

Mercy Moments

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A New Look – What's in a Logo?

Launched at the spring gala on April 13th, our new look emerged from a collaborative process among artists, staff, volunteers and participants who gave thoughtful consideration to all a logo could say about Mercy Center and our mission.



The circle – a universal symbol of unity and wholeness represents the environment – sun, moon and earth. It references the cycle of life, with no beginning and no end, offering protection, a sense of well-roundedness and completion. Participants, staff, volunteers, and supporters – are all included in “the circle of mercy.”

Multiple circles connect the individual to the larger community, allowing support, yet maintaining the integrity of the shape, a symbol of dignity and group solidarity.

Enveloping circles move inward and outward, cradling, embracing and reinforcing at the same time that they promote change, hope, growth and spirituality.

The brushstrokes suggest the “handmade” quality of a person. Like a brushstroke, no two individuals are alike. Mercy Center celebrates each person as unique and equal.

The color palette represents diversity, strength, and optimism grounded by mother earth – imbued with growth and new life. Rooted in the original colors of the center which projected warmth and a welcoming aura, the new palette projects vitality and modernity.

The clean, approachable typeface emphasizes the word Mercy within the circle, physically breaking through to suggest “community and transformation.” Thus the core role of Mercy Center is complete in this representation.

Our deepest gratitude goes to artists Maureen Bennett O'Connor and Nancy Fava, as well as Board member Peggy Costa, RSM, for the time and talent they devoted to creating this new logo. It will serve us well as we move into a new era of community and transformation.

We delight in sending you this newsletter, where you will see just some of the activities that are the lifeblood and soul of our Mercy Center community. Energy and compassion are transparent, and we are filled with gratitude that your thoughts, prayers and support make it all possible.

With hope and perseverance,

Mary Galeone, RSM
Co-Executive Director

Joe Dirr
Co-Executive Director

Mott Haven Saves Engine 60

You Can Fight City

ESL students invested time outside of class to join others in the neighborhood and soon learned that not only can one person make a difference, but that there is strength in numbers. After announcements that the New York City 2011-2012 Budget called for closing twenty-five engine companies citywide, including the local Engine 60 at 342 East 143rd Street, a coalition was formed to organize rallies, marches, and petitions to save essential services in the South Bronx. Mobilized by Blanca Ramirez, LMSW, our Coordinator of Social Services, Mercy Center participants made their voices heard.

Established in 1895, Engine 60 is a cornerstone of protection for the community. Responses to fires, and other emergencies totaled 3,314 in 2011.

It was a real life lesson in language, civics, and citizen preparation. Whatever your race, creed, color, or income, every person is entitled to the highest standard of safety that the community is capable of providing. Yes, you can fight City Hall and win. We did it!



Blanca Ramirez proudly waves Mercy Center's flag.



Claude Sherman and Sylvie Sherman- Bloch.

Spotlight on Leadership

All in the Family

With affection and regret, Mercy Center says *Gracias* and *Adios* to Sylvie Sherman-Bloch who has blessed us with her gift of service for the last decade. A faithful member of our Board of Advisors, Sylvie stepped into many roles to assist wherever she saw a need. As a mentor, she offered sensitivity, kindness, and practical information to an at-risk 12 year old. In support of fund raising, she served on the Annual Auction Committee, bringing items and newcomers to the yearly event. She enlisted her husband Eli to sell Super Bowl Raffle tickets to their extensive circle of family and friends.

And in addition to her family's generous support of the Annual Fund, Sylvie actively solicited major gifts from others.

Most recently, Sylvie toured Mercy Center with her devoted father, Claude. And soon after, Mr. Sherman proudly announced a tribute to his daughter with a gift that will name an administrative office in honor of Sylvie's devotion to empowering the women of Mercy Center to improve their own lives and transform their families. We in turn, honor the Sherman family for a lifetime commitment to making the world a better place. Mercy Center is deeply grateful for the Sherman's generous support. We wish Sylvie, Eli, and their son Ben happiness and success in Boulder, Colorado. *Adieu - Bon Voyage et Bonne Chance!* As Claude Sherman's native French language connotes, this is not goodbye, just "so long until we're together again."

Not Just a Walk in the Woods

Fresh Air, Fun, and Hard Work for Our Families

This spring, twenty-one families enjoyed time out of the South Bronx at a memorable weekend in picturesque Goshen, NY. Lucy Amis LMSW, Family and Youth Program Manager, and Alba Torres, Parenting Coordinator, directed additional Mercy Center staff to help create an unforgettable experience for the participants of our Family Development Program. For many, it was the first time they had ventured into the countryside and the luxury of “space” was a frequent topic of conversation. Recreation included basketball, volleyball, soccer, arts and crafts, singing, dancing, bike riding, a campfire, and abundant and delicious food at every meal. The fun was a perfect foil to the serious effort invested in the workshops each day.

The theme of the weekends is always communication, and this year focused on how to talk to your kids about difficult subjects such as gangs, drugs, depression and whatever else might be affecting them. The topics, which dictate the content of the workshops, come to light when families establish goals during the intake process at the beginning of their two year commitment to the program. Attention to general health and nutrition is emphasized throughout the weekend. Useful stress relieving techniques for mind and body are taught with the hope that participants will continue to develop a holistic practice of caring for themselves. Mercy Center currently serves 54 families (235 individuals) through the Family Development Program. The participants expressed pride and deep emotion when sharing the progress their families have made with the guidance of our professional staff, volunteers, and the direct services they receive.



The Arts Up Close



Twenty-five ESL students enjoyed an adventure to The Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the masterpieces in person. They had a great time as they practiced their English while learning about the art on a private guided tour of the highlights of the museum. It was agreed that a return trip with their families would be scheduled soon. The women are looking forward to sharing their experience and exploring more of the art collections.

Volunteers : In Their Own Words

“I first visited Mercy Center a few weeks after coming back from Afghanistan. That sounds so dramatic! But I suppose it actually was. Starting a new life in a new city would have been a lot to deal with even without that. The second week of class, when Vanessa, Fabiola and Brenda ran up to hug me, I felt like I had a place in New York where I wasn't just part of a crowd. But even better, volunteering at Mercy Center let me find a positive sense of meaning in my new life that allowed me to detach from some overwhelming experiences in the last year.

Somebody at one of the House of the Roses events started talking about the various things the kids gain from the program – I had honestly forgotten that was the primary purpose of teaching. All year my friends have heard stories of my wonderful students and how much I love being involved with Mercy Center. One friend, still in Afghanistan, used to write me regularly to ask for stories of "my kids" because he said they reminded him what was really important. Thanks again for all that you do to create a meaningful experience for us and the kids.”

-Becky, House of the Roses

“With each passing group of parents that I have had the privilege of working with over the past few years, I feel that I am the one who has learned much from these women and men. I am most taken by their humility in sharing their stories about parenting and the struggles they endure in order to be good parents for their children. Sometimes I find myself wondering if I would have the fortitude and fidelity that is so evident in the participants as they wish to create a better environment for their children who they love so deeply. Thank you for encouraging me to volunteer. It has been both gift and grace for me.”

-Br. Jerry, FRS, Parenting Class

Celebrating the Circle of Mercy

A Tribute to Volunteers and College Bound Teens

The feast at The Annual Barbeque to thank our volunteers was a wonderfully concrete expression of our gratitude. We were blessed with a beautiful, balmy evening on June 28. For the first time, we also honored six students from our youth programs who graduated from high school this spring and will attend college in the fall. We are proud of their accomplishments and wish them happiness and fulfillment in all their future endeavors.

After graduating from the Academy of Mount St. Ursula with many academic honors, Sarah Cruz will study psychology at St. John's University with a full scholarship. Osmar Dawson, Jr. graduated from Cristo Rey of NYC High School where he received the Agape Award and a math certificate, and is off to St. Joseph University in Philadelphia where he has been selected as an Ignatian College Connection Scholar and awarded full tuition for four years. With a \$45,000 annual scholarship, Javier Garcia will study writing at Skidmore College after graduating from Alfred E. Smith High School as valedictorian. Jessica Matos graduated from the Health Opportunities High School and will also study writing at Syracuse University. Her achievements in academics, sports, drama, and student government have resulted in annual financial awards of \$37,000. Fernando Munoz graduated from Cardinal Hayes High School and will major in Business Administration with a minor in Culinary Arts at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Gerardo Munoz was named MVP in soccer at Cardinal Hayes, graduated with Second Honors, and plans to study law at John Jay College. Your support has played a major role in their success. We look forward to hearing of their progress in college.



Top l: Back row, Sarah Cruz, Jessica Matos, Fernando Munos, Geraldo Munos. Front row, Javier Garcia, Osmar Dawson Jr.

Top r: Michelle Rolfsmeyer, Kathryn Lyons, Emily Usher Shrair

Bottom: Sean Adcroft, Larry Carbone, Nancy Fava, friend, and friend

Lords and Ladies on the Auction Block

The 7th Annual Gala and Auction was a smashing success with over 300 people joining us at The Boathouse in Central Park. Spirit ran high as we pleased our palates with delicious morsels throughout the evening. The glorious array of items procured by our Auction Committee provided something for everyone – including titles for landed gentry!

Thanks to your generosity, the proceeds netted \$160,629 that will be channeled into Mercy Center programs designed to support our participants in their quest for an improved quality of life. The “Fund a Need” effort alone raised \$26,270 which will cover fees for over 40 kids at Camp Rising Stars this summer. It takes an army of people to make this event a reality and we are grateful to each and every one of you! Your support of every kind - whether you bought tickets, brought friends to meet us, placed journal ads, donated prizes, or helped set up for the evening - is integral to our success. Thank you so very much to our Chair, Diane Vezza, whose energy, enthusiasm, hard work and talented attention to detail created an exquisite event. Diane was an originator of this special occasion and has been a motivating force behind every auction since its inception in 2005.



Suzanne Clifton Walsh and Bo O'Connor



Someone I don't know



John and Diane Vezza, Charlie Brown

Planned Giving

A planned gift to Mercy Center will ensure continued service to the women and families of the South Bronx. Please consider the impact your generosity can have as a tool for empowering others to transform their lives and fulfill their dreams. Always seek professional estate planning advice when deciding how to distribute your assets. For more information on how you can support Mercy Center, contact Margo Golos at MGolos@MercyCenterBronx.org or 347.590.0492.

The Generosity of Friends



Margaret and Manus Clancy

The invitation said, “We love any reason for a party...” and described Mercy Center as “a place of hope in the midst of a challenging environment, offering programs and services that empower participants to reach their full potential and become agents of change in their families and communities.” So on May 6, Manus and Margaret Meara Clancy spread the word to twenty new families at their home in Bronxville. As a gourmet cook, Margaret had a few tricks up her sleeve when it came to enticing friends to come out on a Friday night to hear about our work in the South Bronx.

Participant Sarah Cruz (see page five) came to share her compelling story of growing up in the embrace of the Mercy Center family which provided her with a safe, supportive, and stimulating second home where she could thrive.

We are deeply grateful to the Clancys for their gracious hospitality and generosity. Many thanks to those who came to dine with friends and then opened their hearts to our mission to empower struggling Mott Haven residents to improve their lives through the support, skills and hope made available to them.

The Faces of Mercy Center

Staff Changes

Fondest best wishes for success go to our colleagues and dear friends who are leaving us. Mary Ellen Gianino looks forward to some leisure before pursuing a Masters in Social Work. Mary Ellen brought her creativity and organizational skills to Mercy Center in 2007 as a Mercy Corps Volunteer and has been with us ever since, most recently as Coordinator of both Youth Programs and Volunteers. Bernadette Dirr stepped forward from volunteer status to help with the annual auction and communications projects that included social media and our new logo. Michelle Rolfsmeyer came from Nebraska to complete a year as a Mercy Corps Volunteer Community Worker and is now ready to explore other employment opportunities on the East Coast. We will miss their smiling faces, their talent, and the added strength they gave to Mercy Center.



Mary Ellen Gianino

Our new look includes not just the logo, but some new faces on our staff with the introduction of Aren Bass as Youth Program Coordinator and Eileen Niedzwiecki as Director of Development. Two interns from the Columbia University Masters in Social Work program will also add to our work force this summer.

New Board Members Announced

Four new members of the Board of Directors have been appointed. Their fresh perspectives and energy, coupled with a passion for our mission, personify the qualities of Mercy Center represented in our new logo. We welcome:

Blanca E. Cofino, *Senior Vice President, Global Head of Human Resources*, Thomson Reuters

Iris W. Ramirez, *Immigration Paralegal*, Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel LLP

Sam Rios, *Vice President, Sourcing Group Manager*, JP Morgan Chase

Ellen Vopicka,, *Professor*, Mercy College (Retired)

Mercy Center
337 East 145th Street
Bronx, NY 10454

Phone: 718.993.2789

Fax: 718.402.1594

E-mail:

info@mercycenterbronx.org



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Gridiron or Gridlock?

Negotiations continue...meanwhile

**Take a chance on the Super Bowl—
you'll give a chance to struggling families in the South Bronx**

Win Two Tickets to

Super Bowl XLVI

February 5, 2012 at Lucas Oil Stadium

Indianapolis, Indiana

Drawing to be held Sunday November 13, 2011

Will you sell the winning ticket? You'll be a winner too! Go to
www.mercycenterbronx.org or call Margo at 347.590.0482