

21C County Connections

Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth

Vol. 3, No. 1 Winter, 2001

Celebrating Five Years of Rockland 21C

**Our 5th Annual Symposium • Keynote: Dr. James Comer
March 16 • St. Thomas Aquinas College**

Margaret Meade once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

Five years ago, a small number of committed people in Rockland County had a vision. Today, hundreds are actively engaged in school-community collaboration. At our Fifth Annual Symposium, we will be showcasing our accomplishments and toasting our visionary leaders. Each of our school districts, as well as some of our community and public agencies, will be presenting their "school-community collaboration" best practices.

To make this day even more special, we are honored that Dr. James Comer will deliver our keynote address and challenge us to work inclusively with parents and community to achieve the



Dr. James Comer

enormous impact on educational reform nationally. Dr. Comer continues to address the most challenging issues in urban education by utilizing a rigorous child-centered model. We look forward to learning how we can apply his teachings to our work in Rockland.

Circle March 16 on your calendar!

optimal development of all our children.

Dr. Comer began his work in urban education in 1968 through the Yale Child Study Team. He is credited with transforming an array of outcomes for children in New Haven. That work, which emphasized integrated services, parent involvement and inclusive school management teams, had

Message from the Chair: Harriet Cornell

Noah's Ark

The Coalition for Community Schools opened its national conference in Kansas City with a welcoming address reminding participants that public schools are the primary vehicle for a democratic society. The conference Chair, University of Pennsylvania Professor Ira Harkavy, stated that we can no longer simply talk about the need for educational reform, we must act on the "Noah Principle: no more prizes for predicting rain — prizes only for building arks!"

Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth/Schools of the 21st Century has been laboring for five years to build arks. Six of us attended the Community Schools Conference in late October: Mary Jane Pauling of Head Start; Mary Jean Marsico and Kathy O'Brien of BOCES; Dennis Fleming of Rockland's Youth Bureau; Mimi Hoffman, 21C Coordinator, and me. We were not only energized by powerful

presentations but also overwhelmed by the realization that our experiences and insights were helping to build a national movement.

21C has been invited to speak at major conferences at Harvard, Yale and the Coalition for Community Schools. Most recently we have been approached by the Washington, D.C.-based Finance Project to serve as a model in a Mott Foundation/Finance Project study profiling successful after-school and out-of-school time programs.

What we do in Rockland is, first and foremost, for Rockland children. But it is both exciting and sobering to realize the impact our actions have across the country. Community partnerships are seen as critical to the survival of public education. Collaboration has been called "an unnatural act between consenting adults." Therefore, how a county-wide collaborative works together voluntarily ... overcoming turf issues, organizational demands, and internal and external pressures ... is of great significance to

entities across the country trying to connect the dots in their own communities.

21C is not a program. We do not teach children, run after-school programs or provide daycare. That is what our partners do. 21C is an engine of change, helping others to function more seamlessly, enlarge their capacity, improve their quality and elevate their vision — all with the mission of helping children reach their optimal development.

Three months ago, we reconvened our Strategic Planning Team to revisit our strategies, celebrate successes, refocus priorities and ensure continuous improvement. The two-day session not only reaffirmed our goals for the children and families of Rockland, but also convinced us that even though the process of collaboration is difficult and requires constant nurturing, communication and patience ... the 21C model works. The only prize that matters in building arks is the successful developmental and educational outcome for a child.

Solutions for the After-School Staffing Crisis

By Carole Weisberg

Before- and after-school care is a core component of the Schools of the 21st Century. However, more and more schools are facing serious challenges in terms of finding qualified staff for their school-age care programs. It is no secret that a severe labor shortage exists in our country today, and nowhere has this been more evident than in the field of school-age care. The part-time nature and particular hours of work (usually early morning, or afternoon to early evening hours), coupled with low wages and minimal benefits, has always made it difficult to find qualified individuals to staff these programs. With the current labor shortage, it is now approaching critical proportions.

Recently, we took a look at some of the creative ways in which schools and their programs are meeting these challenges. Here are some suggestions from the field:

- Share staff with school districts and/or with local early childhood nursery/preschool programs when the hours of their part-time workers do not conflict with those of the out-of-school-time programs, thus creating full-time opportunities.
- Share substitute lists with other area child care programs.
Ask the school district to share their substitute list with you.
- Assess the amount of time and money spent on constant advertising and recruitment activities and determine if it would be more cost-effective to raise salaries and provide better benefits which can result in an increased ability to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Develop on-the-job incentives designed to increase job satisfaction for part-time employees.
- Partner with the high school and local colleges to provide supervised work opportunities and job training for students who want to go into the field of education.
- Develop a relationship with local community colleges so your school-age programs can become fieldwork placement sites for their students enrolled in areas such as human services, early care and education.

Carole Weisberg is the Program Manager for Yale's School of the 21st Century.

Celebrating Collaboration...

School-Age Staffing Solutions: Higher Education Partnerships

Ask Rockland's School-Age Care Directors to describe an ideal staff member and they are likely to say: "a local college student interested in a child-centered career who is eager for paid employment that will increase their value in the marketplace."

Ask local college students interested in working with kids to describe an ideal job and they are likely to say: "something that pays me decently, gives me a chance to see what it is really like to work with kids in a meaningful way, and also lets me earn college credit for the work experience at the same time."

This symmetry of need is what great collaborations are made of!

Rockland 21C is inviting higher education and school-age care partners to participate in a "think tank with a budget." Together they will develop systems to guarantee any local college student interested in child-centered/helping careers the opportunity to secure meaningful paid employment in school-age care. In time, we expect the "think tank" will plan for credit-bearing paid placements, course modifications which support varied internships, and innovative financial aid packages.

This "think tank" is the brainchild of Triny Hertzberg, Director of Rockland After School Program. Thank you Triny for seeing innovative solutions to knotty problems and for keeping them on the front burner!

Did You Subscribe Yet?

Subscribe to the 21C List Serv and gain all these benefits and much more

- Information on funding, advocacy, program resources, valuable web sites
- opportunities to help Rockland 21C think through future collaborative activities
- the answers to many of the questions you have been asking



How to subscribe?

- **Send an e-mail to:** listserv@qness.com
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- **Below this line:** type in the name of the 21C-connected organization, if any, that you are associated with. Please also provide your daytime phone number in case we need to contact you about your registration.
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First After-School Artist-in-Residence Program in Rockland Kids Theater Program Smashing Success

By Triny Hertzberg

Victoria Oltarsh, professional children's theater director and Cathy Ford, a professional actor and costumer, launched their Artist-in-Residence in April 2000 at Rockland After School Program (RASP) in the East Ramapo School District. The nine-week residency involved 25 children in grades 1-6 in a multi-disciplinary theatrical production called Moon Tree Theatricals Celebrates Mother Earth

The process began with dramatic readings by the artists of cross-cultural myths that celebrate the earth. Children responded imaginatively through a series of improvisations, dramatic readings, creative movement exercises, ideas for vignettes, original monologues, dialogues, short plays and poems. Each child selected a character (bobcat, sneaky snake, butterfly, fairy, etc.) to portray in the production. Victoria led the children through improvisational sequences, creative writing and movement as they developed their characters and scripts.

Concurrently, Cathy led the children through a process of creating costumes for their characters. After researching their

character, the children made a pattern and used the pattern to construct a three-dimensional mask or puppet or costume. Over several weeks, the children built their costumes with Cathy's guidance.

The performance emerged through these simultaneous child-centered processes. The artists worked to shape the performance and connect the many complex loose ends into a series of vignettes, dances, poems, songs and plays all joined to the children's ideas about Mother Earth. Just imagine "When A Camel Got Wings," "The Butterfly Election," "A Flower's Truth" and "A Fairy's Dream!" RASP staff assisted in all aspects of the production and also acted in the performance.

For the children, participation in the Artist-in-Residence Program exposed them to a cumulative, committed, sometimes frustrating and difficult creative enterprise in which their visual, verbal, written and imaginative skills were given a serious workout. The children worked collaboratively, cooperatively and took chances in front of each other. All agreed that continued



Students that created their own costumes.

funding for collaborations of arts and after-school programs would be money productively spent.

Triny Hertzberg is the Director of Rockland After School Program (RASP).

Get on the Bus

**Coalition for After-School Funding
Advocacy Day
February 13, 2001 • Albany**

“What if everyone got on the same side of the table and pushed together?”

That is the provocative question Jane Quinn, a national spokesperson for community schools, asked a group of colleagues at a recent conference during a discussion of sustainable funding. She urged her peers from various professional fields to transcend their traditional funding priorities and develop a funding agenda that joined early childhood, youth development, education, health and mental health. It is her vision that they agree on a funding package which best advances

the needs of all children, and advocate for it together.

United We Stand for Children is a lofty goal and one which will take years to actualize. However, the Coalition for After School Funding has the potential to move us all in the same direction. Begun last year in support of two very large NYS funding initiatives, Advantage After School Program and Extended Day/Violence Prevention Program, its agenda this year will include support for increased youth development allocations and increased child care allocations.

Please join us on the bus to Albany. Our message is simple: Rockland has many outstanding after-school programs which build the assets of our children and youth. We are creating a SCRAPBOOK to showcase many of these programs. They are currently supported with diverse funding streams. We will ask our public officials to support funding streams which sustain and build capacity in our many programs.

Who are our most effective messengers? The parents and children who need these programs and who have found them invaluable. Call 627-KIDS to get more information on how to reserve a seat on this FREE bus.

Last year, allocations for Advantage School Funding quadrupled to 20 million dollars. We have been told that substantial credit for this outcome goes to the busloads of parents and children from across the state who made the compelling case for comprehensive after-school programming with each of their legislators during Advocacy Day 2000. How did the parents and children feel about the experience? They felt proud to be social change agents and valued what they learned – how to impart a message to a public official. How did programs feel about including children and parents in their group? Great! They developed stronger program leadership and learned critical information about why their programs are valued.

Integrating Preventative Services in Schools

By Barbara Gavin

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has teamed up with five Rockland County school districts to provide services for children and their families. Experienced DSS Senior Caseworkers have been relocated into the school buildings to work in an innovative program called School Preventive Services. Both agencies have set a common goal of getting parents more involved in their children's education. This early intervention strategy, which builds a strong connection among the family, school and community, will help to improve the child's chances for success in school and life.

Caseworkers are able to assist families by offering solutions to barriers that often prevent them from participating (e.g.; child care, transportation, helping to "break the ice"). They act as liaison and advocate for families in crisis (e.g.; evictions,

homelessness, financial difficulties, medical needs, emergency food/clothing and termination of utilities). They are also able to provide information and referral service and assist parents with negotiating the various community organizations.

Home visits are made to families for both outreach and rehabilitative purposes. When intervention is necessary, caseworkers are trained to use a strength-based approach to help the family assess their needs and set their own goals. Caseworkers provide them with effective tools and techniques to achieve these goals. They help the family incorporate the plan and monitor their progress.

The caseworker's personal connection with the families during these interventions helps the worker not only to become more knowledgeable about the community he/she serves but also to build the trust of

parents, children and the community. Providing these services to families through the school provides families with a more personal connection to their child's school and community.

Barbara Gavin is the Acting Family Resource Center Coordinator at Grandview Elementary School and a DSS Preventive Services Worker.

2001 ROCKLAND COUNTY YOUTH FEST



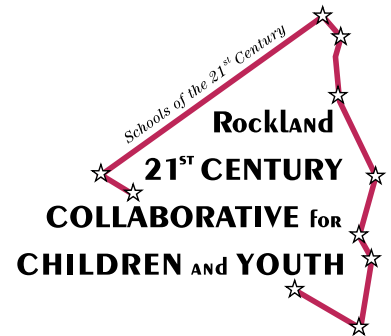
Come one! Come all!! Youth Fest 2001

February 25 • Rockland Community College • 11 AM – 4 PM

This year Youth Fest has something for EVERYONE!!! More than 100 booths will engage you in the vast array of programs, activities and opportunities available to Rockland's children and youth. Hundreds of these children and youth will showcase their talents for you with an eclectic array of performances. And, special guests will be on hand to entertain us all, like Big Apple

Circus To Go and Mel Davis' Baseball Clinic. Looking for meaningful community service or child-centered work experience? You'll find it here!! Finally, learn everything you want to know about Rockland Community College, which is holding an OPEN HOUSE in conjunction with Youth Fest.

**Youth Fest and RCC —
Celebrating Collaboration!!**



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National Experts Make the Case for Linking Youth Development and Education

**Solving the Equation:
Do The Math Part II**
March 21 • Holiday Inn-Holidome

Rockland County has the honor of hosting three national heroes in the field of youth development and public policy on March 21st in the second part of the Do the Math: Investing in Kids Series.

Cheryl Hayes, Founder and Executive Director of the Finance Project, has garnered the support of major private foundations and the U.S. Department of Education in studying how public funding can best be channeled to meet the needs of families, children and youth. Her most recent monographs explore financing options during the out-of-school time. Increasingly, the work of the Finance Project is being studied by school districts all over the country to determine how they can finance their programs using more diverse revenue streams.

Karen Pittman, Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation, is

to youth development what Ed Zigler is to early education and care. She is the one leader in the youth development movement people approach when they want a one-on-one think tank. Karen is largely responsible for making youth development a field of practice and advocating for the integration of its basic principles in all disciplines which touch the lives of youth. Thus, it makes a great deal of sense that Karen is passionate about bringing this way of thinking to the millions of teachers who touch children each day. To Karen, youth development principles are synonymous with quality education.

Richard Murphy, Executive Director of the Center for Youth Development and Social Policy at the Academy for Educational Development, is best known for establishing the Beacon School model in New York and exporting it to many urban centers across the country. A Beacon School is a community school where child-centered, family-centered,

and community development programs are housed. "Murph," as he is affectionately known, is the master of integrating model programs into public policy.

Each expert will make the case that youth development, and education, are fields which need to be connected better fiscally and programmatically. They will help us think through how we can do this better in New York State and in Rockland County. Which education and public policy leaders would you like to see attending this program? Please encourage them to attend!

Co-sponsored by Rockland 21C, registration information for this outstanding opportunity is available from the Rockland County Youth Bureau — 638-5166, convener of this event. You may be learning about Cheryl Hayes, Karen Pittman and Richard Murphy for the first time today ... however, if you've been listening carefully to Dennis Fleming, you would have known about these heroes for a decade!

Support Quality Child Care

Child Care and Early Education Advocacy Day
February 6, 2001 • Albany

Want to make sure your representatives in Albany know that you believe funding for child care and early education is a MUST? The New York State Child Care Coordinating Council, and Child Care Resources of Rockland, are taking a bus from Rockland to Albany to get that message across. Call 425-0009 to reserve a seat on the bus and participate in their advocacy day!

Easy for Professionals

Fun for Kids

Self-contained learning activities are available for use in classroom or after-school settings. These experiential lessons for youth, ages 5 and over cover many topics, including food and nutrition, natural resources, animals, plants and child care.

Please call the 4-H Youth Development Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension at 429-7085.

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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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.



Head Start & Parents Smooth the Way Into Public Schools

LINK: Lucent Involvement Network For Kids

By Carol Gjelsvik

Head Start of Rockland, in collaboration with the 21C Family Resource Centers, has received a large grant from Lucent Technologies to increase the involvement of Head Start and other pre-K families when their children transition to the public schools. In a relatively short time, Head Start and its partners have learned a great deal — particularly from our children's parents!

The Lucent Involvement Network for Kids, the LINK project, is designed to increase the involvement of former Head Start and pre-K parents in the schools by providing activities in pre-school and in the elementary schools which increase parent involvement, and by requiring staff to become aware of what it is like for parents to make this challenging transition. We have been working closely with 21C, and especially the coordinators of the Family Resource Centers in Nyack, Haverstraw and East Ramapo.

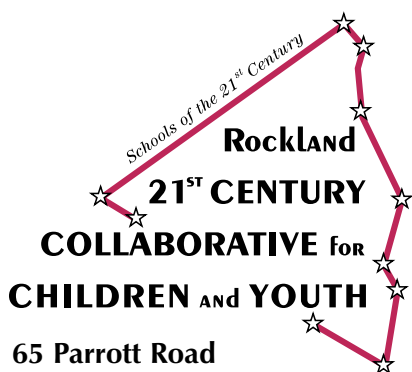
Because of the LINK project, we at Head Start are changing. For example, in one Head Start program we are placing all children who will go to one elementary school in one classroom. This is in response to the parents' feedback. They want to get to know the parents of their children's friends and want those relationships to have continuity beyond pre-school. Thus, when we have parent meetings, we give parents a colored nametag, which corresponds to their child's elementary school so that from the beginning, they will be aware of other parents who will be in their child's elementary school.

In East Ramapo, at the request of the parents, we arranged a training program over the summer about volunteering in the school. Parents explained they wanted to volunteer in their child's class, but wanted to feel prepared for the responsibility first. In Nyack, former Head Start parents played

an active role in planning and implementing Ready Fest, a Family Resource Center event that introduces families to community resources and gives them a chance to interact informally with school district staff. It was a huge success and was attended by a very diverse group of parents.

Now, we are planning activities with a new set of pre-K parents. We are introducing them to our veteran LINK parents and helping them form connections to the Family Resource Center Coordinator and Family Resource Center programs. It is our hope that in a few years Head Start parents will be comfortable playing leadership roles not just within the Family Resource Center, but also within their child's elementary school. We look forward to their lending a strong hand in helping us make our programs family-friendly for all.

Carol Gjelsvik is the Assistant Director of Head Start of Rockland, Inc.



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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- February 6.....** Child Care & Early Education
Advocacy Day
- February 13.....** Coalition for After School Funding
Advocacy Day
- February 25.....** Youth Fest
- March 1** The Impact of Environmental and
Learning Activities on the ADHD Child
- March 16.....** 5th Annual Symposium