

21C County Connections

Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth

Vol. 5, No. 1 Summer, 2003

Annual Symposium... Leadership in Action

On March 25th, Rockland 21C's Annual Symposium "Leadership in Action: Exploring the Challenges" provided an opportunity for 150-plus educators, human services and youth development professionals, teen leaders, parents and Family Resource Center staff to focus on leadership: what it takes to be an effective leader, different styles of leadership, the impact of race and gender on leadership, and models of developing youth leadership.

The morning began with an inspirational and challenging keynote address by Dr. Vincent Ferrandino, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Dr. Ferrandino was returning to his roots, as he had been a social studies teacher and assistant principal at Rockland's Clarkstown South High School early in his career. Dr. Ferrandino painted a picture of the challenges facing those of us concerned with education: an increasingly transient population, changes in family structure, systemic and enduring poverty (20% of all U.S. children live in poverty), the increasing diversity of the student population, and the failure (in many places) of schools to be connected to their communities. Dr. Ferrandino made an impassioned plea for more federal resources to be devoted to public education (only 2 cents of every federal dollar goes to public education), and challenged school leaders to place the child, not the institution, at the center of all we do. Dr. Ferrandino recognized the strides that Rockland 21C has made in making public education and early childhood care a priority in Rockland County, and congratulated Rockland County



Dr. Ferrandino, joined by Harriet Cornell, moderates roundtable of Rockland leaders Michael Phillips, Danielle Bright, Mary Jean Marsico and Ron Figueroa.

Executive Scott Vanderhoef and 21C Chair Legislator Harriet Cornell for their government leadership. He then challenged all of us to engage in global discussions of how to better allocate national, state and local resources to more effectively meet the needs of kids.

Morning and afternoon workshops included sessions on Leadership Challenges in the Context of Racism, Early Childhood and the Development of Leadership, Listening as a Leadership Competency, Performance and Improvisation in Developing Youth Leaders, Teachers as Leaders, Women in Leadership, Empowering Others, and Turning Youth Defiance into Leadership. One workshop introduced participants to Elmwood Elementary's MicroSociety Program, a youth leadership development model where students create a microcosm of the real world inside the school. Another workshop showcased Connecticut's Parent Leadership Training Institute, which develops communities of parents that support one another in skills development, successful parent action and improved child outcomes. Rebecca Gardner, from the New York State Department of Education, joined local youth development experts Phyllis Morena and Marianne McCarney to explore NYS's plans to integrate principles of youth development into middle school education.

The afternoon began with a roundtable featuring the voices of

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***"Leadership is truly about
humility, openness and
support to my staff."***

— a symposium participant



NYS Department of Education's Rebecca Gardner addresses integration of youth development principles into middle school education.

Rockland 21C Welcomed Three New Board Members in March

Jane Brown, Executive Director of Child Care Resources of Rockland (CCRR), has been with CCRR for 11 years. She has been deeply involved with Rockland 21C through her participation on 21C's Early Care and Education Implementation Team. Jane has an M. Ed. in Early Childhood Education from Boston University. She taught infant, preschool and school age children in Army Child Development Centers as well as directed center-based programs and Army Family Child Care Programs.

Miggy Lopez, Principal at Gerald F. Neary Elementary School in Haverstraw, previously taught English as a Second Language (ESL) at Neary, and prior to that taught at Port Chester Middle School. Miggy has a B.S. in Education from St. Thomas Aquinas College, and an M.S. in Educational Technology from NYIT. She obtained her School Administrator and Supervisor Certificate in 2002.

Daly Flanagan is the School Director at the Rockland Center for the Arts and the Adult Programs Coordinator at the Nanuet Public Library. She has over 15 years experience in art education and administration including positions at the American Craft Museum and the Craft Students League and Elsa Mott Ives Gallery - YWCA of the City of New York. Daly has an M. S. in Education and Administration from Bank Street College of Education and Parsons School of Design.

Rockland Children's Champions Honored at Celebration Dinner



Each April during the "Month of the Young Child" Child Care Resources of Rockland recognizes the very special people or groups of people who have made a significant difference in the lives of young children in Rockland. On May 1st the 2003 Children's Champions Awardees were honored at the Eleventh Annual

Children's Champions Celebration Dinner. **Anne Nissen**, FRC Coordinator at Sloatsburg Elementary School for the past 3 years, received the "Rookie of the Year Award." Anne was described as the "backbone" of the Sloatsburg FRC, giving of her heart, soul and often her own time.

21C's Family Resource Center Peer Network was the recipient of the "Dynamic Group Award". The Network of Family Resource Center Coordinators provides FRC coordinators with monthly focused learning experiences on specific topics and linkages with specific community support agencies, and has vastly enhanced the effectiveness of each FRC. The Coordinators honored with the award were: **Dana Andrews, Jane Bosley, Lauren Grennan and Randi Miller** (Nanuet); **Rachel Berlin, Vivian Cay Berrios and Julie Kassel** (Nyack); **Rose Ann Mercado** (BOCES); **Kathy Lamar and Anne Nissen** (Ramapo Central); **Teresa Ortega and Liz Zurla** (North Rockland); **Eva Goley, Linda Lesica and Tanya Soto** (East Ramapo); **Margaret Umbrino** (South Orangetown); **Dorothy Atzl, Tina Braca, Donna Delay, Ilana Meyers, Sally Montag, Marie Palmiotti, Marcy Sacks, Rhea Vogel, and Joanne Weisbecker**, (Clarkstown).

Rockland 21C Board member **Alexandreena Dixon** was presented with the "It Takes a Whole Community" award for her commitment to educating the minds and uplifting the spirits of young African Americans in Rockland.

Finally, **Judy Savage** received the "Phyllis Helbraun Award" for her 23-plus years of contributions to the early childhood community, particularly as Executive Director of Child Care Resources of Rockland. Rocklanders are lucky to have such dedicated, visionary champions for our county's children.

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Rockland
21st CENTURY
COLLABORATIVE for
CHILDREN and YOUTH

Regents Learn from Rockland's "Magic"

Do you remember the jubilation when Henry Higgins said, "I think she's got it; I think she's got it!" after Eliza was able to enunciate "the rain in Spain" instead of "the Rine in Spine." That was the way I felt when Regent/Chancellor Robert Bennett summed up the various round-table conversations that took place on Tuesday afternoon, January 14 at the Nanuet Middle School. The task had been to respond to a few key questions: the key components of successful partnerships with schools; key principles to successfully involve parents and families; key barriers we overcame and how; and critical barriers for New York State to address.

The meeting was opened by Dr. James Ryan, BOCES District Superintendent, to whom we owe appreciation for hosting the two-day visit. In his welcome Jim made it clear that inter-agency collaboration went on every day in Rockland. Commissioner Mills, who has been a long-time supporter of 21C, recalled being present when 21C was officially launched at the IBM Center, stating that "schools can't do it alone." BOCES' Mary Jean Marsico did a marvelous job of giving a brief history of Rockland's collaborative efforts, which led to a "systematic vision and clear culture of caring for children."

My round-table visiting guests included Regent Milton Cofield from Rochester and Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Associate Commis-

sioner of NYS Education Department, and a range of parents, educators and community partners. The Regent wanted to know what we meant by parental/family involvement, and my table mates and I talked about making parents feel welcome and valued in schools. Of course, we Rocklanders at the table focused throughout on the importance of the early childhood years, from birth to kindergarten, as a key to school success -- and the need for incentives to encourage schools to understand this.

Much of our discussion focused on barriers to collaboration that needed to be addressed by NYS, and I had my long list ready: the need for FLEXIBILITY in funding to make it easier to blend funding streams; including a way to make local partnerships easier to accomplish; an increase in funding for the Community Schools initiative, which has stayed flat since the Cuomo days and which provides a very flexible community school approach.

Can we say, "We think they got it, we think they got it?" Time will tell. But we surely made an impact. They came to Rockland because they knew we were doing wonderful things and wanted to know what the "magic" was and whether it was translatable elsewhere in NYS. Thank you, Dr. Ryan and BOCES, for arranging this opportunity on short notice-and making it such a meaningful visit.

Unprecedented Visit to Rockland by Board of Regents

New York State's Education Commissioner Richard Mills and the New York State Board of Regents spent January 14th and 15th in an unprecedented visit to Rockland County and its schools. The Commissioner, Regents and a number of NYS Education Department staff visited all eight Rockland school districts and held two public forums to gather local concerns about education. During the whirlwind tour, they met with students, parents, educators, government officials and representatives of Rockland's extensive network of child-serving agencies.

"Outside of Rockland County, you have a towering reputation for what you have achieved. You know the problems because you are engaged at the ground level. It's really amazing what you have done." Commissioner Mills' words warmed the hearts of the crowd of more than 150 professionals who met with him at A. MacArthur Barr Middle School in Nanuet to talk about the county's collaborative efforts to support children, including Rockland 21C. The participants broke into smaller roundtable groups, each with one of the Regents, to respond to some key questions: What makes a school-community partnership successful? How are parents and families engaged in schools? How has Rockland sustained its collaborative efforts? What barriers to collaborative efforts such as Rockland's can New York State address?

An evening community forum at Nyack High School drew both parents and professionals. Each Regent facilitated a breakout session where participants were asked to pose questions or discuss their



Rocklanders meet with New York State Board of Regents.

concerns about the education system. According to 21C staffer Amy Barnett, the discussion in the breakout session she attended centered on standardized testing — both the implementation of the state and federal standards and the impact on children and the classroom. Regent Adelaide Sanford urged parents and educators alike to communicate in writing with the individual Regents regarding their concerns.

The Regents' visit provided the county with an opportunity to share lessons learned in building collaborative inter-agency and inter-sector efforts, as well as to impress upon the state the role it can play in further strengthening school-community partnerships.

Rockland Implements Parent-Child Home Program

Action Plan 4.6: Establish a countywide home visiting program for children from pre-natal to age five.



PCHP is a nationally recognized home-based literacy and parenting program specifically geared to families who are challenged by poverty, low levels of education and other obstacles to educational success. Families with two year olds volunteer

to meet with trained home visitors twice a week for two years. In 30-minute play sessions, the home visitor emphasizes verbal interaction and learning through play, using carefully chosen books and toys. The book or toy introduced each week becomes a gift to the child and the family. Home visits are scheduled at the convenience of parents, so that mothers and fathers who are working, in

After researching a number of different home visiting models, and learning that school districts wanted to implement one which emphasized early literacy, Rockland 21C arranged for the Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) to establish six demonstration sites in Rockland County.

school or in training programs can participate and parents are able to realize their role as their child's first and most important teacher. English Language Learner families may choose books in their first language.

More than two decades of rigorous research has demonstrated that PCHP parents' verbal interaction with their children dramatically increases, creating a language-rich environment and contributing directly to their children's success in school. Another benefit of the program is that parents often use it as a stepping stone to return to school, learn English, and advance economically. In many PCHP sites around the country, parents become paid home visitors themselves after participating in the program with their child.

Last September Rockland 21C brought together representatives from school districts and nonprofit and public agencies to be

trained in the PCHP model. PCHP uses a turn-key model, training local coordinators, who in turn train their own home visitors. Coordinators chosen by each of the school districts spent three days learning about the program – from the evidence supporting it, to the nuts and bolts of reaching out to participant families, training home visitors, making a home visit, choosing books and toys for the families and anticipating challenges.

The program has been implemented in: East Ramapo, Nanuet, North Rockland, Nyack and Ramapo Central, each tailoring it to their needs and resources. East Ramapo has trained some of its VISION volunteers, who already do literacy-related volunteer work in the schools, to be its PCHP home visitors and are now utilizing AmeriCorps members. Nyack has been loaned two

How is it going?

We hear one heart-warming story after another, all with a common set of themes: parents witness their child's eagerness to learn; share their pride in their child's accomplishments with the home visitor; and realize their involvement in their child's education is integral to their child's success.

How can you get involved?

Several school districts are eager to train volunteer home visitors, or train home visitors "on loan" from other organizations, public agencies or businesses. Businesses, faith communities and PTAs are exploring ways to donate the books and toys integral to PCHP; the Youth Bureau is always on the lookout for future AmeriCorps members. And, all the programs are eager for referrals of families who could benefit from the program.

If you are interested in learning more about Rockland's PCHP Initiative, contact Mimi Hoffman at Rockland 21C.

Annual Symposium Continued from page 1

four Rockland County leaders: Danielle Bright (President, Haitian American Parents Association), Ron Figueroa (Director, Rockland Alliance for Prevention), Mary Jean Marsico (Director of Special Education, Rockland BOCES) and Michael Phillips (Assistant Principal, Ramapo High School). In "fishbowl" style, Dr. Ferrandino moderated a discussion among the panelists of some of the challenges and assumptions about leadership. While the panelists' leadership styles varied, as did the route each took to leadership roles, all cited the importance of mentors on their own development, and touched on the need to build successive leadership to follow in their stead. Their honesty and self-awareness made the fishbowl both intimate and gripping.

21C's 7th Annual Symposium closed with a consensus that it had been a very valuable day. "I learned strategies that I will be able to use in my work with teen leaders," stated one participant. Many there remarked that they were struck by the amazing wealth of support and resources in Rockland. Others recognized the value of collaboration and inclusiveness: "I have to spend more time working with and reaching out to the diverse communities in our county." "I plan to reach out more and facilitate partnerships with other groups to 'head off' potentially difficult situations with families." Perhaps the best measure of the day was that it just wasn't long enough – many participants expressed the desire to have more time in their workshops and with each other!



Judy Savage

*Former Executive Director
Child Care Resources of Rockland*

So how do I explain this choice I have made? Choosing to leave a job I cared deeply about and going off to a music and dance camp!!! How could I, a passionate early childhood specialist, leave the world of advocacy and education to manage an outdoor camp near Cape Cod? Yes, the physical beauty of the place, and the peace and quiet it provides me is part of reason, but Fred Rogers knows the real answer.

I believe there is no better work than caring for and educating young children and their families. According to Fred, we who have chosen that path have a special calling. "Our domain is the heads and the hearts of the next generation, the thoughts and feelings of the future."

For many years I worked in the classroom, and later in offices and meeting rooms of policy makers and elected officials. Good work that often made a difference. But, for me, it was always only one piece of the whole picture. What I loved about children was their capacity to respond to the world with wonder and joy. What I loved about teaching was extending that sense of discovery into each new stage of their development. What I was committed to in my work was making it possible for all children to have

those kinds of early experiences.

Educated in human development, I was always fascinated by the way in which early experiences formed and shaped the later adult. Every once in a while I would meet a

grown-up who had successfully made it to adulthood with that sense of wonder and joy intact. Aha, I thought, that's the measure of truly successful human development.

Fred Rogers was the ultimate example of an adult who never lost that childlike wonder and sense of whimsy. His ability to tune into, interpret and explain the world in ways that young children could immediately comprehend was a gift that too many of us have lost. He kept the connection to everyday joy and wonder. And shared it with all of us.

So how does all of this relate to camp? Because it has been at this little camp in the pinewoods of Cape Cod where I have consistently seen whimsy and childlikeness fostered. In both children and adults, through the magic of nature and music and dance, I've watched myself and others connect to joy and wonder every summer. So, the way I figure it, this is just another way to strengthen the hearts and minds of young children and their parents. If my work here can contribute to the healthy development of generations to come, and if they can take that joy and wonder into the future, I'm doing all that I can, in the best way that I know how.

Judy Savage spent the last 23 years in various capacities at Child Care Resources of Rockland, the last 7 years as Executive Director. In March 2003 she left CCRR to become the Executive Director of Pine Woods Camp on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Her vision for, and tireless work on behalf of, Rockland County children and families has vastly improved both the support system available to families and the linkages between families, schools and communities. She was a founding member of Rockland 21C, and served on our Board of Directors and Executive Committee. She is greatly missed by all.



Nyack family with their Parent-Child Home Program home visitor.

Foster Grandparents by Head Start. North Rockland is collaborating with DSS School Preventive Services Workers, and plans to involve retired teachers in the Fall.

The growing partnership between PCHP and Rockland's AmeriCorps Program – which is the first in the country – is a pilot program with potential for national replication. The AmeriCorps members receive a federally subsidized stipend for the year that they remain in the AmeriCorps program. The cost to the PCHP site is much less than it would be to hire staff outright. And the AmeriCorps member has the opportunity to perform very meaningful community service and gain valuable skills.

As has been so valuable with the FRC Coordinators Peer Network, the Rockland PCHP Coordinators are meeting regularly to share their progress and form a learning community of their own. They learn from each other how to spread the word in the community about the program, recruit and retain families that will benefit the most from the program, supervise home visitors and make sure that participating families are linked to any additional supports they may need.



Symposium participants experience leadership development through play.

From Penmanship to Puberty

The **Clarkstown Family Resource Center Partnership** has been offering two innovative programs that help children to communicate and understand themselves, and help parents to better understand their children. Both programs have been met with great interest, attendance and success.

Handwriting Without Tears® is a nationally proven method of teaching penmanship. It is fun for kids, and uses an intuitive approach. The Partnership is currently running this program after school for children in first and second grades in all 10 elementary schools in Clarkstown. Parents are thrilled to be able to enroll their children knowing they will receive the support they need in this area. Success is clear to see and comes quickly for these students. Parents see results and children are empowered by their ability to write more legibly which helps them to be more successful in school.

In addition, Clarkstown FRC Partnership has offered mother-daughter and father-son puberty workshops several times during this past school year. These parent-child workshops are limited in size to assure that the participants feel very comfortable learning and talking about what can be an awkward life transition for both of them. Keeping the lines of communication open during this time is essential so we can keep them open as our children grow and mature.



— Rhea Vogel

Parents Can Be Students, Too!

Summit Park Elementary Schools' FRC sponsored an Adult Back to School Night, where parents could meet and hear from representatives of 14 non-traditional adult education programs. The evening was met with a terrific response from parents looking for ways to expand their education, and a number of parents immediately began to move forward to enroll in a program. The adult education programs that attended were: BOCES Adult Division, Capri School of Hair Design, Hispanic-American Bi-Lingual Association, Lincoln Technical Institute, Nyack College, Rockland Community College, Rockland County Guidance Center, Tomorrow's Workplace, and St. Thomas Aquinas College.

— Linda Lesica

Swapping Stuff

At **Margetts Elementary School**, the FRC held a "Give and Take Event" where families brought things they wanted to give away to others in the school, and then had the opportunity to take what others were giving. Every table in the cafeteria was filled with useful items, and families took most of them home. Anything left over was donated to the Jornaleros Project at St. Paul's Church in Spring Valley.

— Eva Hernández Goley

Joan Golden, Liberty Elementary School, Nyack School District

Having a Family Resource Center Coordinator on site has been invaluable to me. I often think that schools in this day and age should be as much social institutions as educational ones. We, as educators, have put a lot of time and effort into our curricular paradigms. But our model as a welcoming community contact to needy and immigrant populations, or persons bewildered by what can seem a cold and impersonal institution, has lagged far behind.

Too often ESL (English as a Second Language) students have no one to advocate for them, not because of lack of concern from the staff, but because of ever shrinking funds and the fact that the school staff are struggling against financial and time constraints. Since we have had an on-site FRC Coordinator, I have had so much more contact with the families of my second language pupils and other students with a range of social and emotional needs or needs that go beyond the classroom. I have had the luxury of getting to know them personally, seeing them as whole people, not just students.

For example, one of my students was having such a hard time in class – she seemed listless and could not focus. The ESL teacher noticed the same thing. I spoke to our FRC Coordinator about my concerns and she made contact with the family, learning that there were many emotional upheavals taking place in the family, in addition to the social

isolation of being newcomers to the community and the country. Our Coordinator not only found a Spanish language AA meeting, but was able to get the whole family into counseling and get the parents to enroll a sibling preschooler in Head Start. The family was so grateful, for they had truly been "strangers in a strange land." Without our Coordinator I never would have known the pain that existed for that little girl. I would only have had my more limited view of her as one of 23 students in my classroom.

This is just one example of how the FRC has helped. They have aided me with problems as diverse as giving second language books to children, contacting families facing financial burdens and finding services for them, tutoring ESL students, and procuring donations of warm coats, hats and mittens for needy children. The FRC Coordinator has added warmth and compassion, and provided caring to people who may have been shy about approaching the schools because sometimes there was too little time for human contact.

Personally, this connection has only broadened my perspective on my students' lives. It has helped me to know who they are and teach them better. It has allowed me contact with people I might never have gotten to know. I know that our Coordinator has touched many lives, and this, to me, is the "stuff" of good education – knowing the whole child.

Celebrating Collaboration

Rockland Teachers' Center and North Rockland Family Resource Centers Team-up

The Rockland Teachers' Center (RTC) and the North Rockland School District have been working together to enhance the resources available to North Rockland's Family Resource Centers at West Haverstraw Elementary and Gerald F. Neary Elementary. RTC's Barbara Monthie has been working with FRC coordinators Teresa Ortega

(Neary) and Liz Zurla (West Haverstraw), and her assistance has enabled both FRCs to provide a wider array of parent and family workshops over the 2002-03 school year, including sessions on first aid, bullying, literacy and science. Barbara says that all the workshops went quite well

this year, and cites the first aid workshop, attended by over 50 parents and children, as a particular success.

RTC is also helping the district to implement its new Parent-Child Home program. Barbara's 15 years as an early elementary teacher has proven very useful to the FRC Coordinators, who are coordinating the weekly home visiting program. She provides child development training to the home visitors and helps them to plan how to engage both parent and child in the week's activity. In weekly meetings with the six home visitors, she also helps them to reflect on the parent-child interactions in the homes they are visiting, and to problem solve as issues arise. As the Parent-Child Home Program expands, Barbara plans to add retired teachers to the ranks of North Rockland's PCHP home visitors.

North Rockland's Robert Katulak, newly-appointed as Assistant District Superintendent, values the collaboration: "RTC continues to be a beneficial partner for our district, helping us to access the right resources, consultants or programs in support of a particular focus or need. Debi Thomas, Marianne Smith, Barbara Monthie and I continually work together as a Professional Development Resource Team to build the capacity of teachers, students and parents in our great district." The FRC Coordinators couldn't agree more about the value of the partnership. Says Liz Zurla, "Barbara Monthie's creativity, ideas and support have been wonderful. The collaboration with RTC has been a big plus." Teresa Ortega adds, "The partnership with RTC has helped me to be more effective and productive, and has underscored for me the importance of my role as FRC Coordinator."

Rockland Business Association Addresses Education



On June 5th, the Rockland Business Association hosted its 6th Annual Educational Symposium, "Ready, Set...Grow!" The theme, this year, was "The Education Crisis: What Can Business Do?" I wanted the RBA to explore its interface with education – a subject of growing relevance to the business sector. When I began my investigation into the subject area, I had some personal motivations and some professional beliefs, but only the beginnings of a symposium. Without the assistance of 21C, we would not have had such a substantive forum.

Years ago, a black minister told me that in his community it was believed that by age 21, "one-third of our children will have been killed, one-third will have been incarcerated and one-third will have received an inadequate education." I have since heard those thoughts echoed by community activists. This concern, so relevant to achieving good outcomes for business and for the community had to be part of the focus for Ready, Set...Grow!

Obviously, I knew about the spiraling costs of education but wondered why there was a need for the myriad of agencies being funded for pre-school, after school programs and family counseling. I questioned the union-driven personnel costs, the "designer" curriculums that don't live up to their hype, the facility costs, the administrative costs and the attempts to make textbooks "politically correct".

Through our relationship with 21C, I became part of the 21C List Serv and gained a window into a whole other set of perspectives. I was introduced to the noted author and advocate Alvie Kohn and his thoughts on competition. I learned of Ellen Galinsky, the nationally recognized President and Co-Founder of the Families and Work Institute and Dr. Edmund Gordon, Director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Columbia's Teachers College, both Rocklanders, both committed to bringing their expertise to our community, both presenters at Ready, Set...Grow.

I haven't been converted to all of the positions to which I have been exposed; but I did stand up in Albany for the continuance of Universal Pre-K. While I'm still a fiscal conservative, believe that education needs to adopt a business model, and don't believe that government is the answer; I am passionate about business, education and nonprofits finding common ground and addressing this challenge side by side. That wouldn't have happened if 21C had not started a dialogue with the RBA. We've taken a major first step.

Al Samuels is the Executive Director of the Rockland Business Association.

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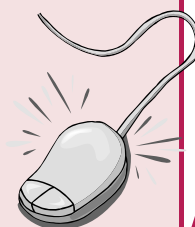
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Jane Brown, Executive Director *Child Care Resources of Rockland*

You have been a key person at Child Care Resources of Rockland for many years. What initiatives do you feel most proud of shepherding thus far at CCRR?

The initiative that I am proudest of having led is the development of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in Rockland County. We started by facilitating meetings with early childhood providers, kindergarten teachers and elementary principals to ease the transition to kindergarten. Once state funding was available to institute UPK, we helped to implement the UPK programs in East Ramapo and North Rockland, and currently are the UPK contractor for East Ramapo, Nyack and Clarkstown.

How has the child care field changed over the years?

In many ways, the field and the issues have not changed. Early childhood

educators are still not valued for what they do, and are still not paid worthy wages. Early childhood education is still not recognized as the primary learning period for humans. In our society, we remain conflicted about whether kids should be cared for in group settings or with “mom.”

What are some of the challenges and benefits of taking over leadership from within?

It's been a hard time to take over leadership, with federal, state and county funding at risk, and with the economy such as it is. At the same time, having already been within the organization has made for a much smoother transition. The staff at CCRR, who are an amazing group of people, have been very supportive. I think that for them, having to get used to

a new person at the helm could have been very difficult, given the financial stresses on the agency. Personally, one of the challenges has been that I haven't been able to fill my old position due to the uncertainties of funding levels, so I am still doing both my old and new job.

If you could persuade the general public about one early education and care issue, what would it be?

We have got to figure out how to value children in our society. I think that if the public really understood child development, children would be more highly prized and all the supports that they and their families need would be provided.

How do you, as a leader, renew and sustain yourself?

Exercise is important to me – I'm up at 4:30 a.m. several mornings a week doing yoga stretches and working out on my stair master. I have a very supportive family. My 4-year old grandson is there to play with me when I get home from work. And the CCRR staff keeps me going – they are dedicated self-starters who motivate and sustain each other and perhaps most importantly, have FUN together.

Rockland
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Monsey, NY
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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

There are a growing number of affinity groups in Rockland County — attend one of their regular meetings.

Haverstraw Collaborative: 1st Tuesday of the month – noon
Catholic Charities, Haverstraw; For more information: 942-1360

Spring Valley Collaborative: 2nd Friday of the month – 10 am
Kurtz Center; For more information: 352-4167

Prevention Roundtable: 3rd Tuesday of the month – 2 pm
Rockland Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Dependencies;
For more information: 638-5865

Immigration Coalition: 3rd Wednesday of the month – noon
St. Paul's Church, Spring Valley; For more information: 634-5729

Nyack Youth Collaborative: 4th Tuesday of the month – 9:15 am
Nyack Center; For more information: 358-2600