

County Connections

Schools of the 21st Century
**Rockland
21C**
Collaborative for
Children & Youth

Building a Comprehensive Support System that Links Family, School & Community Together ★ Vol. 6, No. 1 ★ SUMMER 2004

www.rockland21c.org

Rockland 21C Launches Its New Website

Rockland 21C will launch its official website this fall. The site aims to offer a one-stop shop for information on an array of opportunities and valuable resources for families, communities, and service providers. We hope it will build support for collaboration between schools, families and the community.

Creating a website was a strategy developed early on by 21C's Executive Committee in an effort to link all community partners and agencies in one central location. In the spring of 2000 the concept for the site began to take shape. The many possibilities for the site mirrored the expansive vision of our young collaborative. As the priorities of Rockland 21C emerged, so did the composition and value of the web site.

"Rockland 21C's website will give us the opportunity to spotlight the effective and valuable accomplishments that Family Resource Centers, partners, and many others have had by publicizing their work on the internet. Not only are we reaching out to the Rockland community, but because several states have showed interest in wanting to know the secret to our success, we are answering the call by providing a useful resource for others nationwide," says Rockland 21C's chairperson, Harriet Cornell.

Its home page, www.rockland21c.org will feature links to: *About 21C*, *What's Happening*, *Family Resource Centers*, *It Takes a Community*, and *Resources and Links*. *About 21C* will include historical information, an overview of the initiative, and will recognize the many individuals who have been a part of the organization. *What's Happening* will bring the reader up-to-date on Rockland 21C developments as well as provide important updates from partners. The *Family Resource Center* page will provide information from each of the Family Resource Centers, as well as inform the visitor about Family Resource Centers in general. *It Takes a Community* will introduce the many sectors of our collaborative and "connect the dots" between them. *Resources and Links* will offer visitors a portal of web sites and archives useful to families and professionals. In addition, *Viewpoints and Testimonials* from

"Rockland 21C's website will give us the opportunity to spotlight the effective and valuable accomplishments that Family Resource Centers, partners, and many others have had by publicizing their work on the internet."

—21C's chairperson, Harriet Cornell.



stakeholders will be embedded throughout the site. Rockland 21C hopes its website will generate excitement and interest from community members and nationwide viewers. Most of all we hope this website will be utilized frequently by families as well as the public and private sectors.

With a strong vision for a website, Harriet Cornell forged the way from the beginning, contributing archives, written and spoken material and unrelenting persistence. There were many other significant individuals who worked over the years in developing 21C's website. We are exceedingly grateful for their contributions: Linda Kallman, creative conception and copywriting; Martha Gradisher, creative director/senior designer; Sarah Chauncey, builder/architect; Marilyn Glisci, designer; Amy Barnett, copy-writing and Bryan Burrell who brought his considerable knowledge of technology to our web committee. Thank you to all!

Rockland 21C is uniquely positioned to offer a variety of resources, opportunities and cooperative learning experiences through its web site. Many of the ideas we had several years ago, that were so daunting, now have technology to support them. In time, our web site, www.rockland21c.org will feature more and more ways for our community to work together so that children are nurtured, cared for and actively learning. Please visit us at www.rockland21c.org. Please click on *Contact Us* and let us know what you think.



Party for Lauren Grennan hosted by Harriet Cornell.

Saying Goodbye to a Distinguished Leader

Dedicated. Compassionate. Resourceful. Courageous. These are just a few words that you will hear to describe Lauren Grennan and the

successful legacy she will leave behind in Rockland County. Some 5 years ago, Lauren created the Nanuet School District's first Family Resource Center (FRC).

Lauren worked closely with RASP (Rockland After-School Program) and other after school programs to make the most of their settings and reach families on their waiting lists. Lauren created a series of after school enrichment programs that were self-sustaining and affordable for Nanuet families. She developed a database, which directed families to the most suitable programs and services available. Families were encouraged to keep in touch with her and she consistently proved to be reliable, persistent, and generous with her time and efforts.

During the days and weeks following 9/11, Lauren got information out to teachers and parents in Nanuet on how to console and support the children. She was the driving force behind *Friends of the Family* – a program that raised money for 3 Nanuet families who lost husbands and fathers. Lauren saw that *Friends of the Family* was a way of responding not only to 9/11 victims, but also to Nanuet families who faced the loss of a loved one or a medical crisis. Her vision led to its more inclusive approach, an approach that is being adopted at other Family Resource Centers in Rockland County.

Her most recent accomplishment was establishing Rockland's first FRC on the Middle School level at MacArthur Barr Middle School. As the Middle School model grows in Rockland, it will use MacArthur Barr as a blueprint.

Lauren is moving to Wilmington, North Carolina with her husband Chris who will continue his leadership position at Verizon. We are quite confident families and children in Wilmington have a wonderful surprise in store for them.

Healthy Schools, Healthy Lifestyles off to a Healthy Start

Rockland's Department of Health is teaming up with Rockland 21C on an ambitious and exciting mission. Trained this June, teams from 34 elementary schools will undertake a self-assessment of eight health related modules, such as food service and health services, to determine how well they provide children with good nutrition and sufficient physical activity. Upon completion of the School Health Index (SHI), each school will begin to make changes in their practices, programs and environment, in accordance with the SHI protocol. STEPS to a Healthier NY, the overall initiative, was created to halt the epidemic of obesity, diabetes 2 and asthma in children. The Center for Disease Control awarded the NYS Department of Health and its five demonstration counties one of five statewide, multi-year grants.



School Health Index Leaders representing B.O.C.E.S., Clarkstown, East Ramapo, Nanuet, North Rockland, Nyack, and Ramapo Central complete 3 days of training.

Harriet Cornell Honored at Children's Champions Celebration Dinner

Each April during the "Month of the Young Child" Child Care Resources of Rockland recognizes special individuals or groups who have made a significant difference in the lives of young children in Rockland.



On April 28, 2004 our very own Harriet Cornell was the recipient of the Phyllis Helbraun Award, recognizing her service over many years, to the early childhood /school age community. The Phyllis Helbraun Award is given to an individual who has improved the delivery of services for children on a county-wide, state or national level.

Harriet's dedication to improving life in Rockland for its youngest predates the Rockland 21C initiative. During her 20+ years as a County legislator, not only did she establish the first county-wide school community collaborative, but also created the Council on AIDS in Rockland, and STOP F.E.A.R, a coalition to help prevent domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape Harriet has been a tireless advocate for children and youth. Nationally she has advocated for the continuance of AmeriCorps; in New York State she has worked to increase the size of the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program (UPK); and in Rockland she has advocated for quality childcare and child care subsidies.

Phyllis Helbraun, the founder of Child Care Resources of Rockland (originally the Rockland Council for Young Children) and Harriet Cornell pioneered side by side over decades to improve the lives of children. Jane Brown, CCRR's Executive Director, in presenting this award to Harriet Cornell acknowledged this meaningful connection and recognized how their leadership paved the way for many Children's Champions to follow.

Congratulations Harriet. You are the ultimate Children's Champion!

County Connections is a Newsletter
of Rockland 21st Century
Collaborative for Children & Youth

Editor Becky Christner
Editorial Review Harriet Cornell, Mimi Hoffman
Layout/Graphics Laurie Straus, ElEss Design, Inc.

Schools of the 21st Century
Rockland 21C
Collaborative for
Children & Youth

21C Board of Directors

Naomi Adler

United Way of Rockland

Linda Alvarez-Cruz

East Ramapo School District

Ron Anagnostis

Sloatsburg Elementary School

Danielle Bright

Haitian American Parents Association

Jane Brown

Child Care Resources of Rockland

Bryan Burrell

Rockland County School Boards Association

Harriet Cornell

Rockland Legislator & 21C Chair

Alexandreena Dixon

Alpha Kappa Alpha

Joan Facelle

Rockland County Department of Health

Daly Flanagan

Rockland Center for the Arts

Dennis Fleming

Rockland County Youth Bureau

Edward R. Fuhrman, Jr.

Nanuet School District

Vedeta Hanley

Community Action Program

Karen Kasman

Clarkstown Family Resource Center Partnership

Brenda Koch

Rockland County Teachers Association

Miggy Lopez

Gerald F. Neary Elementary School

Tara Morris

Library Association of Rockland County

Mark McNeill

Nanuet School District

Timothy O'Neill

Clarkstown Police Department

Karen Oates

Mental Health Association of Rockland

Mary Jane Pauling

Head Start of Rockland

Ernest Roberson

Parent Representative, Rockland County

Susan Rutledge

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation

James M. Ryan

Rockland BOCES

Christopher St. Lawrence

Town of Ramapo

Debra Thomas

Rockland Teachers' Center

Margaret Umbrino

South Orangetown Family Resource Center

C. Scott Vanderhoef

County Executive

Susan Needle Vitale

Rockland CARES Integrated County Planning

Joseph Zambito

South Orangetown School District

Roberta Zampolin

Nyack School District

A Message From Harriet Cornell

Congratulations to Rockland 21C Schools

Rockland 21C was formally "launched" on October 8, 1997, almost two years after a group of us went to Yale to learn more about the School of the 21st Century developed by Dr. Edward Zigler. During the intervening years a core group of teachers, school administrators, early childhood organizations, parents and others expanded and became emboldened to attempt an innovative approach toward educating our children. By October of 1997 we had determined to provide the best possible future for Rockland's youth, enlisted in the Yale model, spread the notion that schools alone could not be held responsible for ensuring the education of children, and were committed to finding new ways to link and coordinate families, schools and community so children's learning and healthy development were reinforced from every side. By October of 1997 our school districts had taken a leap of faith, each contributing \$3000 annually to enable us to work with Yale in a unique countywide collaborative and to provide professional training opportunities. In return the districts would receive technical assistance from Yale. That funding, which later grew to \$5000 annually, has been critical to the growth of the 21C initiative.

Now in 2004, we can begin to measure the distance we have come and the importance of the commitment made by our schools. Initially, there was concern that encouraging families with toddlers and pre-schoolers to use the schools would hinder the mission of the school—to educate. But the importance of involving parents in their child's education encouraged schools to develop Family Resource Centers, a key component of the Yale program. What excitement when the first FRCs were established in Nyack, Nanuet, and West Haverstraw!

We now have almost 30 FRCs. In 2002-03 school districts contributed a total of \$513,460 in actual dollars and \$534,104 in-kind support, which includes time of school staff and specialists, school administration, custodial and more. Through a grant program, Rockland 21C added \$160,000 for the FRCs, and some school districts garnered additional funds through parent fees and town government grants.

Nine years later schools are the champions of FRCs. They encourage as many early childhood programs as their staff can manage. They see children totally at home in the "big school" and totally adjusted when they transition to kindergarten. FRC coordinators are key to working with parents, helping uninvolved parents find a comfort level in school, which encourages them to become involved in their child's education. Equally important, coordinators help "over-involved" parents find a comfortable distance that enables their child to grow and thrive. Most dramatic is the rise in parents who attend events and parent-teacher conferences as well as other specially designed programs.

Rockland 21C is a national model because all of our school districts joined together with government, family and community to make a dream come true: all children cared for, nurtured and ready to learn. Congratulations and thanks to the visionary leaders who run our schools.



Karen Mapp, Ed.D.

SAVE THE DATE: October 1, 2004

Symposium 2004

*The Vital Partnership –
Parent, Teacher, Child, Community
Everyone Has a Role*

To take advantage of the many opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate at the start of the school year, we postponed our Annual Symposium to **October 1, 2004**. It will take place at the Stony Point Conference Center from 8am-3 pm. Karen Mapp, Ed.D. President of the Institute for Responsive Education, and co-author of *A New Wave Of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, will be our keynote. A selection of workshops will include: The Parent-Teacher Conference – Dealing with Bad News; The Front Office – Setting the Tone; Language and Culture – How and Why to Bridge the Divide. Look for a Symposium brochure in your mailbox – or click on www.rockland21c.org to register.

Better Baby Care Campaign of Rockland



Action Plan 3.1 - Provide early parenting information and training to new parents in order to foster school readiness and successful learning characteristics.

The mission of the Better Baby Care Campaign of Rockland County is to improve the quality of life for babies and toddlers by providing comprehensive support, education and services for families, caregivers and the community.



- Every infant and toddler should grow-up in a strong and nurturing family
- All pregnant woman, expectant fathers, and parents of infants and toddlers should have access to parent education and family support
- All working families with infants and toddlers should have access to quality, affordable childcare
- Every infant and toddler should have a clearly identified primary healthcare provider
- Every infant, toddler and their family should have health insurance and access to information on health resources, including services for special needs children
- All families should have access to paid family and medical leave
- All infants and toddlers with special needs should have access to early intervention and access to specialized services where needed
- All infants and toddlers should have a stable and permanent home

A new mother brings her newborn home, exhausted yet excited about this new life before her. As days go by, she realizes the intense responsibility and care that her infant needs and feels overwhelmed and inadequate. She needs help. She looks for someone who can help her with questions. She becomes frustrated because she cannot find the appropriate person to talk with about her concerns... What does she do?

Because the needs of new parents are clear, during its strategic planning process, Rockland 21C developed a plan to- "Provide early parenting information and training to new parents in order to foster school readiness and successful learning characteristics." The action plan included:

- Prepare a new parent kit, to be given at the time of a child's birth, to teach parenting skills to new parents for the first five years of a child's life
- Prepare a list of community resources and phone numbers for new parents; and search out companies/organizations to fund production of booklets and materials
- Work with existing staff and volunteers, to distribute the materials

The 21C Early Education and Care Team worked on action plan b. Later, several individuals took the initiative to make this plan a reality.

Child Care Resources of Rockland's Deputy Director, Marcia Scheer, introduced Rockland to the Better Baby Care Campaign in 2002. It is a nationwide initiative founded by Joan Lombardi, former Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Clinton. Because the needs

"This has been a wonderful opportunity for many agencies to come together to reach new parents and caretakers, offering them practical information that will benefit their family."

Marsha Scheer

Collaborating Organizations, Agencies and Individuals

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| BOCES/Judy Hoffman and Students | Nanuet Library |
| Child Care Resources of Rockland | Nyack Hospital |
| CIC Head Start | Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth |
| East Ramapo Central School District | Rockland County Dept. of Health |
| Gail Koss | Rockland County Dept. of Social Services |
| Good Samaritan Hospital | Rockland Parent Child Center |
| Head Start of Rockland | |
| Lorette Adams | |

Funders for Campaign Parent Packets

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Library Assn. of Rockland County | March of Dimes |
| Orange and Rockland Utilities | United Way of Rockland County |
| Presidential Life Insurance Company | |



of children under three are often ignored, Lombardi launched the Better Baby Care Campaign to “improve the early care of infants and toddlers while their parents are working, in school, or in need of services.” The national campaign seeks to work with local organizations to raise awareness as well as to improve the quality of early care and education; it advocates for paid family leave and other related policies.

Child Care Resources of Rockland reached out to those who had shown an interest in providing a resource packet to new parents. When the Rockland Better Baby Campaign Committee formed, it agreed it would provide information about community resources and promote literacy to families with children ages 0-3.

With over 15 community partners and 5 funding agencies involved, The Better Baby Care Campaign of Rockland was poised for success. It developed a “New Parent Kit” that offers a Parent Education Booklet in English and Spanish geared for children under 3. It includes a concise resource list in both Spanish and English. Rockland libraries provide a coupon for a free book, intended to encourage families to visit their local library. The Campaign endeavors to put a packet in the hands of all new Rockland mothers and fathers.

“People are committed to the cause despite the challenges,” said Marcia Scheer. “This has been a wonderful opportunity for many agencies to come together to reach new parents and caretakers, offering them practical information that will benefit their family.” When asked who has been vital in this initiative, Scheer said with no hesitation, “Gail Koss, who is tireless in her effort to disseminate information and continues to rally us all and lead the way in this project.”

How can you get involved?

Packets need to be distributed to clergy, pediatricians, civic groups and others. If you can arrange to have packets disseminated, please contact Rockland 21C or any of the other organizations, agencies or individuals listed at left.



PARTNER

Ron Anagnostis *Principal, Sloatsburg Elementary School*

PERSPECTIVE

Often we are asked the questions “What is a Family Resource Center?” and “What is the value of having one?” Sloatsburg School’s Family Resource Center (FRC), which now has been in operation for approximately seven years, has helped our school become even more responsive to the needs of our community. Sloatsburg, which is located in the northwest part of Rockland County and part of the Ramapo Central School System, is a small village consisting of over 3000 residents.

On a regular basis, we have surveyed our school community in order to determine its needs and wishes. From the feedback we receive from parents/guardians, we are able to establish short term and long term goals, and plan activities that address these needs. Our Family Resource Center Coordinator, Anne Nissen, has played a vital role in helping to establish our Family Resource Center. We have conducted various pre-school playgroups for children, from infants to five-year-olds. We have morning playgroups, afternoon playgroups, and early evening playgroups (free pizza and salad are served). Children and families love “their playgroup”. Our youngsters quickly become familiar with “their school” and their eventual transition into kindergarten is much smoother. Sloatsburg has conducted various workshops for parents (e.g. language milestones, pre-reading activities, parenting, etc.). We work hard with parents’ help to reach out into every neighborhood and let residents know of some of the activities that are taking place, and we also provide new families with a comprehensive Welcome Kit. Our school has fine-tuned kindergarten orientation for students and parents/guardians, arranged to have dental screenings, held popular Family Fun Nights, partnered with the Public Library and other organizations to conduct Family “Read-Ins”, formed a fourth grade Gardening Club, had male readers come into our school, and also initiated the “Start Something” program (described elsewhere in this newsletter). Our youngsters are extremely proud of their Family Resource Center and the activities/programs it provides.

As a principal, it is gratifying to see the positive effect that our FRC has had on our school community and our community at large. Many families say they are grateful and proud to have a school that offers so much.

Barnes and Noble Teams Up with Rockland 21C

October 21-23

The *Parent Child Home* program will benefit from your purchases at the Palisades Mall location of Barnes and Noble on October 21-23. There will be a special display of books and toys used in early literacy home visits. You will be able to purchase them for one of the 75 families currently enrolled in the program throughout the county. To augment this effort, Barnes and Noble will donate 20% of all purchases from Rockland 21C supporters as well. How will they know you are a Rockland 21C supporter? Bring this newsletter with you, or click on www.rockland21c.org to obtain a special shopping certificate. And, by all means, start your holiday shopping early!



EAST RAMAPO

District Breaks New Ground Offering ESL Classes

This year, our Grandview and Fleetwood Family Resource Coordinators from the East Ramapo Central School District made great strides reaching out to our immigrant community by offering Adult ESL classes. Our intention was to provide evening classes that would combine learning English, parenting techniques, and everyday skills that benefit both parents and children. We held discussions with community organizations such as H.A.C.S.O., Konbit Neg LaKay, HABLA, The Learning Center, B.O.C.E.S, East Ramapo staff and parents to plan the curriculum.

These meetings underlined the need for childcare to accompany our classes. We also realized how important it was to incorporate learning about the East Ramapo school district into the curriculum. We offered question and answer sessions with the School Psychologist, Social Worker, Dep't of Social Services Preventative Service Worker, and the Family Resource Center Coordinator.



We could not have done it without BOCES, who sponsored the program. The Spring Valley Key Club and Rockland Girl Scouts proved invaluable in volunteering their time to assist with childcare. Due to the success and demand of the ESL program, it will continue at Fleetwood in the new school year.

One parent described why it met her need: "Estoy muy contento con el programa porque necesito aprender a escribir y hablar inglés. Ahora que estamos en este programa, tengo tiempo para aprender lo que quiero. Quisiera seguir como estamos porque aprendo y les ensé a mis hijos a mejorar su education. Gracias." ("I'm really happy with the program because I need to learn how to write and speak English and now that we are in this program, I have the time to learn what I want. It is why I would like to continue so I can learn and teach my children, so they can have a better education. Thank You.")

By Tanya Soto and Debbie Guerra

SLOATSBURG

Twenty-three Dreams

"Start Something" is a 10-part youth program developed by the Tiger Woods Foundation and Target Corporation which Sloatsburg School's 21C Program ran as an after school program in Spring 2004. Each child identified a dream and developed an action project that helped him or her take a step toward fulfilling that goal; projects had a community service aspect so that each child's work paid off not just for him- or herself, but for others, too.

Mentors such as an architect, a car-customizer, sports players, legislator Harriet Cornell, and others helped the 23 fifth-graders develop their ideas (or, 'shift before you rev,' in the words of their slogan). Finally, with the help of their parents, the children performed in classrooms, in a video, and at a restaurant; shepherded a friendly dog through a senior center; built models; designed doll clothes; organized

group games; advocated for concerns of importance; and much more. At the end of the project, the children had a chance to illustrate and talk about what their dream meant to them. You can't imagine how proud each child was to stand in front of parents to tell their story of how this project helped them to take a step in the direction of their dream and overcome a fear they had. Confidence was gained. The thrill of meeting a challenge prevailed. No matter the size of the challenge, everyone learned the value of perseverance and dedicated work.

By Anne Nissen

NYACK

The Playgroup

If you happen to stop in at the Central Nyack Community Center around 6:20 p.m. on any given Wednesday during the school year, you will likely be greeted by an animated, pizza- faced three or four year old getting ready to move into the story room with about seven or eight other preschoolers and their parent/guardian.

After a lively session of stories and songs with master facilitators, Rachel Berlin, Upper Nyack's FRC Coordinator and Joanne Wallace, assistant district Coordinator you will see creativity abound in the fun filled arts and crafts session. All of these activities take place with mom, dad, grandma or another guardian by the children's side.

The Central Nyack Playgroup is a collaboration between the Nyack School District, the Rockland Parent Child Center and Clarkstown Recreation. The idea for the group grew out of a need identified by the Valley Cottage School principal and an FRC advisory team. There were many children starting kindergarten at a deficit because they did not have the language rich family experiences that their middle class peers were exposed to by this time. Our goal was to provide experiential learning opportunities for children and parents together. We needed to find a family friendly neighborhood location and serve dinner. Clarkstown Recreation was happy to give us the space and a staff person for the time we needed.

Rachel Berlin who is Creole speaking and Joanne Wallace facilitate the group. We have also been consulting with Nyack's Parent Child Home Program (PCHP) Coordinator, Susannah Bozhkov. After twelve weeks, we had between three and five families attending. Although we had hoped for more families by this time, we learned that patience, trust, and relationship building are very important keys to success in any attempt at true change. Rachel and Joanne both speak of the dedication to the program that families have once they start attending. We believe that with time we will see the program take root and look forward to keeping you posted as the Central Nyack Playgroup evolves.

by Julie Kassel



Neary Elementary and Girl Scouts Build a Future

The staff and administration of the Gerald F. Neary Elementary School are fully committed to the development of character in all our youngsters. This year, collaboration between the Girl Scouts and the school synergized to create a wonderful opportunity for 40 of our girls. The Girl Scouts helped us build character and skills that will improve the chances of success for our girls in the real world. It is also a program that helped our school comply with the character education requirements as it sought to build qualities of leadership, values, social conscience, and conviction about our girls' self-worth.

Forty Gerald F. Neary first grade girls had an opportunity to become Girl Scouts and to enjoy weekly meetings during the school day. This opportunity was made possible by the generosity of the Girl Scouts of Rockland County through the efforts of Elena Lavalas, Director of Alternative Delivery Services. The program started in January and lasted through June. It involved all of the girls from four first grade classes who came together during the Project Read period. Girls worked on honors and Girl Scout badges in a program that integrates reading and writing. The beauty of this program is that it gave the girls a hands-on opportunity to learn about the Girl Scouts. Oftentimes, the lack of economic resources, transportation, and availability of a parent/guardian who can bring them to and from meetings precludes them from



the opportunity of learning about and enjoying this all-American tradition. The Girl Scouts paid the \$10 registration fee, provided materials for craft activities, and a Family Reading book for each girl.

In addition to the weekly meetings, there were other highlights. Mrs. Lavalas was able to secure a grant to pay for 20 of our girls to attend the Girl Scouts' Addisone Boyce Summer Camp for one week. Parents were invited to accompany their daughter to an Open House at camp. On Sunday, April 25th, around 50 students, parents and siblings joined us for the tour, which gave the parents and the girls a wonderful opportunity to experience the outdoors and see the camp facilities on a gorgeous day. The North Rockland School District provided the transportation to and from the camp.

In the end, the program surpassed all of our expectations as it resulted in the formation of a troop that will be run in our building after school hours during the 2004-05 school year. Four of our mothers volunteered to be trained to become troop leaders and so far about 20 girls have pre-registered. There are plans to continue the program for incoming first grade students during the school day with the hope that they too will discover the joy and fun of becoming part of the Girl Scouts. There are plans on the way to have a Boy Scouts pilot running simultaneously.

Miggie Lopez, Principal, Neary Elementary School.

VCS & CCRR Help Grandparents Raise Their GrandChildren

There are approximately 1,174 grandparents responsible for their grandchildren in Rockland County today. More and more grandparents and relatives are now raising other family members' children. Death, abandonment, mental illness, drug addiction, and incarceration are the primary causes for the increase. But, whatever the reason, relatives in this situation find themselves dealing with many conflicting emotions, such as love, resentment, fear and guilt.

In view of the challenges that grandparents face when raising their grandchildren, Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) was created in September 2001. It supports and expands services to grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of parenting family members' children. Feedback from parenting grandparents and relatives helped shape the program.

RAPP offers Monthly Support Groups with free child care while caregivers receive support, socialization, education and information. Enrichment funds are available for children to attend summer and mini-camps, specialty programs, tutoring, during and after school functions, and recreational opportunities.

The highly successful Monthly Respite Program was developed in collaboration with Childcare Resources of Rockland and West Street Learning Center to help reduce parenting relatives' stress by giving relatives an opportunity to have much needed time off, a need echoed by group members meeting after meeting.

Child Care Resources of Rockland provides childcare for Monthly Respite Program participants at the West Street Learning

Center one Saturday a month from 10am-3pm for children between the ages of 2-13 years old. They provide breakfast, lunch and snacks. Partnering with CCRR ensures that every child receives quality care. The respite offers well-planned, supervised stimulating activities and trips. Children get an opportunity to meet other children living in similar situations. They have age appropriate discussion groups, which allow children to talk about their family situation using language and terms common to them, helping to lessen the feelings of isolation, and childhood identity confusion.

This could not be done without the support of West Street Learning Center. West Street has welcomed us with open arms and we have complete access to all of the facilities, including the kitchen. The Center is well equipped to accommodate the entire span of ages with things like computers, a library, and a gated fully equipped children's park. Collaboration is not new to non-profit agencies. With the recent cuts in funding, we have learned to be creative to ensure that our communities continue to receive quality services. Volunteer Counseling Service and Child Care Resources of Rockland are veteran collaborators; what could have been a challenging collaboration, instead, proceeded with ease.

Anyone seeking information about the VCS Relatives as Parents Program please contact Dornzella Milligan, RAPP Program Director, at 77 South Main St., New City, NY 10956, (845) 634-5729.

Dornzella Milligan, Director of the Relatives as Parent Program, Volunteer Counseling Services





Dr. Cliff L. Wood President, Rockland Community College

How do your previous professional accomplishments enhance your new role as President of Rockland Community College?
First and foremost, I have always had a passion for Community Colleges. I bring 37 years of experience and a high-level commitment to this field. My understanding of operations, funding, and the role of a community college are strong. My professional career includes employment with both single campus districts and multi-campus districts, and has provided a wealth of exposure to every aspect of higher education. One of my greatest passions is access to higher education and that no one should be denied this opportunity. I intend to continue to advocate for this.

What do you see as the "new vision" for Rockland Community College?
Our vision for the college is still being crafted, however we do see that we must simultaneously recreate and repair the image of

Rockland Community College, nationally, statewide, and in the community in which we live. We intend to rebuild a sense of community at Rockland. Three critical issues that must be the foundation of what we do are services to the students and to the community, excellence in teaching, and the importance of people. One thing is certain. We all agree on the role of students and the importance of their input. Our college, our teaching, and our services must be student-centered.

What are some unique opportunities and challenges that you see unfolding in your role as President?
We are very fortunate to live in a community rich with diversity, heritage, and tradition. We must continue to celebrate our unique backgrounds and cultures while developing common goals. I am energized by the diversity of the campus. Our job is to teach students to be citizens of the world. I see this as a real

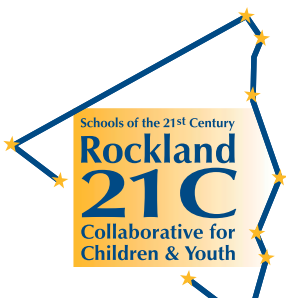
opportunity here. To really have an impact, we must incorporate multi-culturalism into every curriculum. I see this as our ethical responsibility.

How do you see RCC interfacing with school districts and Rockland 21C?

We welcome the opportunity to be able to collaborate with other entities and want to hear others' ideas on how we can partner together. Having been a member of two Boards that focused on quality of life issues, I understand the value of community schools and the support families need from their schools. We want to be able to develop strategic partnerships with others in the community. RCC understands the challenges that face seniors in High School and look forward to dialogue on how we can help with this. I intend to meet with all of Rockland County's Superintendents of Schools. I plan to get involved with public schools, as I had done in Morris County.

Tell us about your passion for your family.

I'm very close to my 4 children. For my birthday, my wife asked what I wanted. I told her there would be nothing more enjoyable than to have all my children in one room at the same time with my wife and me. I love to be with my family and cherish the moments that we have together.



65 Parrott Road
West Nyack, NY 10994
Phone: (845) 627-5437
Fax: (845) 627-2934
www.rockland21C.org

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #9416
Monsey, NY
10952

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Sep. 4 **CEJES Parent-Child Book Club** Call 362-8610
- Sep. 18 **Annual Rockland County Storytelling Festival**
Call 359-7800 X113
- Sept. 29 **Foster/Adoptive Information Meeting**
Meets last Wed. of each month. Call 364-3535
- Oct. 1 **Rockland 21C Symposium** See page 3
- Oct. 1 **United Way Day of Caring**
Call 358-8929 for info. or to volunteer
- Oct. 13 **Fall Series for Dads** Call EPIC at 352-9105
- Oct. 15 **First Rockland County Youth Summit**
"The Power of SADD" Call 638-5865
- Oct. 20 **10th Annual Community Policing Symposium**
to Advance Youth Development Call 638-5865
- Oct. 21-23 **Buy a Book** See page 5
- Nov. 6 **Child Care Resources of Rockland Annual Conference** Call 425-0009

Post what's happening in your organization on www.rockland21C.org