

21C County Connections

Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth

Vol. 3, No. 2 Spring, 2001

The Circus is Coming!

Opening Night • June 14th
For Tickets: Ruth McConnell at 627-KIDS
or Ruth21C@aol.com

Everyone loves the circus. How could you NOT? But anyone who has seen the Big Apple Circus is passionate about it. In a one-ring format, their engaging performance artists bring the magic and wonder of the circus to new heights.

Lucky for us, they are setting up their "big top" at the Palisades Mall from June 14 to July 1. We are grateful to Harriet Cornell once again for her ability to network Rockland 21C with such outstanding new partners. We are proud to be working hand-in-hand with this unique non-profit organization to ensure that its stay in Rockland brings our families and children the full complement of treats it has to offer.

Perhaps the biggest treat is their dedication of Opening Night, June 14 as a benefit for Rockland's children, which they have asked us to coordinate. Rockland 21C invited all public and private partner organizations that "develop the intellectual, emotional and social potential of children and are actively engaged with community partners" to share in the fundraising opportunities and the excitement of Opening Night ... which should raise over \$50,000 for 21C and its partners.

On April 4th, 21partners attended a breakfast meeting where ground rules for the event were established and seating locations were chosen. Family resource centers, community centers, child-care programs, arts organizations and others left the meeting very excited about an evening which will raise money and awareness in support of Rockland's children. If you would like tickets for Opening Night, contact Ruth McConnell at 627-KIDS or Ruth21C@aol.com and she will connect you with partners who still have unsold tickets. Tickets for the rest of the Rockland Big



Apple Circus run are available through the Helen Hayes Box Office (358-6333) as well as through Ticketron. Groups Sales are available through the Big Apple Circus Office (212-268-2500 x 102).

As part of their Circus for All® program, Big Apple Circus has also asked Rockland 21C to help them distribute tickets to children and families who could not otherwise afford to go to the circus. So, if you represent an organization which can distribute tickets quickly to children and families who are in these circumstances, please contact Mimi Hoffman at Rockland 21C.

We also have been helping the Big Apple Circus bring their Beyond the Ring® program to the children of Rockland County through school-based assemblies and workshops eligible for arts-in-education subsidies and through an artist-in-residence program for children in school-age care programs. If you want more information on this, please contact Mimi21C@aol.com.

Big Apple Circus is coming to Rockland with the hope of developing an annual presence here and investing in Rockland's children each and every year. All we have to do is show them that we can fill their tent for the 20 shows they have scheduled and that we are hungry for the great educational, artistic and entertainment programs they offer to our families. Please do everything you can to make this new collaboration a success!

UPDATE

SHOW ME THE MONEY!! Kids Ask Legislators for Funding

10 1/2 year old Gabe Mendez, from Margetts Elementary School, says he asked Assemblyman Sam Colman to "show him the money" back in February when four kids from Rockland After School Program went to Albany. They were there for the annual Coalition for After-School Funding Advocacy Day, along with students and adults from all over New York State, to

lobby for funding of school-age programs.

In addition to Sam Colman, they met with State Assembly Members Alex Gromack, Nancy Calhoun, and State Senator Thomas Morahan.

This was serious stuff for the Rockland contingent. Matt Bonomolo, age 9 1/2, from Highview Elementary School, told us "my after-school counselor Max McClin-

tock asked me if I wanted to represent our program and tell the legislators why after school programs are important. I talked it over with my parents. They told me it was a great honor to do this. We met a lot of people and I got their signatures and pictures. Now that's like a treasure of mine."

(Continued on page 5)

Message from the Chair: Harriet Cornell

As a child, my two favorite treats were pony rides and the merry-go-round, so I jumped at the invitation to take my six-year-old grandson to the dedication of the new carousel at Bear Mountain. The carousel is beautiful, housed in an architecturally appropriate structure and featuring animals indigenous to the region ... as well as the prancing horses of my youth. Robin loved the wild turkey, the bears and fox, but chose a horse for his inaugural ride.

He definitely enjoyed the ride, although later he confided it was a little boring to wait for the carousel to start (the result of the dedication ceremony). What really made him incredibly joyous, however, occurred the next day when he went hiking and fishing with Grandpa Martin, played soccer with Grandma Harriet, and planned an outdoor clubhouse.

Since that weekend I have thought so much about the sound of his laughter and his enjoyment of play. My own happy childhood remembrances are all about the outdoors — running, playing games, exploring creeks, climbing trees. In our adult zeal to find learning opportunities for children, we should not allow free play ... with all its imaginative possibilities ... to be squeezed out of a child's day.

A recent research report by the Packard Foundation on Children and Computer Technology recognizes the many benefits of computers to enhance learning, but also warns of some adverse effects on children's physical, intellectual, social and psychological development resulting from extended computer use and inappropriate content. Much more research is needed on the effects of computer use, but we do know that children's healthy development includes a variety of physical and social activities. Play is good, and as my grandson kindly told me when I had lost our third two-person soccer match, "You don't always have to win, Grandma! When you play with a team, it's about everyone working together."

Celebrating Collaboration...

Rockland Center for the Arts: The Beginning of Wonder Children's Books Exhibition

By Daly Flanagan

The Rockland Center for the Arts recently presented an exhibition that spoke to a diverse audience. The Beginning of Wonder: The Art of Children's Books spanned a wide spectrum of illustrative styles that reflected the diverse cultures of American children. The Center reached out to Rockland County in a true cooperative effort to foster the love of books. Over 500 people attended our two-day opening event that included art workshops for all ages, a book sale, panel discussion and the opportunity to meet and greet the illustrators. Local libraries participated by promoting and touring the exhibition. Over a dozen elementary schools were introduced to children's book illustration through hands-on exhibition tours. Using activities, discussion and drawing, students sharpened both their verbal and visual skills and gained a greater understanding of the tools used in both visual communication and storytelling.

Building on this experience, the Center will present Forces of Nature in the spring of 2002, an exhibition of art that is affected or created by elements of science and nature: water, fire, air, light, gravity and earth.

The Rockland Center for the Arts is committed to being a rich resource for our communities and schools. Our programs include a School for the Arts for both children and adults, two galleries, a summer arts camp and arts-in-education programs in collaboration with schools and community organizations.

In April, the Rockland Center for the Arts hosted a Family Resource Center team meeting, also attended by several school-age care programs. We explored ways the Center can bring visual arts programs to children and youth in after-school programs, and arts-oriented parent/child programs to families through school and community-based family resource centers.

The Rockland Center for the Arts is located at 27 South Greenbush Road, West Nyack, New York 10994. For more information, please call (845) 358-0877.

Daly Flanagan is School Director for The Rockland Center for the Arts.

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Harvard Conference 2001: *THE POWERFUL VOICE Of Rockland's Youth*

By Mimi Hoffman

Jason Friedman, Karen Oates, Karen Kasman, Buzz Ostrowsky and I recently attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education's annual conference for selected community collaboratives. Harriet Cornell played a dual role, as conference faculty and as a delegate of the 21C contingent. The March 29-31 conference tackled the thorny subjects of leadership and collaboration. While the conference offered many opportunities to learn from others, to brainstorm among ourselves and to re-frame issues of leadership and collaboration, it also made us very proud.

In October, the Harvard conference staff asked Rockland 21C if we could supply youth voices for their upcoming national conference. We recommended our Youth Council. Marianne McCarney and Eduardo Gonzalez took it from there and arranged for four wonderful Youth Council spokespersons: Joseph Coe, Jane Louis, Neena Taskindoust, and Sandy Sathaporngkul to serve as faculty for the conference. The students spoke during two "fish-bowl" panels: What Do You Want from Your Communities? and Making Connections Across Institutional Divides to Strengthen Communities.

The "Harvard Four" are an amazing ensemble. They are well-spoken, thought-provoking, real, heartfelt, gutsy and reflective. They represent the best of student leadership, and at the same time they demonstrate how diverse the path to becoming a student leader can be. School-Community collaborations from Portland, Oregon to Cambridge, Massachusetts have returned home determined to establish comparable organizations. We were bursting with pride and wanted to share this great Rockland moment with all of you.

We asked Sandy, Joe, Jane and Neena a few follow-up questions for this article. They answer with the same honesty, confidence and determination we heard at Larsen Hall. They make us want to do them justice by solving this issue — how can youth play a more meaningful role in our community?

In speaking with educational leaders and policy makers from all over the U.S., what did you think was most important to communicate about youth leadership?

Sandy: The most important thing is that we, the youth, were at Harvard addressing national leaders. We were not bumming

around doing dumb things. With our perspective we can see what we can do to improve our lives, the lives of others and improve our communities. My whole theme during the panel was, "We want a voice. We want to be represented where decisions about youth are made."

Joe: Youth are legitimate. We have as much power as adults do. Our opinions and voices are meaningful.

Neena: What we spoke about was "having more openness between students and community." It is important to have the students in the mix with policy-makers and teachers and other decision-makers. I think it is so important for there to be participation by students in policy-making. Students will benefit most because they are the leaders of tomorrow. They will be able to do well at school and go on to a better life ... and then the community benefits. There were school districts at the conference that were going to go back and make changes to benefit their students.

Jane: It was most important for educational and public policy leaders to think about the process they were going to have to develop to get youth involved in community service. We showed them there are youth who want to be involved ... and programs like the Youth Council. Programs that get us involved and keep our interest; give us an active role like starting the meetings ... leading the meetings. Not just listening and being passive. It was great to be able to speak at Harvard and know people wanted to hear what I had to say. I felt like I was representing all my friends and I was able to speak out for all of them. I felt like it was the best thing I did all year.

How did your experience on the Youth Council prepare you to serve as faculty for this conference and why do you think your group had such a big impact on the conference participants?

Sandy: We had so much impact because we were the only youth there and this was the first time in this Conference's history that youth had a voice. The Youth Council prepared me for being on a panel like this because the Youth Council is a forum. There is always an audience to hear my ideas. I have a voice. I've learned so much in the last eight months. I am thinking about things I never thought about before ... about things like racism and sexual orientation. I have learned how to dis-

cuss these kinds of issues and be in control of any situation I'm in.

Joe: Youth Council gave me a strong base to be able to communicate my ideas to a wide array of people. I've had a lot of public speaking opportunities, like going into schools and talking to students. We had an impact at Harvard because we were a diverse group and proved ourselves to be credible. We care about our communities and the education we receive. We make things happen ... and we have fun doing that.

Neena: Being in an environment where you can talk openly is important. At the Youth Council we do speak-outs, and we speak at schools. It was a different audience at Harvard, but it is the same set of skills. You have to know what you want to say. The Youth Council tries to give everyone that chance. I used to be very shy. Now I can say what I think. The Youth Council makes it a very gradual and comfortable process.

I don't know what they were expecting, maybe that we would be younger and not as articulate. Sometimes young people don't know how to express themselves and are intimidated speaking to adults. We were able to talk about anything; we could be very open. We communicated in a way that was easy for the adults to understand.

Jane: Being in the Youth Council really prepares us to participate in conferences, be vocal, and take that leadership role. The Conference participants were impressed because they saw that we, as young people, were really passionate about community activism. They could see it is really time-consuming for us, and requires a commitment. They were so encouraged by our commitment.

Were there things said in Cambridge that are worth repeating for Rockland's educational and public policy leaders?

Sandy: Kids need a place to learn how to communicate what they really want and need. For example, PTAs (Parent-Teacher-Student Associations ... as opposed to Parent-Teacher Associations) should be in all middle schools and elementary schools. They are a place where kids can be heard and a place for them to talk about what they want. I know there are kids who really care about how the school is being run. After all, aren't we the consumers of the service: education? PTAs are a great way

Overflow of Page 3 Article

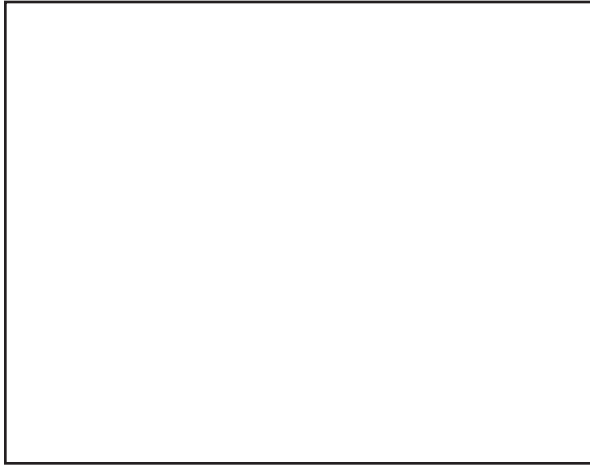
for students to have an early leadership experience.

Joe: It's important to look at the curriculum carefully because it usually is from a white heterosexual male perspective. There needs to be more diversity training for faculty and students. Schools should be more community-based ... capable of insights about how community is woven into their students' lives. Staff should take the time to get to know the community. In my school we are very diverse, but our teachers aren't. Many are not even from our community. There needs to be more open dialogue among students, between students and teachers, between teachers and administrators, between students and administrators ... about diversity concerns ... so that schools can foster a positive learning atmosphere.

Neena: Teachers should do things outside of school with us, and be more a part of our community. When you go to school and there is a teacher who takes a few minutes to be real, takes the time to make a joke, to ask how you are, to ask what is going on with you ... it makes the student more comfortable in the classroom. Therefore you ask the teacher for help, you are more comfortable expressing yourself in class. People don't realize that a relationship between a teacher and student is just like any relationship. If the teacher acts in a closed way, then the student will also be more closed to the teacher and the class. You try harder when your teacher is acting like a real person. It matters so much to the student when they feel a teacher cares about them. If a school would stress that more, the kids would get a lot more out of their education. I felt like the people at Cambridge really cared about their students. That made me feel "Wow, that is something that should be happening everywhere." I want to take that back to my school and find ways to make it happen there.

Jane: There were public officials and educational leaders who were eager for community to be more involved in schools and for schools to have more involvement in the community. They realize how important it is for teachers and administrators to see where their students are coming from. That helps them have a better feel for their students, their situation and how to help them. Teachers need to spend time in the communities in which they work; shop there, eat there, have friends there. They need to take the initiative.

Celebrating 5 Fabulous Years: Symposium 2001



"It hits you like a tidal wave...there is so much 21C-related activity going on in our schools and in our community...we are witnessing great momentum," commented Debi Thomas, Director of Rockland Teachers' Center, after the Symposium.

Before the Symposium officially got underway, registrants were treated to displays developed by seven school districts and their partners, showcasing children and families involved in a host of activities — from enrichment activities, to parent support groups, to dental screenings. No matter which display you focused on, it was clear that families are being welcomed into all of the schools, and strong school/community connections are being made.

Most Symposium participants felt that James Comer's keynote was the highlight of the day. He reminded us that we have the power to create powerful learning environments if only we put the developmental needs of children first and respect all their developmental pathways — cognitive, physical, language, social, ethical, psycho-

logical.

Pam Charles, Principal of BOCES Hilltop Elementary, reports she has been "Comerized" and is in the process of "Comer-izing" her staff, her students and their families. Classrooms have been provided with Dr. Comer's Developmental Pathways Poster and students are actively engaged in identifying which of their developmental pathways are at work. Others intend to bring Dr. Comer's message back to their stakeholders by borrowing our videotape of his keynote

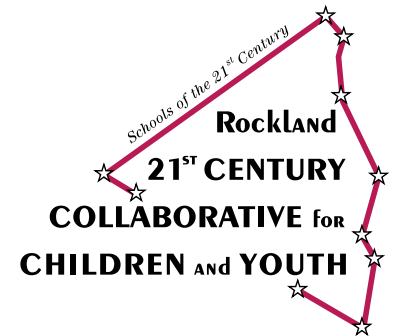
address. Let us know if you would like to borrow it as well. Just call Ruth at 21C — 627-KIDS.

Dr. Comer also conducted a special workshop for School Board Members, Superintendents of Schools and Assistant Superintendents of Schools. He challenged our educational leaders to consider New York State learning standards through a child development lens. What if we made policy on the state level, on the district level, and on the school level — in conjunction with what we know about healthy child development? What if educators were given extensive formal training in child development? He urged them to find the courage to follow this path because it will achieve the best outcomes for children.

Each of the workshops received rave reviews from attendees, and a great deal of sharing took place. There are now Rocklanders investigating how to get Nyack's Voices of Love and Freedom curriculum in their own school, how to become qualified as a

Universal Pre-K provider, how to develop a Welcome Kit as engaging as Sloatsburg's ... and clamoring for a DSS Preventive Services Worker in their school and for Victoria Oltarsh and Cathy Ford to be their Artists-in-Residence!!

Our Symposium — Celebrating Five Fabulous Years — surpassed our highest expectations in both our accomplishments ... and what we are all continuing to learn from one another.



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Mimi Hoffman Honored

for her Vision and Hard Work

Rockland 21C Coordinator Mimi Hoffman was honored on April 22 at the Nyack Seaport by Rockland Family Shelter for "working steadfastly to help create a world where respect and dignity become the norm." Mimi received the Shelter's Third Annual Distinguished Citizen Award for her leadership in founding RFS over 20 years ago to protect battered women, as well as for ten years of dedicated service to the organization. In presenting the award, Executive Director Carolyn Fish thanked Mimi for her unselfish efforts on behalf of the women and children of Rockland. (WILL BE SUBBING QUOTE FROM CAROLYN)

On hand to applaud were 21C Family Resource Center Coordinators Lauren Grennan, Ann Nissen, Karen Kasman, Rhea Vogel and Julie Kassel, as well as 21C Executive Committee members Scott Vanderhoef and Judy Savage. In addition to presenting Mimi with Rockland County's Distinguished Service Award, 21C Chair Harriet Cornell presented her with roses from 21C in appreciation of her continuing work on behalf of Rockland's families.



Technology enables many exciting things to happen, such as breaking down the sometimes confining walls of a school or classroom to allow rich cultural resources to enter in.

Recently, Krista Kohlhausen, Educational Outreach Director of the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum in NYC, emailed the Rockland Teachers' Center (RTC), inquiring about the Rockland YouthFest which had been advertised on the RTC Web site. Thus began a close relationship between the children and families and schools in Rockland County and the resources of the Intrepid — exemplifying Rockland 21C's goal of "connecting."

Krista and the Intrepid became partners in a new and exciting venture with the RTC, enabling teachers and students to bring the expertise and resources of museums, zoos, science centers, etc. into classrooms, via real-time two-way videoconferencing. Since then, the Intrepid's educators have brought their resources to YouthFest and the annual Science Inventions Technology Exhibit at North Rockland High School. Over the past few weeks, 22 teachers representing 11 districts from Rockland and beyond, have met both face-to-face and online to learn how to align the resources of two museums — the Intrepid and the Hudson Valley Children's Museum (HVCM) — with their curricula. As part of a Federal Innovation Technology Grant and New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), these teachers joined a growing movement to link curriculum with informal content providers through videoconferencing (VC). Students and teachers use a two-way VC experience to take a virtual class trip to

the Intrepid, and to the HVCM.

New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) has been a pioneer in the use of videoconferencing in the classroom to support standards-based curriculum. Their EEZ — Educational Enterprise Zone — consists of cultural entities ranging from the Museum of Modern Art to the Smithsonian to the National Park Service, including Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. This year, Rockland has become a member of the EEZ community, offering teachers the opportunity to enroll in a 3-credit graduate course on a scholarship basis. Twenty-two teachers comprise the pilot classes this spring, with another course scheduled for the summer.

The 21C school network has already been utilizing new technologies to connect the various parts of Rockland's caring community for children through an active listserv moderated by CATI — Computer and Telecommunications Initiative of Rockland.

Teachers may apply to become part of the summer EDIN 777 Special Project: EEZ Scholarship Program class, which is offered through the Rockland Teachers' Center and New York Institute of Technology, School of Education. Teachers will develop a web-based unit working with educators from area museums, and will learn how to integrate interactive videoconferenced learning experiences into their standards-based curricula. For more information, call me (Marianne Smith) at 942-0354 or email me at rockteach@home.com.

Marianne Smith is the Assistant Director of the Rockland Teacher Center Institute.

UPDATE

SHOW ME THE MONEY!! Kids Ask Legislators for Funding

(Continued from page 1)

Keyana Dennis, age 10, also from Margets, wanted to go so she could help her after-school program stay open. "We need the government to give us more money so kids have a place to go after school. Some kids don't have things to do at home, or anyone to play with ... especially if they are an only child. At the program I get to express myself ... and there's lots of different things we can choose to do."

"I was nervous meeting the legislators but if we don't have the after school program some kids have to stay home by themselves," said Olivia Chin, a 9 1/2 year old from Highview. "I would be alone until my Mom and sister got home. At the program, I do my homework and have lots of friends to play with."

We asked the kids if they thought it was worth going and if they thought the legislators really listened to what they had to say. Would they go again?

"Yes!!!" they all yelled in harmony. "They said they would try to help us," Keyana remembers. "I thought all the legislative people would be sitting on the opposite side of the table from us and just ask us questions. But they talked with us." And Gabe reports that "they told us they would help us raise more money. They listened to us because they know that kids really care."

And when we asked them why it is important that more adults and kids from even more school-age programs go to Lobby Day next year ... and what things could be done with increased funding ... they told us:

"So we can have a bigger room and more kids can be in the program. They don't have room for everyone." (Keyana)

"So kids don't have to be lonely at home. They can learn stuff and do fun things. We play sports and do arts and crafts." (Gabe)

"So we can have more counselors and pay them more. One of our counselors left because he didn't make enough money. He got a job at Applebees." (Olivia)

"And he'd really rather work with us." (Matt)

Note: The kids were accompanied to Lobby Day in Albany by Mimi Hoffman, Rockland 21C Coordinator, as well as staff from Rockland After School Program, Miller Family Resource Center and Martin Luther King Center.

Family Resource Center News

Rockland FRCs Participate in NYS Child Abuse Prevention Conference

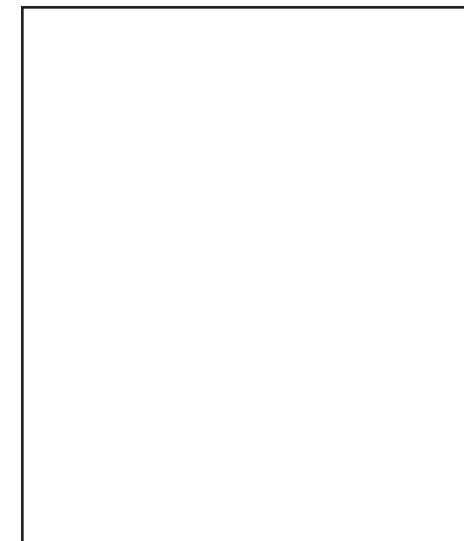
Sherry Goffman, Principal of West Haverstraw Elementary School, Barbara Gavin, Acting Family Resource Center Coordinator and DSS Preventive Service Worker, Carole Weisberg, Program Associate of Yale's School of the 21st Century, and Mimi Hoffman, Rockland 21C Coordinator presented "A Model for a Countywide Collaboration of School-Based Family Resource Centers" at New York State's 6th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference in Albany, April 1-3. Community-based Family Resource Center staff from around the state, as well as other child-centered professionals, learned about the Yale model, its application at West Haverstraw Elementary and its impact on families at the Grandview School.

School-based Family Resource Centers are a growing phenomenon nationally. New York State's Office of Children and Family Services encouraged Rockland 21C

to be presenters at this conference because they were so impressed with our 21C Family Resource Centers during their visit to Rockland in October 2000.

New York State views Family Resource Centers as a "primary child abuse prevention strategy" and has designated funds to support FRCs when they are under the aegis of community-based organizations. They have also dedicated funds toward professional development of FRC staff and parent leaders. Our FRC Coordinators are now linked to the NYS Network of Family Resource Centers and were invited to attend the April NYS Child Abuse Prevention Conference.

In response to feedback from school districts that they want 21C's help in providing professional development to Family Resource Center coordinators, we offered underwrite the full cost for every Rockland Family Resource Center Coordinator to



attend this extraordinary conference. Six Coordinators — Barbara Gavin, Jennifer Benson, Julie Kassel, Anne Nissen, Karen Kasman and Ana Torres — were able to go.

Some high points and impressions of the conference are discussed in additional newsletter articles written by three of the attendees, clearly showing how child abuse prevention is a key component in the work of our Family Resource Centers.

West Haverstraw Collaboration for Dental Health

By Sherri Goffman

On January 26th and February 2nd, two dentists and a dental hygienist from the Rockland County Health Department conducted screenings for about 150 West Haverstraw Elementary School students. As a result of the screenings, which took place at the West Haverstraw Family Resource

Center, a number of children were recommended for additional dental treatments through their private dentists or the Department of Health. All of the children received a toothbrush and a certificate for participating.

The dental hygienist, and our Health Department contact person, was Jane Badagliacca. She assisted Dr. Eleew and Dr. Heitzner during the screenings.

West Haverstraw Elementary School PTA President, Margie Morales, generated the initial interest in the program which was provided by the Health Department at no cost to the school district or the students.

Sherri Goffman is the Principal of West Haverstraw Elementary School.

Raising Resilient Children

By Julie Kassel

I found the "Raising Resilient Children" lecture with Dr. Robert Brooks during the conference to be thought-provoking, amusing, heart-wrenching, motivating and practical. Brooks spoke in-depth about his experiences working with troubled children and adolescents.

What resonated most for me both as a Family Resource Center Director and as a parent, was the concept — originally from Dr. Julius Segal — of a "charismatic adult" ... an adult from whom a child "gathers strength." This adult does not need to be a parent. It does however need to be an adult who believes in the child and conveys this belief and caring. In all of the school violence tragedies that have happened across the country, the common denominator is that the children were bullied and did not have an adult in their lives to support them.

Brooks also spoke about what he called "islands of competence," referring to activities that children do well, enjoy doing, receive positive feedback for doing, and recognize as personal strengths. Certainly we all need these in order to face routine and stressful life events.

In my position as FRC director, I come into contact with many teachers and parents. In the past, teachers have asked me to help find ways to provide one-on-one attention for children in need of support. I have always been happy to help out when I could, but now I truly realize the potential value of these relationships.

After Dr. Brooks' talk, I thought a great deal about ways to develop and enhance the "charismatic adult" concept to benefit the children for whom I am asked to find resources. I have since found caring adult volunteers to team up with children who need extra support. To take it a step further, we are having regular meetings to assess how the relationship is progressing and find ways to enrich it.

Additionally, I am currently working on incorporating the important concepts Dr. Brooks outlined into the parenting workshops that we offer. As educators and parents, we are all gatekeepers of our children's happiness and success in life. I am determined to keep these concepts in the forefront of my mind as I work with parents, staff and children.

Julie Kassel is the Nyack Schools Family Resource Center Director.

Yes, You Can Prevent Bullying

By Barbara Gavin

At the conference, Cindy Pierce Lee, Associate Director of SCOPE, presented an approach to “bullying prevention” that I could not wait to bring to the Boys and Girls Club I work with at Grandview School in Monsey.

She suggests that you create a task force of children who become actively involved in problem solving around bullying. For instance, you provide the children with a detailed map of the school and they identify the locations where they know bullying takes place. They then participate in the decision-making process related to how security should be handled in these locations.

The children in my Boys and Girls Club include kids who have been bullied and need help in developing a less vulnerable persona. I have brought lots of activities to this group in the past, such as role-plays and worksheets, and it has been hard to engage these second graders in the activities. The mapping exercise was different.

I handed out the map and we took a tour of the school building and grounds. We noted areas where they had firsthand knowledge of bullying. Many of them were aware of one location — a corner of our playground which is hidden from the view of the playground monitors. The group realized this spot could be made safer if the playground monitors simply moved. By the end of that group meeting, members of my club were armed with pad and pencil and were eager to survey their classmates about this important issue and looked forward to coming to our next meeting with newly discovered “danger spots” ready to be entered in our map. One of the children who eagerly went off to poll his classmates is a child who rarely initiates conversation, and avoids anything “controversial.”

What a non-threatening and age-appropriate way to raise awareness about bullying in our school community while helping our children to develop communication and leadership skills ... clear “protective factors.” I even think this exercise helps to achieve some of those NYS Learning Standards we are hearing so much about.

Barbara Gavin is the DSS Preventive Service Worker at Grandview Elementary and has served as Acting Family Resource Center Coordinator.

The Role of Schools in the Prevention of Domestic Violence

By Anne Nissen

Each and every morning, a husband carefully left a single bullet out on the kitchen table for his wife to find. Why? To remind her who had the power, and who was in control, in that household.

What happens to a child growing up in an environment like that? That was the topic addressed at the April conference by Joan Faxon, the School-Based Program Administrator for New York State’s Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. 500,000 incidents of domestic violence are reported each year in New York State, so imagine how many children are exposed to such “patterns of coercive behavior exerted by one family member over another ... purposeful and deliberate [behavior] with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control.”

Some children may be so focused on being alert to their surroundings (“What’s that sound behind me?” or “Whose voice is that?”) that they may seem preoccupied and exhausted, or consistently anxious. Young children may report hearing the abuser make “wild monster noises.” Others may not want to leave mom’s side, or may show an inability to trust, or have other difficulties in relationships. Some will show pro-violent attitudes. Children in these situations sometimes miss school, saying they are nauseous, or have headaches or earaches.

Faxon recommends that schools:

- Have firm policies in place.
- Policies should specify what a staff member should do and how the staff member should respond to a suspicion or to a child’s confidence, including when a child has disclosed that he or she has witnessed an incidence of domestic violence. That child too is at risk. The domestic violence policy should be in staff, student, and parent handbooks, and should contain consequences and accountability for students who behave violently.
- Sponsor a family/domestic violence week.
- Consider a poster contest; developing a non-violence contract to be signed by all parents and children; having the County’s domestic violence service provider do a presentation to school staff and/or families, and otherwise make a strong statement of zero tolerance.
- Have palm-size cards with the NYS Domestic Violence Hotline phone number (1-800-942-6906) available for discreet taking.

Anne Nissen is the Family Resource Center Coordinator at Sloatsburg Elementary School.

Help Our Mailing List Grow!

- We will share our child-centered mailing list with Rockland 21C
 Please add my name to the 21C Mailing List

Name _____

Organization _____

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City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Phone # _____

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Mail to: Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth
65 Parrott Road, Building 10, West Nyack, NY 10994

The mission of the Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth, a pioneering county-wide partnership with children as its priority, is to ensure the optimal development of every child through a comprehensive support system, an array of opportunities in schools and other community organizations, uncompromising advocacy and dedication of community resources to our common aspirations.



New Help With Tuition Costs: *The 529 College Savings Plans*

By Patricia Wallis

According to a recent article in *BusinessWeek*, "A new savings breed lets you set aside \$100,000 or more in a tax-deferred account that can be invested, depending on the state, in anything from boring bonds to risky technology funds. Your child can use the money in any school, not just those on a pre-selected list. Best yet, you're not restricted to investing in your own state's plan but can go shopping among nearly all of the 41 states that either offer these programs or soon will."

If you work with families who are concerned about planning for their child's future success, encourage them to discuss their options and the details with a financial advisor and/or a representative of the financial company that manages each plan.

Parents and grandparents now have the

ability to save and invest on a tax-deferred basis for future educational expenses through state-administered college savings programs detailed in section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. The 529 college savings plans allow states to offer investors professionally-managed, tax-advantaged portfolios to help meet the rising cost of college. The benefits for investors include market-based returns from a portfolio of mutual funds and complete control over withdrawals for the life of the account. In other words, if the minor named as beneficiary does not go to college, a new beneficiary can be named, such as another member of the family who would use the funds for their higher education expenses.

Each state that offers a 529 plan sets the limits and chooses the money manager for

it. For example, Putnam Investments manages the Ohio state plan and Alliance Capital manages the Rhode Island plan. Each of those plans has different limits for the life of the account. Ohio's limit is \$150,000 and Rhode Island's is \$250,000. New York State has a \$100,000 limit, offers a state income tax deduction for contributions made, and the money manager is TIAA-CREF. Although some states are exclusive to their own residents, any resident of any state can open an account under one of these three programs for future use toward an accredited post-secondary school of their choice within the U.S.

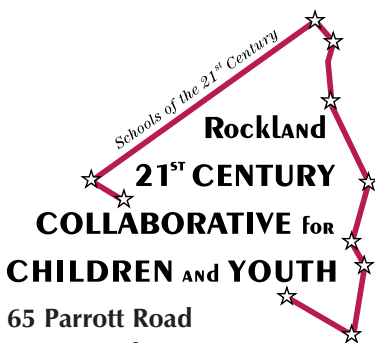
Thanks to Patricia Wallis, an investment consultant with McDonald Investments Inc., a Key-Corp company in New City for bringing this valuable information to our attention.

Web sites with more information

www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/01_11/b3723115.htm (Business Week article)

www.savingforcollege.com (All available plans in the U.S.) • www.nysaves.com (NYS plan)

Rockland 21C is eager to work with the corporate sector to bring their unique resources to the growing number of school-community initiatives around our County. Contact Mimi Hoffman at 627-5437 if your company has something important to share.



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West Nyack, NY 10994

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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

June 3rdParity Day Picnic To end discrimination in mental health insurance, treatment, and employment and housing service. Free food, fun, games and entertainment. Rockland Lake South 12 Noon - 4 PM

June 14th.....Big Apple Circus Opening Night
To Benefit Rockland's Children Palisades Center Mall Limited Opening Night tickets are available. Email Ruth21C@aol.com for information (Tickets are still available for performances June 15-July 1 through Ticketmaster at 212-307-4100 or www.ticketmaster.com, or in-person only at the Helen Hayes Performing Arts Center Box Office in Nyack.)

July 9-11th... Yale's School of the 21st Century Annual Conference Partners for Success: Linking Communities, Families and Schools www.yale.edu/21C