty making friends, and 2) when they are out of school, kids may not otherwise have opportunities to engage with peers.

Diane, a licensed clinical social worker, began creating groups periodically, initially to help latency-aged children develop listening and speaking skills and to express themselves through art and play. Children earn tickets for positive group behavior, then trade them in for small prizes at the end of the multi-session group. More recently, Diane developed a support group for teenage girls. She prides herself on an ability to individualize activities to meet the diverse needs of clients.

"Children always ask when I will be offering another group, as they seem to have fun and enjoy socializing," Diane said. "And I learn a lot about my own clients by observing how they behave in social situations, so everyone wins!"

Case in Point: Doing More Than the Minimum

When the NYC Administration for Children's Services gets involved in a domestic violence case, the city agency refers the family to an organization like The Child Center of NY for domestic violence counseling. This educational counseling is a vital part of helping such families, but at The Child Center, we do much more to ensure a family — including the children — is truly equipped to end the cycle of abuse and live healthy, fulfilling lives.

Giselle grew up in a home where there was enough money for school clothes and toys for Christmas. There were also frequent arguments and violence. When Giselle got older, she says, "I picked guys like my dad — men who wanted to argue and hit me."

Last year, one of those men tried to choke her, continuing the all-too-familiar cycle of abuse. Except this time, something different happened: Giselle's daughter Hailey, the eldest of her five children, called 911, and ACS referred Giselle to The Child Center's Trude Weishaupt Prevention program, where she received the required domestic violence counseling. But we didn't stop there. We helped Giselle in both practical and emotional terms, so she wouldn't feel she needed to put herself — and her children — in a dangerous situation again.

Giselle's case planner, Vanessa Bryant, helped Giselle get health care and insurance, and affordable child care, since her boyfriend (who fled after the 911 call) used to stay home with the younger kids while Giselle worked.

Bryant also helped Giselle develop a structured household, with outlined roles for each child, so the stress of being a single working mom didn't overwhelm her. Family counseling sessions helped her cope emotionally.



Still, it wasn't easy. On top of everything else, Giselle recently had been unemployed, and the time without a paycheck took a harsh toll: "We had no more food stamps and had been evicted," Giselle remembers. "All our stuff was in a storage room that the owner wouldn't open until I paid the bill. I didn't have coats for my children. I had never been in that position in my whole life."

That's when Giselle almost went back to her abusive boyfriend. Instead, she turned to Bryant, who gave Giselle winter clothes, a gift card for food, and a MetroCard to get her to her new job. This practical help is key to ensuring families can get through a rough transition period without returning to an abusive partner.

Still, we didn't stop there. Because the effects of domestic violence can cause lifelong suffering for the children who witness it and, as Giselle's story illustrates, cause the cycle to continue, the staff also worked with Giselle's children — particularly 13-year-old Hailey, who had become "parentified." Feeling responsible for her mother's well-being, she did not have close friends or pursue outside interests. To help with these issues, the staff connected Hailey to a Child Center therapist who specializes in helping traumatized children. Hailey is now building friendships and engaging in age-appropriate activities — and excelling at them. She was even selected to participate in an event at the United Nations and was profiled by NY1 (visit our website to see the clip).

"My family and I have been through some struggles. It kind of shut me down. But counseling opened me up," Hailey says. "It was pretty scary, but I helped my family. Now I feel very safe and happy."

Field Notes: Strengthening Character

Helping Out for the Holidays

Instilling in our youth the importance of community service is a cornerstone of our Youth Development programs. While this dedication to giving back is always encouraged, it's never more salient than during the holidays. This holiday season, several programs participated in efforts to support families in need. SONYC 237, an afterschool program for middle-schoolers, organized a toy drive and a book fair to promote literacy during the break; students of the Youth on the Move class at SONYC CASA (Corona Arts & Sciences Academy) created an awareness campaign to educate peers about access to food and clean water; and many programs held food drives. One of them was COMPASS 223, an elementary-age afterschool program, which donated 392 cans to a local food pantry. The students were clearly moved by the experience. See the note (to the right) written by third-grade participant Angelisa.

Angelisa All children can Learn
I was happy that i could
help some one and I
love it. want i help some
one I am very happy.



Learning from Community Role Models

Just in time for Thanksgiving, NY Mets outfielder Curtis Granderson and third baseman Jose Reyes gave more than 100 students of Child Center programs at M.S. 72, P.S. 223, and August Martin High School a firsthand lesson in what it means to give back to the community. Through the club's Metsgiving and Granderson's Grand Giving campaigns, the players ushered in the holiday season with a turkey giveaway at M.S. 72, distributing free turkeys and vouchers for Mets tickets. This event was yet another example of the NY Mets' continuing support of The Child Center, most notably through Far Rockaway RBI. You can learn more about the Mets' support of this initiative on our website, childcenterny.org. Also involved in the turkey giveaway were FreshDirect and Food Bank for New York City, who provided the turkeys, and Uber, who donated the transportation.

Promoting a Strong Work Ethic

At the heart of The Child Center's philosophy is the firm belief that every person can contribute meaningfully to her community. That's why we're so proud of our JobNet program, which provides internships to young adults facing emotional or behavioral challenges. We work with 39 local businesses, including law firms, retailers, libraries, and hospitals to offer clients valuable work experience. One of those businesses is Guy Thomas Salon in Manhattan, where JobNet client Brianna interned for two years. "I always had a thought in my mind that I will never be 'job ready,'" says Brianna. "At Guy Thomas Hair Salon, I learned patience, dedication, determination, and how to be the best I can be." Brianna just completed her first semester at Duke University, and Mr. Thomas asked for another JobNet client to replace her. His current intern is Mandy, whom Mr. Thomas told us is perfect for the job. "The assistant position has always been very challenging to fill," Mr. Thomas wrote to us in a letter. "The Child Center is batting a thousand."



JobNet client Mandy



THE CHILD CENTER OF NY

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Suzy uses her natural curiosity to observe an insect at our Ficalora Family Foundation Head Start program in Woodside.



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