

Volunteers and Student Interns Bring Resources, Support and Smiles to the Family Center

Neighbors Link is fortunate to have two groups of Westchester Community College (WCC) students volunteering during their second semester, a mutually beneficial opportunity to both learn and teach as they prepare for careers in social service.

GLOBAL SCHOLARS ENRICH FAMILY NIGHT

As part of their work as Kathryn W. Davis Global Community Scholars at WCC, four students have made a commitment to Family Night at Neighbors Link Northern Westchester. After several planning meetings with Neighbors Link staff, the students created lesson plans for sharing science experiments and projects, cultural games, karaoke, and arts and crafts activities with the nearly 30 students who attend Family Night. A total of six Family Night children's sessions will be organized by students Nadine Brown, Gilecia Dias, Christelle Dorce and Shehada Zyoud. This is the second year students from the Global Scholars program have interned at NLNW, and their energy and ideas have contributed meaningfully to the program.

INTERNS LEND A HELPING HAND IN PARENTING CLASSES

The second group of interns is made up of three students in WCC's Human Services program. As part of their studies in social work, they are completing field work at Neighbors Link. Tania Banda, Stephanie Santana and Karina Reyes are all supporting Family Center parenting classes. To broaden their practical experience, they are also spending time as administrative assistants under the direction of the Family Center staff. As a culmination of their work, they will be asked to lead classes towards the end of their internships.



WCC Intern Stephanie Santana works with families in the parenting class.

"THE WCC INTERNS CONTRIBUTE TERRIFIC ENERGY AND IDEAS TO THE FAMILY CENTER PROGRAMMING. WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE THEM WITH US AGAIN THIS YEAR."

-CAROLA BRACCO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEIGHBORS LINK NORTHERN WESTCHESTER



At a recent Family Night, WCC Intern Gilecia Dias helps youngsters express their creativity.



For her Bat Mitzvah project, almost 13 year-old Hannah Klein (left) baked and sold enough cookies to purchase a collection of bilingual board books that have been on the Family Center's wish list.



Members of a youth group from Temple Shaaray Tefila lead the children in song at a recent Family Night gathering.



KATONAH MUSEUM OF ART FAMILY TRIP

An Evening at the Kentucky Derby

OUR ANNUAL FESTIVAL DE PRIMAVERA
TO BENEFIT NEIGHBORS LINK NORTHERN WESTCHESTER

Saturday, May 3, 2014

5:00PM | POST TIME 6:24PM
TRUMP NATIONAL GOLF CLUB | BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NY 10510

TICKETS: WWW.NEIGHBORSLINK.ORG OR 914-666-3410 EXT 14

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Current Resident or:

Spring/Summer 2014

Neighbors Link



VOLUME 21

OUR MISSION: To strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants. OUR STRATEGY: Educate, Empower, Employ



OUR ANNUAL FESTIVAL DE PRIMAVERA

An Evening at the Kentucky Derby

HORSE RACING, COCKTAILS, DINNER & LIVE AUCTION AT TRUMP NATIONAL GOLF CLUB
Saturday, May 3
5:00PM | POST TIME 6:24PM

Self portraits on display in the Family Center were created in partnership with the Katonah Museum of Art.



Family Center Campaign Over 90% Complete

In October of 2012, Neighbors Link launched a special fundraising campaign to generate \$1.5 million in support of a new Family Center. Thanks to generous community members, we are pleased to announce that the campaign has reached over 90% of the goal.

The "Share the Vision" campaign stays true to the Neighbors Link mission of strengthening the whole community through integration of immigrant families. With this vision, the Family Center has already engaged over 500 parents and children in programming and we are moving toward creating a community where:

- All children are school-ready, excited to learn and prepared to reach their full potential.
- There is no achievement gap between immigrant children and their peers.
- Where all children graduate from high school and are college-bound or career-ready.

"The success of the Share the Vision campaign is extremely heartening because it affirms our community's commitment to integration," said Kim Manocherian, the Campaign Chair. "We are confident that this fundraising effort will reach its total goal soon and that the Family Center will continue to grow and flourish."



Over 500 children and parents have been engaged in the Neighbors Link Family Center. The expanding roster of programs includes Parent-Child Together, Children's Evening Program, Parents as Teachers, as well as ongoing opportunities for families to make valuable community connections.

"THE SUCCESS OF THE SHARE THE VISION CAMPAIGN IS EXTREMELY HEARTENING BECAUSE IT AFFIRMS OUR COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT TO INTEGRATION."

-KIM MANOCHERIAN, CAMPAIGN CHAIR





John Sayles Explores
Storytelling with
Life as a Novela Group

Life as a Novela is an initiative of the Jacob Burns Film Center and Neighbors Link in which immigrants develop an original television script based on their own lives, hopes, and fears. Recently, acclaimed writer and director John Sayles came to the Jacob Burns Film Center to show his film *Go For Sisters* to the *Life as a Novela* group and to speak with them about the process of making a film.

For their ongoing telenovela project, the group's evolving script follows the life of a woman immigrating from Latin America to the United States. Her story borrows from their own, complete with the challenges of a new culture and language.

The conversation with John Sayles inspired the *Life as a Novela* group to continue its story writing effort, finding the comfort of shared expression in the telling.

“TELENOVELAS ARE THE MOST POPULAR TV FICTION PRODUCED IN LATIN AMERICA ... IN ESSENCE, THEY ARE THE LANGUAGE OF THE IMMIGRANT- A LANGUAGE THAT SPANS DOZENS OF BORDERS AND MANY CULTURES.”

—FROM JBFC ARTICLE

SOLD ON SAYLES: BRIDGING CULTURAL GAPS THROUGH STORYTELLING



FAMILY NIGHT CELEBRATES 8TH ANNIVERSARY

In March, Neighbors Link celebrated the 8th anniversary of its Family Night program. Twice a month, families join together for a communal meal, social networking and professionally-led workshops on topics critical to their success including navigating the school system, family dynamics, educational opportunities and financial literacy.



Congressman Maloney and Local Leaders Share Thoughts on U.S. Immigration Reform

ALTHOUGH HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF THE LAST SEVERAL U.S. PRESIDENTS, PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM REMAINS STYMIED IN WASHINGTON as legislators wrestle over its provisions, including the definition of a legal "pathway" for millions of immigrants living in this country. Congressman Sean Maloney's December field hearing at Neighbors Link on the topic brought together a panel of distinguished community leaders, as well as immigrants who shared their stories.

Below are highlights from the remarks presented by Neighbors Link Executive Director Carola Bracco.

Study after study confirms that immigration and economic growth go hand in hand, and the history of this country proves it.

Today—as we live through our broken immigration system—our thirst for the immigrant workforce and the advantages of having this workforce in our country are evident at every turn.



Speakers included Joel Seligman of Northern Westchester Hospital (center) and Reverend Paul Alcorn of Bedford Presbyterian Church (right).

So what is keeping us from implementing immigration reform? I believe that possibly the opposition to reform is based on fear and emotion. We have been down this path before as a country when we desegregated our schools and during the civil rights movement.

There are some critical practical issues that we have to address and reform will help us do this. For example, in this country we have four million U.S. citizen children that have at least one undocumented parent. That is four million kids that are being raised by parents or a parent that under our current system are severely limited in their ability to integrate and raise their U.S. Citizen children.

The decision to migrate is a decision that is forced on a family, forced by the conditions they live in and by the

economic policies of governments in their home country and years of foreign policy of the U.S.

Couple these conditions with the thirst for labor in the U.S.—a need in this country to have a working class community that works in our homes, in our yards, and in the restaurants we frequent—and, combined, we have several conditions present that all encourage immigration.

To migrate, to leave family, home and culture is rarely a choice, it is a survival

you can see the immense courage, resourcefulness and ingenuity required to be an immigrant. It is no wonder that immigrants are two times more likely than native born Americans to start a new business in the United States today.

“I WANTED TO BE HERE BECAUSE NEIGHBORS LINK IS HERE. THIS ORGANIZATION IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT MODEL FOR HOW WE HAVE TO COME TOGETHER TO WORK WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS.”

—CONGRESSMAN

SEAN PATRICK MALONEY

strategy. Our experience at Neighbors Link and in this community teaches us that, for the generation that chooses to migrate, it is a traumatic experience full of loss and sacrifice.

For those who are brought here as children or left behind in their country, there is tremendous guilt, for it is because of them and their future that their parents have given up everything. To live this life, and then live it in fear of deportation that could take parents away from their children, would be debilitating to most of us.

I tell you this not so you will feel pity or feel sad, but rather so that



Left, Carola Bracco shares her thoughts with Congressman Maloney.

CONGRESSIONAL FIELD HEARING PANELISTS

- Jessica Orozco, *Hispanic Federation*
- Russell Hernandez, *Atlantic State Development Corporation and Bedford Post Inn*
- Kalyan Achanta, *IBM Strategy Consultant*
- Adrienne Viscardi, *Director of ESOL Programs at Bedford Central School District*
- Carola Bracco, *Executive Director, Neighbors Link*
- Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney
- Joel Seligman, *President & CEO of Northern Westchester Hospital*
- Pastor Paul Alcorn, *Bedford Presbyterian Church*
- Rabbi Jason Nevarez, *Temple Shaaray Tefila*
- Paul Tolve, *Director of Pastoral Services at the Westchester County Department of Correction*
- Isaac Marquez, *Community Leader*
- Manuel Lemus, *Mount Kisco Resident*
- Dr. Jere Hochman, *Superintendent of Bedford Central School District*



Rabbi Jason Nevarez of Temple Shaaray Tefila (center).

Portrait of a Neighbor

THE WORK OF NEIGHBORS LINK IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT OF PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY LIKE YOU. Thank you for supporting our mission of integration and helping to make our community stronger. We hope you enjoy these portraits of some of the people who make Neighbors Link so special.



SNOW PATROL

Neighbors Link day workers volunteer for various community service projects throughout the year. In February, six workers—Manuel, Leonidas, Sergio, Pablo, Arnulfo and Leonel—shoveled out fire hydrants in Mount Kisco after a major snow storm, helping keep our community safe and clean.

When asked about their experiences at Neighbors Link, all six mentioned the Worker Center as an important place to find jobs. Manuel also said that the English classes had been extremely helpful for him and Leonidas appreciated meeting so many new people and having a strong sense of community at Neighbors Link.



LIFELONG LEARNER



Ovidio has been coming to Neighbors Link for the past five years and has participated in many of the programs offered here. He particularly loves the Family Night program because "the topics covered in Family Night are so important for the education of children."

Ovidio was a primary school teacher in Guatemala. However, with many children of different ages in the same classroom and limited resources, he was frustrated with the quality of education. He decided to come to the United States to give his family and children a better future. He is grateful for the opportunities he has received. Currently, his two daughters are in college studying to be teachers and his son is in high school.

ROSETTA STONE

Jennifer and Amy volunteer at Neighbors Link, facilitating the Rosetta Stone computer-based program to learn English. Amy came to Neighbors Link after retiring from teaching special education. "I enjoy

volunteering here because of the interest the men and women show in learning a new language and culture so they can fully integrate into this community." For Jennifer, the learners' courage has impacted her the most. "I find these men and women to be so brave. Many of them have never sat at a computer before and it takes a lot of courage to learn not only a new language, but a new technology."



SOUPER GROUP

Georgia is a sixth grader who loves to cook. For her 11th birthday, she decided she wanted to do a cooking project that would help her community. And so the Souper Group was formed.

Georgia and 16 of her friends (the group keeps growing!) get together once a month to make 40 quarts of soup to deliver to ESL (English as a Second Language) learners at Neighbors Link.

The girls in the group expressed a desire to help their community while spending time together in the kitchen. Emma and Katie said that "helping people is even better when you can do it together with your friends." And the project will continue because, as Georgia commented, "the first month was so fun that we decided to get together to make a different healthy, hearty soup for Neighbors Link every month."