



Homes for the Homeless

Serving NYC's Neediest Families Since 1986

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2012 **SPRING/SUMMER**

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HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS BULLETIN

SERVING NYC'S NEEDIEST FAMILIES SINCE 1986

2012
Spring/
Summer

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2012 edition of the *Homes for the Homeless Bulletin*.

As our nation struggles to recover from an economic recession that has impacted all Americans in some form, the U.S. Census Bureau tells us that the most children and families in the nation's history are relying on public assistance programs. And as I write, New York City's Department of Homeless Services reports that close to 19,000 children are in shelter. It is during these times that Homes for the Homeless is more important than ever. This edition of our *Bulletin* focuses on how our four New York City family shelters are unique, as they provide not only a place to sleep for our neediest families and children, but offer a wide range of other programs.

Our educational and instructional programs, like the Clinton Family Inn's Play and Read program for kids and its book club for parents, both of which are featured in this issue of

the *Bulletin*, ensure that our children and their parents receive educational enrichment. As discussed in the *Bulletin*, we have also teamed up with the National Diaper Bank Network to give away 100,000 diapers at our four inns. Other programs like Milk from the Heart, which is also featured in this issue, represent Homes for the Homeless' dedication to the larger community of families who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Our staff members, volunteers, and supporters make all of our work possible. I am thankful for your continued support in these especially trying times. Thank you for coming together for our city's children.



Ralph da Costa Nunez, PhD
President and CEO
Homes for the Homeless

2012 SPRING/SUMMER SEASON SPOTLIGHT on...

Moriah Eden and Mary Kordzikowski
Play and Read Volunteer Coordinators

Moriah Eden and Mary Kordzikowski were brought together by their desire to give back to New York City. Volunteers at Homes for the Homeless' Clinton Family Inn (CFI), the two met volunteering through New York Cares at another Manhattan shelter, and in November of 2007, were approached to be team leaders for Play and Read at CFI.

Play and Read is a program that gives residents the opportunity to bring their children every Wednesday for one hour and a half of educational, instructional, and recreational time supervised by a group of seven or eight volunteers. The kids play with toys, draw, read stories, utilize the outside playground, and end the evening with a snack. Moriah, 33, and Mary, 30, have been with the program since its inception.

"It's really been great to see the kids grow. We try to teach them how to share, play well with others, and say 'please' and 'thank you,'" says Mary, a retail planner who lives in Manhattan. "At the beginning, you see kids crying because they don't want to leave their mothers, but in the end they're crying because they don't want to leave [Play and Read]!"

"We try to make it beneficial and memorable for them," says Moriah, a Queens resident who works for the New York Public Library. "We want to be a positive influence."

Margaret Menghini, senior program associate, Homes for the Homeless, says that Play and Read has become one of the shelter's most popular programs. "Kids really enjoy it. New residents jump right on board."



Volunteer Mary Kordzikowski helps a young CFI resident practice his counting skills.

BOOK CLUB HELPS SHELTER RESIDENTS TURN THE PAGE

The discussion moved steadily around the table. One woman read a short vignette, while the others considered how its message related to their own lives. They thought of questions like: What makes me hopeful? If I had as much money as I wanted, what would I do with it?

This group of women reading *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros' book about a young girl growing up in poverty, looks very much like any other book club in New York City. But what sets apart the Clinton Family Inn (CFI) book club from others is that the women leading this discussion about homelessness and adversity speak from personal experience.

Organizers say that members being able to relate to the books' stories and characters has helped bring about a meaningful exchange of ideas despite the fact that residents are in the midst of severe personal crises and many do not speak English fluently. CFI arranges the Play and Read program (featured on page 1) to coincide with the book club so the residents can immerse themselves in the readings while being assured that their children are being cared for by volunteers.

During a recent meeting, one resident, Beatrice, was especially vocal. Although she said her own English was limited, the themes in Cisneros' writing meant something to her, and brought back memories from her native Haiti. With a 15-year-old daughter, and another child on the way, she identified with characters in the book who are forced to make hard choices in the face of financial uncertainty.

"If it wasn't for my older daughter, I'd go to school," she said, citing one similarity she had with the protagonist in *The House on Mango Street*.

Anneliese Haines, a New York Cares volunteer, has run the book club for over five years. She chooses authors who come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. She starts each new session by asking members what they hope to gain by participating and occasionally asks them to write their own stories. Beyond that, she imposes few requirements. The club is set up to allow members to join in and participate at any time. Most important is how it gives the participants a sense that their ideas, feedback, and opinions are valued.

"It's empowering to think that somebody wants to listen to what you have to say," Haines said.

During book club meetings, CFI residents and New York Cares volunteers read passages aloud before discussing them as a group.



Book Club leader Anneliese Haines, left, listens as Beatrice, a Clinton Family Inn resident, describes how the themes in *The House on Mango Street* relate to her life.

FROM DIAPERS TO DAY CARE PROSPECT FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER HAS FAMILIES COVERED

Lakeya, a home health aide and Harlem family shelter resident, is a typical worried mother. When she dropped off her two sons, who are two and four years old, at the Prospect Family Support Center for the first time, she called every hour to check on them. Also like a typical mother, Lakeya worries how she will pay for expensive necessities like diapers. With families like Lakeya in mind, the Prospect Family Support Center (PFSC), in partnership with the National Diaper Bank Network, sponsors a diaper give-away initiative.

“When it comes to homeless families, people often don’t think about the concrete realities of their daily lives,” said National Diaper Bank Network Executive Director Joanne Goldblum. “It’s often difficult for them to get what they need.”

Since the partnership began in November 2011, Homes for the Homeless has received 100,000 diapers from the National Diaper Bank Network to give to families in each of its four family shelters and the local community. The Prospect Family Support Center, which operates at one of these shelters and provides respite and overnight services for children with the aim of strengthening families, keeping them together, and protecting children from abuse and neglect, gives diapers to those it serves throughout New York City.

“Distributing diapers to families is one example of how the Prospect Family Support Center is dedicated to helping the neediest members of the New York City community in as many ways as possible,” said Margaret Menghini, senior program associate at Homes for the Homeless.

For Lakeya, PFSC has provided that help since she started taking parenting classes there last September. Though her classes are now finished, Lakeya is happy that the staff still calls to inform her about events. “They don’t want me to feel like I’m finished there now that I’ve finished the program,” she said.

With the help of volunteers from Indiana University, over 7,500 diapers were distributed to 180 families on the day Lakeya received diapers for her children. The program has distributed 100,000 diapers to date, and many recipients, including Lakeya, were thankful for the support.

“It just helped me so much. I was almost crying. Being in a shelter [and] getting diapers from Family Support allows me to spend that money on a MetroCard or food. I was overwhelmed and so happy,” she said. She also expressed her gratitude for PFSC generally and said that she will continue coming back for help: “I’m very happy with them. I want to keep coming back for years and years.”

Following the success of PFSC’s March diaper giveaway, the National Diaper Bank Network has developed an ongoing partnership with Homes for the Homeless.



VOLUNTEERS SPRING INTO ACTION

Our outstanding volunteers, who are grade school students and teenagers, college students, and professionals, bring smiles to our children's faces, teach them something new, and serve as positive role models.



▲ Saratoga Inn students and members of Temple Israel of Great Neck worked together in March to prepare placemats and cards for Meals on Wheels clients.

▲ Every week since February, students at The Nightingale-Bamford School have assisted with story time and art projects at the Clinton Family Inn.



On April 12, at the third annual Job Hop organized by KidCare, middle schoolers at the Saratoga Family Inn talked careers with professionals in New York City. ▶



▲ Students at the University of Michigan and the University of Indiana spent their Alternative Spring Break at Homes for the Homeless facilities, where they volunteered at the Prospect Family Support Center and at all four of Homes for the Homeless' shelters.



Students at [Winston Prep](#), a high school for students with learning disabilities, volunteered at the Clinton Family Inn during their community service day on March 23.



MILK FROM THE HEART

A PORTRAIT OF THREE FAMILIES

Families line the street waiting for milk at a Milk from the Heart distribution center. In a typical month, the program gives out over 7,000 quarts of milk.



Every week, hundreds of low-income families and children in the Bronx receive fresh, free milk from Homes for the Homeless' Milk from the Heart program. Here are the stories of three parents whose children have benefited from Milk from the Heart:

For three months, John, 32, has been walking every week to a distribution site near his home in the Bronx. He supports a son and three daughters, ages 3, 8, 10, and 12. He says that he appreciates how Milk from the Heart helps "keep the doctor away."

"This program is very good," John said while holding his family's fresh quart of milk. "The milk is giving the kids protein and vitamin D. It keeps them healthy."

The distribution is something the community needs, he says.

"Things are rough right now, and milk is especially expensive for people with kids," John said. "I really think it's important to keep up with giving away milk as much as possible. There are a lot of babies that need it."

Vinora, 48, is a single mother of four living in the Bronx. Her kids, ages one, 10, 17, and 19, enjoy the benefits of fresh milk without Vinora being burdened by its ever-rising cost.

"The kids like the milk with their cereal, but it's getting more and more expensive," Vinora said at a distribution site recently. "The program is good, very good. It helps out people a lot."

Ricardo is a 49-year-old single father who learned about Milk from the Heart through a friend. He went to a distribution site for the first time in May.

"It's important for me because I'm not working right now," Ricardo said. "I'm homeless and it's very hard."

While waiting in line for his family's milk, Ricardo held up his new driver's license and told of how he was searching for a job as a truck driver.

"I'm in a shelter with three of my kids, and it's very hard to find work," Ricardo said, as a Milk from the Heart volunteer handed him the two quarts of milk reserved for every family.

As Milk from the Heart expands in the upcoming months to serve more homeless New Yorkers, other shelter residents like Ricardo and his children will reap the benefits of fresh milk.

Since its launch in February 2010, Milk from the Heart has promoted health and wellness among low-income New York City families. Kids who drink milk at breakfast have been known to score higher on tests, have better daily attendance in school, and participate more in class.





HELP NEW YORK CITY'S HOMELESS STUDENTS

Homes for the Homeless wants to make sure that all children living in our shelters start the 2012–2013 school year off right. With that in mind, we will be providing our kids with school supplies so that they are prepared on the first day of school. But we need your help. Our kids need a number of items for the new school year, and by helping us provide these supplies, you will be making a difference.

Please visit our Amazon Wish List, at <http://amzn.to/OJBrUj>, or our website, <http://www.hfhny.org/getinvolved/wishlist.asp>, to find the complete list of supplies that you could donate to make sure that our kids kick off the new school year right.

A SPECIAL THANKS

Homes for the Homeless would like to thank our partners, friends, and supporters for helping to make our spring programs a success. Every effort has been made to provide an accurate listing. We apologize in advance for any inadvertent error or omission, and would appreciate you notifying us of such.

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Alessandro Vettori
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Andrea Stern
Anna Vettori
Annaliese Haines
ART START
Bershan Shaw
Bess Knox
BlackRock
Brevard College
Broncksland Chapter of AARP
BronxWorks
Catherine Barnett
CHALK Center
Citrin Cooperman
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Stephen Gaynor School
Sylvia Perelli
Temple Emanu-El
Temple Israel of Great Neck
The Children's Museum of Manhattan
The Dalton School
The Ethical Culture Fieldston School
The Hitachi Foundation
The Malcolm Gibbs Foundation
The National Diaper Bank Network
The New York Community Trust
The Nightingale-Bamford School
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Watch Over Me
Westside Campaign Against Hunger
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