

From the Chief Executive Officer

Research consistently finds that children generally grow up to be like the people around them, especially their parents: If a child is raised by two college graduates, she'll likely become one, too. You might say that child is "at risk" for success. That's good news for some of us. But it's terrible news for parents whose children are at risk for something quite different.

I think about this sometimes when I'm with my son. I can easily help him with homework, and when that isn't enough, I can provide tutoring without having to forego buying food or paying rent. I'll be able to help him prepare his first résumé and professional email. He's introduced to a plethora of activities, like piano and robotics, through which he can find his strengths.

This is not the experience of most Child Center families. Children are told education is the path to success, but when opportunities are scarce, and people in their daily lives have not achieved this type of success, it's difficult for these children to believe it's possible for themselves. To ask children in these circumstances to pursue that kind of path is to ask them to be extraordinary — literally, "outside the ordinary."

That's what The Child Center helps children do: be extraordinary. Our preschoolers overwhelmingly start out below expectations in such areas as language and math; by spring, nearly all are meeting or exceeding them. In our afterschool centers, city dollars provide basic activities and supervision, but we also provide educational support and activities that engage students and build their skills and confidence. Last year, our students won poetry, video, and dance contests. These kids feel the way we want all kids to feel: extraordinary and capable, and not just because they have to be, but because they know they have it in them. That's in large measure because of extraordinary supporters who believe in children's potential before they do.

Students of Child Center afterschool programs showed how extraordinary they were at our 65th anniversary gala. See facing page for details.

Photo credit: Evan Whitney



Traci Donnelly
Traci Donnelly

Child Abuse Prevention Program for Court-Ordered Supervision Cases Begins in September



Six-year-old Gavin and his family received services through our current FTR program at the Elmhurst Preventive Program.

One thing we've learned in 65 years of working with children and families is that the vast majority of parents will do right by their children, given the right support. This is particularly evident in our child abuse prevention and family support programs, such as our Family Treatment and Rehabilitation (FTR) program for families with significant additional challenges. Because of our successful outcomes with FTR cases, the NYC Administration for Children and Families awarded The Child Center 40 slots to serve clients through a new FTR program for families under court-ordered supervision (COS), a child protective service mandated by the court when ACS has filed a neglect, abuse, or severe abuse petition.

"This is an intense program for families in which the parent is struggling with substance abuse or a mental health issue. The FTR COS program will provide counseling, advocacy, and case

management, and we'll work with family court judges, as well," explains Robert Cizma, our Vice President of Health Homes and Integrated Care. "Sometimes judges feel uncomfortable closing a case, because they can't be sure what's going on. Through FTR COS, we will be the eyes and ears for the court, working closely with the family, ACS, and the judge."

"This program speaks to one of our core beliefs," adds CEO Traci Donnelly. "We work to keep families together, intact, and healthy where we can, and minimize out-of-home placements because we know the importance of the parent-child relationship."

In addition to therapy, a key aspect of FTR COS will be connecting families to needed services, which The Child Center is in a unique position to do, as we offer many services ourselves, from addiction treatment to job placement.

FTR COS will serve families in South Queens, Jamaica, Far Rockaway, and Richmond Hill.



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Spring/Summer Newsletter

Child Center Alumna Inspires Current Students

A core principle of The Child Center of NY is that children learn best from relatable role models. Sometimes that takes the form of alumni sharing their journeys with current students.



In April, teen singer Brianna (Bree) McDonough visited our COMPASS afterschool program at P.S. 223 in South Jamaica, which she used to attend. She started at the program for the same reason many students do: for supervision. But as she found out, The Child Center's extended day programs offer much more.

"Each day, we'd have a snack, then a homework session, and then there were different classes we could choose from," Bree recalls. "I chose music." She was delighted that Ms. Bailey, the music teacher in day school, taught at the afterschool program, too. With instruction from "Ms. B" and a lot of hard work, Bree learned music was something at which she could excel, and that it had a healing and unifying

power she didn't expect: "I often felt like I didn't fit in. But in music class, other kids got to know me. We bonded as a community."

Today, Bree uses music to benefit others. Just in 11th grade, Bree has begun a professional singing career and is a student at the Rosalind Joel Conservatory for Music and Theatre (named for the mother of singer-songwriter Billy Joel, a supporter of the school). But you can most often find her singing for charitable causes, such as autism and LGBTQ issues — and, especially, bullying. She's registered the #JustKeepSinging hashtag on Twitter and speaks to youth about bullying, as she did during her visit to P.S. 223. Bree and the students sang Alicia Keys' "Girl on Fire" together, and by the end, even the shyest children joined her on the stage. When Bree asked, "How many of you have been bullied?" every child raised a hand. She told the students, "There will always be people who tell you to be quiet. Don't listen to those people. Just keep being you."

The children took the lesson to heart. "I like how Bree talked about speaking up for yourself," said third-grader Tailar. "So I now speak up for myself."



2018

On the Record:

Out of

251

clients in our Health Home Program for children with multiple chronic conditions or serious emotional disturbance, only

3.5%

(9 total) were hospitalized, for a prevention rate of

96.5%.



Eight-year-old Nathaniel wants to be a basketball player or a businessman when he grows up. He loves learning math and playing basketball. He gets to practice both at his Child Center afterschool program, the Hammel Houses Community Cornerstone in Rockaway Beach.



Inside This Issue

Broadway stars headline 65th anniversary gala

The Child Center hosts historic LGBTQ forum

Rockaways youth and families say "no" to gun violence

Strengthening Family. Building Community.

Noteworthy

- Amid a national opioid crisis, the **director of our Jamaica Family Center substance abuse clinic, Johanna Bos**, was invited to **LIU Brooklyn** to instruct pharmacy students on using naloxone to reverse an opioid overdose. Visit our website for **News 12 Brooklyn's** interview with Bos.
- Thank you to **The Cummings Fund** for its grant of \$35,000 and the **Jean and Louis Dreyfus Foundation** for a renewed and increased grant of \$15,000 for Steps to Success, an enhancement to our middle school afterschool programs that improves school success by strengthening resiliency skills aligned with high school graduation.
- Thank you to **New York Community Trust** for its grant of \$120,000 to develop an innovative new assessment tool to streamline intake and referral systems. The tool will help us identify and address social determinants of health by connecting low-income families to appropriate services, within and outside of The Child Center. The grant will allow us to screen thousands of clients within two years.

The Child Center celebrated 65 years of service at our Annual Spring Gala on May 14 at The Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers.

The View's Sunny Hostin guided nearly 400 guests through a moving and entertaining evening of celebration. Performances by our students showed the value of music in our afterschool programs, and the audience was wowed by Broadway stars Jessica and Santino Fontana and Idina Menzel, who led a group-sing of her legendary "Let It Go" with the children. Speakers included Emmy Award-winning chef Lidia Bastianich, our honoree; staff member Omar Kazi (see "Staff Spotlight"); and 15-year-old Frantzia, who spoke of how The Child Center helped her overcome unimaginable trauma. Board President Dick Jay was joined by 12-year-old grandson Lucas as CEO Traci Donnelly announced the naming of the Jay Family Building.

Many thanks to our board members and major sponsors, including Pat and Dick Jay, New York Community Foundation Bank, Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Lidia Matticchio Bastianich, Jennifer Milacci and Marc Scher, Garrett D'Alessandro and Amy Rappaport, Flushing Bank, Pond Family Trust, Chasity and Peter Santoro, TDBank, Anne and Benjamin Bahr, Katie and Jim Brennan, Barbara Deli, M.D. and Neeraj Bewtra, Farrell Fritz, P.C., Jackson Lewis, P.C., The New York Mets Foundation, The Nicolosi Law Firm, P.C., Nell and Adam Schwartz, Gelvina Rodriguez Stevenson, and Aliana and David Spungen. Special thanks to our gala host committee: co-chairs Katie Brennan and Jennifer Milacci, Paula Barnes, Gelvina Rodriguez Stevenson, Chasity Santoro, and Sher Sparano.



Staff Spotlight: Assistant Program Director Omar Kazi Earns Russell L. Carson Visionary Award

It's become a tradition and high point at The Child Center annual gala to present the Russ Carson Visionary Award to a staff member who consistently goes above and beyond for clients and represents the kind of forward-thinking that defines The Child Center. This year's award went to Omar Kazi, who recently was promoted to Assistant Program Director of our Asian Outreach Program. Kazi, who immigrated from Bangladesh as a teenager, provides mental health support to immigrants dealing with acculturation stress and individuals coping with mental illness and trauma. He also conducts outreach to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues in Asian communities. Impressively, he does it all with a 95 percent productivity rate. Upon presenting Kazi with the award, CEO Traci Donnelly remarked, "Omar envisions a brighter future for his clients, and in turn, they can see it for themselves."

In Their Words: Jessica's Story

I had my first child when I was 18 years old. I was living with my parents. It was a bad situation from the start, but it was after the birth of my second son, Anthony, that my parents really gave me their back. I took my kids and moved out of the house.

I got married and had two more kids — my daughter Marie and my son Yadiel — but my husband left me soon after Yadiel's birth. He was born at 25 weeks and needed surgery when he was just a year old, and it turned out Marie needed early intervention services for physical therapy.

I contacted The Child Center because I was trying to get a little bit of help. I was thinking I needed help getting to appointments and things like that. But the kind of help I ended up getting was very different — and very good for all of us.

I met with a woman named Maria and was surprised to be meeting at a school. Only my oldest was in school, in kindergarten. I never thought to put my kids in school earlier than that. Maria told me that I could send my three-year-old, Anthony, to Early Head Start, but I didn't want to. So Maria said they could send a teacher to my home. I started to like it. I saw that Anthony was learning more and more. I decided to send him to the center to learn with the other children, and I started my daughter there when she was two and a half. It made such a difference! With my oldest, who never went to preschool, it was hard for him in kindergarten. He had trouble learning, counting, being with other kids. He wouldn't talk to the other children.



Jessica with her youngest child, Yadiel, at our Early Head Start center in Flushing

I thought at first that two and a half was young to start school, but when I saw my daughter in the classroom, I knew I made the right decision. I saw her talking a lot, sharing, and getting along with other kids. She was learning so much. I know she will not have a problem when she gets to kindergarten. Now my son Anthony is at The Child Center's Head Start/EarlyLearn in Corona, and he had a rougher start, but he is doing great now, too.

Being a part of The Child Center was good not only for my kids, but also for me. I don't like to talk about myself, but the teachers at Corona give me so much support. They ask what's going on and help me with parenting. When Anthony was tantruming a lot, they showed me how to give him a time-out so he can calm himself down and we can work it out.

At Early Head Start, the family service manager, Stephanie, runs a group called Personal Best to help with parenting and building a social network for the parents. I got to hear other moms' stories, and I was surprised when some moms said my story gave them motivation. We talked about

how we were raised, and how we can do differently. In my house growing up, there was a lot of slapping. Through the group, I learned even though I did not have the ideal childhood, my mother still loves me; and I have the power to break any parenting cycles that I do not want to continue. I learned how to be patient and work out conflicts. I know I was able to become a better parent and person because of this group. I feel happy — like I learned how to be a mom.

In the Field: Building Community

Celebrating the Week of the Young Child

Every day is a celebration of the young child at The Child Center, but during the annual Week of the Young Child, sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, our Head Start programs participate in a national observance to spotlight the needs of young children and their families — and how early childhood programs meet them. It's a fun-filled week with a different daily theme and activities that engage children, teachers, and families, strengthening the bonds of community among them.

At Early Head Start, parents participated each day. On Music Monday, 3-year-old Yordan loved having his parents, musicians in a mariachi band, come to school and play music. On Tasty Tuesday, children and parents made smoothies, and on Work Together Wednesday, they made cardboard structures, such as a fire truck. On Artsy Thursday they made tie-dye T-shirts, and the week ended with a special breakfast on Family Friday. Sharing the school day with parents was a thrill for the children, including 3-year-old Alonda, who told her mom, "Mama, te amo mucho! Me gusta pintar contigo." ("Mama, I love you very much! I like painting with you.")



Saying No to Gun Violence and Yes to Children's Potential



As gun violence has dominated national news, its effects have been felt intensely in the Rockaways, where two 15-year-old boys, Trevor Rhudd and Youssef Soliman, died from gun violence within two months. Parents, young people, and community members of all ages are coming together to say enough is enough. To bolster these efforts, The Child Center and other neighborhood partners, clergy, and elected officials organized a community peace march and summit in February. The summit included discussions and workshops aimed at stopping the violence and emphasizing that it's not just a matter of saying "no" to violence — but saying "yes" to opportunities to bring out young people's strengths. Participants received information about the Ocean Bay Youth Council, summer camp, and other community programs, including The Child Center's Cornerstone community centers. "We at The Child Center of NY will do everything we can to help youth realize their potential," says Deborah Hoyle, director of the Ocean Bay Community Cornerstone. "It's time to end the violence, engage our young people, and reclaim our communities and our promise."

Creating a Safe Space for LGBTQ Youth in the Rockaways

The Child Center hosted the Rockaways' first ever LGBTQ Conference and Forum at our Ocean Bay Community Cornerstone in April. The turnout and enthusiastic participation indicated it was an idea whose time had come. Panelists and audience members discussed issues affecting the LGBTQ community, especially the need for a safe space — in the Rockaways — where people who identify as LGBTQ can meet to support one another. Several attendees noted that they previously only have had a choice to attend an event like this one in Manhattan, which is difficult for any resident of the Rockaways to do regularly, but especially for young people. Ocean Bay will continue holding regular events for the LGBTQ community in the Rockaways, such as a family support group in August. Check out the full story on our website, childcenterny.org.



The Child Center of NY is a 65-year-old social impact agency that helps children from under-served communities to compete and succeed. To make a donation, visit www.childcenterny.org or email us at fundraising@childcenterny.org.