



The Volunteer Voice

THE NEW YORK CENTER FOR CHILDREN

333 East 70th Street · New York, NY 10021 · Phone (212) 517-3012

Summer 2008

www.newyorkcenterforchildren.org

Summer Event Series!

The New York Center for Children is extremely fortunate this summer to have – not one, not two – but three wonderful summer interns! Among the plethora of incredible projects that they have done at the center, Arielle Handler, Ashley Kim, and Marcella Kelson have created a weekly schedule of events for NYCC's children. Below is a highlight of the festivities. The events culminate August 7th with an NYCC carnival.

Madeleine the Magician

On Tuesday, July 8th, the Summer Events Series kicked off to a phenomenal start with a professional magician! Madeleine the Magician (www.MadeleineTheMagician.com) donated a one-hour show to the children of NYCC, and it was impressive. She made a dove appear – twice! She repeatedly vanished and made re-appear and multiplied a small red ball to the surprise of her volunteers who thought they had been holding it, and she levitated a very brave NYCC little girl to the amazement of all watching. All of this while teaching the children three very important magic words: 'Please,' 'Thank you,' and 'You're Welcome.'

Arielle and Ashley kicked off 'Magic Day' with a series of magic of their own. Arielle read Ashley's mind; Ashley made a key ring go through a rubber band; and they both made a penny vanish. At the end they taught their child-friendly, do-at-home tricks to the children who attended.

The afternoon ended with pizza, veggies, juice, and cookies. Volunteers Emma Sulkowicz and Amy Bluestone also helped at the event.



Dan, Dan, the Science Man



The next week – on the 14th – all three interns, Emma, and an additional volunteer – Dan Aguinaga – hosted an afternoon of science. Children learned about making hypotheses and were shown – among other projects – how hard-boiled eggs float in salt water but sink in regular water; how to blow up a balloon using a reaction between baking powder and carbonated water; and how to make a lava lamp from water, oil, food coloring, and salt. Afterwards, they were treated to a themed snack of 'Dirt and Worms': Chocolate pudding with oreo crumbles and gummy worms.

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Tropical Luau

On the 23rd, the summer festivities continued with a Tropical Luau. Participants did not merely learn to dance the luau at this colorfully decorated, festive event. They were given their Hawaiian names, told the significance of leis (the flower wreath necklaces so indicative of Hawaii) and given one as a gift, and taught the meanings of the various hand gestures in a typical luau. At the end they were able to perform a complete 'poem' in dance for their families and NYCC Staff. This week's fun ended with a rousing limbo – during which we learned that Arielle is secretly a professional limbo-dancer in her free time – and a snack of blue jello with Swedish fish accompanied by pineapple pieces.



Jungle Art

Most recently, Marcella, Ashley, and Arielle held an afternoon art workshop, on July 29th, in jungle art. Art activities included jungle scene color by numbers; model turtles made from paper bowls; and jungle-motif name plaques for children to hang on their walls.

All of the activities were incredibly creative and well-organized, leading to seamless implementation. The children were fully engaged and participatory and all involved in the activities had a wonderful time. We are looking forward to next week's carnival as a perfect closing – prizes and all – to Summer 2008.

Summer Interns 2008

NYCC summer interns attend staff meetings, write case summaries, track cases, work directly with children in the playroom, update the free and low-cost events' calendar for NYCC families, and help out with special projects: both research projects and fun-oriented projects such as the Summer Event Series.

This year's interns: Arielle Handler, Ashley Kim, and Marcella Kelson, come to us from University of Florida, Ramapo College of New Jersey, and George Washington University respectively. All three are wonderful with children and have greatly enriched the lives of both our evaluation and therapy clients this summer. Beyond that, they are all incredibly open to any type of project; ambitious, bright, and eager to help; and extremely resourceful. NYCC has truly lucky this summer.

This year we are especially grateful to our interns for compiling an extremely comprehensive resource manual for our Annual Child Abuse Prevention conference on Teen Pregnancy and Teen Parenting; for researching accessible summer camps that offer both financial help in attending, and expertise in working with behaviorally challenging children; for compiling a referral/resource manual for NYCC staff; and for reviewing past cases to assemble statistical data on intake rationale for all NYCC evaluation referrals. An additional thank you to Arielle for her hard work tutoring over the summer!



Marcella, Dan, Arielle, Ashley, and Emma – Ready to make some hypotheses!

New at NYCC...

New at NYCC...

New Volunteers!

Joining us since last winter, NYCC welcomes:

Ellen Farrell
Emma Sulkowicz
Weston Zisek



New Staff!

In June, a new Therapist/Evaluator joined the NYCC team. Lakeya Cherry, a California native, holds an M.S.W. from Columbia University School of Social Work with a concentration in Practice and Programming in Family, Youth, and Children's Services. Before joining NYCC, she worked as a Case Planner at Harlem Children's Zone. Welcome Lakeya!

This summer also kicked off two new Psychology externships at NYCC. After bidding a sad farewell to Kristin Orlovsky and Anna Rosch, NYCC welcomed Jaclyn Balkan and Denise Sandole, hailing from Fordham and Yeshiva Universities respectively. Jaclyn and Denise will be with us until July 2009 and we are excited to have them at the Center!



New Additions!

Therapist/Evaluator Meara Beirne and husband, Matt Retzer welcomed a new family member. Ellis Charles Retzer was born July 5th, 2008 at 8:16pm. He weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces at birth, measuring 21.75 inches long.

Welcome Ellis!

New Furniture!

If you have not been to the Center recently, stop by and look at our exciting new playroom furniture. Purchased via money raised from last year's raffle, NYCC has added two organizer shelving units, a storage cart (with wheels!), and a train table complete with 132 piece train set to the playroom as well as a new table for one of our downstairs play therapy rooms. In addition, thanks to a generous donation from *giggle*, we have two new play sets downstairs (a tool set and a kitchen set), new puzzles, a new dollhouse with dolls, and new toys for our youngest clients. Thank you *giggle* and thank you again to everyone who participated in the raffle!

Coming soon: a new fish tank for upstairs, and a study table for our older clients.

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Volunteer Voices: Part One

By Arielle Handler

While volunteering at the New York Center for Children, some of my most memorable times have been our weekly summer events. All week long we plan and set up for the event. When the day of the event arrives, one of the biggest anticipations is how many children will show up. Summer is a very busy time for our therapy clients and we never know who will be able to make it. As the weeks passed, we quickly learned that it didn't take a whole roomful of children to make the event successful, sometimes the most satisfying events had only a few children attending.

One that sticks out most in my mind was Jungle Art day. This event had four different stations set up each with a different art project. As we were waiting for the children to arrive, one of the Center's therapy clients walked in with his therapist. We immediately noticed that he was not in the best of moods. He had just had an argument with his mother on the way to the Center and wanted nothing to do with our planned activities. He sat at the table with his arms crossed and a scowl on his face. We began to explain to him that he had a few different crafts to choose from. As we each described our craft station his head remained down. The project I was in charge of was the making of a paper turtle. I had made an example to show the kids what it was supposed to look like when finished.

The minute I pulled out the turtle I had made, his eyes perked up. He told us that he would like to work on the turtle craft, and immediately he began to paint the turtle shell.

While he painted, the three of us chatted with him. Before we knew it, he had finished his turtle and was eager to move onto the next craft station. He began to share with us that he was very creative and loved working on craft projects. Before his therapist was ready for him, he had completed every art station and proudly displayed his projects to each person who entered the room. His therapist later told us that he was very happy during their time together and that Jungle art day had made him forget all about the troubled mood he was in when he first walked into the center. Having one child experience a better day made Jungle Art day a complete success.



Volunteer Late Summer and Fall Birthdays

All of us at The New York Center for Children wish you a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

August



September



October



November



Due to privacy concerns, Birthdays are blocked for the online edition of the Volunteer Voice

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News from Spring...

Earth Day Celebration

On April 14, NYCC held an early Earth Day Celebration with the children at the Center. Turn out was fantastic, both in terms of children and their families who attended and in terms of the outpouring of volunteer support. The children painted vases for the approaching luncheon fundraiser as well as decorating tin can flower pots using tissue paper and glue for themselves. After a pizza party – while the flower pots dried – each child was allowed to choose whether to plant a bean seed or a flower seed and they took their potted plants home with them.

Women for Children Luncheon

NYCC held its first ‘Women for Children’ luncheon to benefit our Center on April 29th, 2008. Around 175 people attended, and many more sent along generous donations to the Center. Each table at the event was accented by a hand painted centerpiece vase – painted by NYCC children at our Earth Day Celebration. The vases were sold in silent auctions and garnered over \$3,000 for The New York Center for Children! The event also featured a panel on healthy self-esteem and children. Thank you to all attendees, donors, volunteers, board members, panelists, and – of course – NYCC clients for making this event such a success.

Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference

Wednesday, June 11th, marked the third annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference, sponsored by The New York Center for Children in collaboration with Prevent Child Abuse America and NYC Children’s Services. This year the topic was ‘Empowering Teens: Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting Support.’ Statistically, families where the mother has the first child while still a teenager are at a greatly increased risk for physical child abuse and for accidental deaths due to child abuse.

The conference was a huge success. Dr. Michael Carrera kicked it off with a passionate keynote speech in which he advocated for the need to empower and inspire teens. ‘When we create a climate and atmosphere where young people belong, great things can happen, and when they do they [the teens] reduce risk.’ Pointedly, he described the youth at danger for teen pregnancy as ‘at promise’ rather than ‘at risk’, as ambitious but lacking advocates. His speech was followed by two panels, one on preventing teen pregnancy and one on supporting teen parents. All of the speakers were incredibly knowledgeable and engaging and 99% of attendees gave the conference a 4 or a 5 out of 5. “This is the best conference I’ve been to...I had my 5th pregnant 8th grader this year so this was a godsend.” Thank you to all of the speakers, collaborators, and volunteers/interns who made this conference such an inspiring event.



photo by Rob Rich ©
Guest Shirley Kamper Solman with Sheila Buchanan, NYCC Nurse Practitioner, and Dr. Edward Greenblatt, NYCC Director of Therapeutic Services



photo by Rob Rich ©
Former Volunteer Coordinator (and current Therapist/Evaluator) Mary Pesses with Senior Social Worker Sarah Anders



photo by Rob Rich ©
Lisa Spiegel, Michel Cohen M.D., Pilar Guzman, panelists, and Alex Witt, moderator, at the April 2008 Luncheon

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer. ~Author Unknown

Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.

~Sherry Anderson

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. ~Anne Frank

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