

Mercy Moments

A Publication of Mercy Center Bronx, NY

MC LOGO
GOES
HERE

Volume 3, Issue 1
Summer 2009

Board of Directors

Latifa Beato
Charles Brown
Candida Carrasquillo
Ana Collado
Beatrice Colón-Cruz
Nancy Conde
Margaret Costa, RSM
Beth Finnerty
Sonia Gonzalez-Cruz
Valerie Leon
Jesus Muñiz
Michael Termini
Regina Ward, RSM

Board of Advisors

Debra Stolarik, Chair
Elizabeth Cassino,
Vice Chair
Gregory Arcaro
Christine Bacon
Anna Berardi
Charlie Brown
Steve Coats
Nancy Conde
George Deshensky
Abigail E. Disney
Margaret Grace
Patrick Grace
Theresa Kane, RSM
Siobhan Keegan
Arthur Lange
Jennifer Lupo
Beth McCabe
Patricia Mescall
Tim O'Connor
Mary O'Hara
Daria Pizzetta
Brian Powers
Claudette Scheffold
Sylvie Sherman-Bloch
Charles Slivinski
Gene Sullivan
Diane Vezza
Ellen Vopicka

Co - Directors

Joseph Dirr
Mary Galeone, RSM

Greetings!

The women of Mercy Center come from over 30 different countries, speak more than 25 different languages, and range in age from 18 to over 80. Yet they have one thing in common – they seek a better life for themselves and their families. Often inspired by the dreams they hold for their children, they come to Mercy Center in search of skills and assistance. As you can see in the story below about our ESL Certificate Ceremonies, they find those skills and much more. In addition to learning English, participants found a community of support and encouragement, a community they celebrate and cherish.

We just completed a very successful year – serving almost 2,000 women, men and children in our five main program areas. We truly could not have done this without the generosity of our many supporters. Mercy Center is the product of the commitment of many – from volunteers like Gene Sullivan, profiled on page 3, to Auction donors and attendees, from foundations to City agencies, from donors to participants, and everyone in between. We are deeply indebted to all who make the Center possible. We wish you a safe, healthy, and happy summer, and look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,



Joe Dirr



Mary Galeone, RSM

ESL Students Celebrate Success!

Mercy Center's ESL students had a very successful year. Thanks to their dedication, and the commitment of our volunteer teachers and professional staff, 170 women and men completed an ESL course at Mercy Center this past spring. We are proud that almost half of these students are ready to advance to the next level in our three-level program!

In late May, the entire Mercy Center community came together to celebrate these achievements with Certificate Ceremonies. Participants brought spouses, friends, and children to share in their achievements. They took this opportunity to thank the volunteer teachers who make the program possible. Perhaps most extraordinary was that the students in weekday classes prepared for weeks before the ceremonies to put together a show, including traditional dances from their

(Continued on page 2)



Student Amada performs a traditional Mexican folk dance to thank Mercy Center and her volunteer teachers

ESL Graduates Celebrate, cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

native countries. These dances demonstrated a rich blending of different Latin American cultures representative of our neighborhood – from a Mexican folk dance to a Dominican Merengue. Most impressively, students also wrote and performed a skit in English, demonstrating how participating in Mercy Center’s programs – from ESL to Parenting classes to support groups – helps participants in real life situations. These performances were one way the students thanked Mercy Center for all they had received.

The Certificate Ceremonies were joyous affairs, complete with typical Mercy Center hospitality. They also served as a true testament to the depth of the community that is formed around Mercy Center’s programs and services. It was clear to all who attended that Mercy Center has a transformative impact on the lives of our participants.

Almost half of Mercy Center ESL students are ready to advance to the next level

From left, below: Joel teaches volunteer teacher Kathyne to Merengue; Students shared treats; Maria Laura says goodbye for the summer to volunteer teacher Laura



Learning to Read at Mercy Center

Imagine you are five years old. You live in a small apartment with your mother, your father, and two younger siblings. All your life, you’ve spoken Spanish, just like your mom and dad, until Mom enrolls you in the local school for kindergarten. On your first day, you are scared because everyone speaks to you in English, and you don’t understand. You start to pick up the language pretty quickly, but you still speak only Spanish at home with your family. Without the extra practice of English outside of school, you start to fall behind. Then you start first grade, and it gets worse.

For children of immigrants, this is a common experience. Each year, they slip further behind in all of their classes, often because they can’t read and write well in English. This past year, 75% of Mercy Center’s After School participants struggled with



Language Arts, Reading, and Writing. And all children in the Saturday Reading tutoring program performed below their grade level in reading.

This fall, our After-School and Saturday Reading Enrichment Programs will focus on the reading needs of students. Both pro-

grams will incorporate a new reading curriculum, KidzLit, into daily sessions. The new curriculum is designed specifically for community-based After-School Programs and has been proven to strengthen reading skills and develop a love for reading in students. It also incorporates an emphasis on values, including helpfulness, fairness, and responsibility. Because reading interventions are most effective when implemented early, both programs will focus on children in grades K-5. We are really excited about the new approach and the fantastic new library of books that accompanies the curriculum! This program is made possible, in part, by donors to the “Fund-a-Need” opportunity presented at our annual Auction. Thanks so much for your support!

Photo: Board member and volunteer tutor Jesus reads with Sammy

5th Annual Cocktail Gala and Auction a Success!

Over 350 people gathered on April 22nd at Tavern On The Green for a spectacular evening. Thanks to everyone who donated prizes, bought tickets, purchased journal ads, donated, and gave of their time and expertise for free! You helped us to raise over \$150,000 for the women and families of the South Bronx. More than that, however, you participated in a wonderful evening to recognize those who have given so much to our community and the Center. Mercy Center honored Karla G. Sanchez, trial attorney and the first and sole Hispanic partner at Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP, who regaled the crowd with an entertaining speech! We also presented the Circle of Mercy Award to The Volunteer ESL Teachers, who make that program possible. Despite the hard economic times, people pulled together with a level of generosity we could only hope for. Special thanks to our Auction Committee and Board of Advisors, who work tirelessly for months every year to plan this event!



Clockwise from top right: Guests check out the auction items in the journal; Maureen Bennett O'Connor, artist and volunteer, graciously "womaned" the table selling artwork and cards created by Mercy Center women; Guests take a break from bidding

Volunteer Spotlight: Gene Sullivan, Attorney and Gardener

Mercy Center thrives because of the dedication of our volunteers. Some give a few hours each week, others stop by once during a Spring Break service trip. And others give even more.

Gene Sullivan, a retired corporate attorney, is one of our most generous volunteers. Gene spends at least two days each week at Mercy Center, providing legal services to our participants. In the three years he's been with us, Gene has learned about all kinds of cases that he didn't see during his years at Chadbourne & Parke in Midtown Manhattan. He has learned how to counsel participants through credit issues, has tapped into

his network of resources to provide advice in medical malpractice matters, and has represented participants in court on housing and family law matters. Gene provides much needed support where it would otherwise not be possible.

But Gene's skills do not stop there. Gene is an avid gardener, bringing life to our plants and color to our courtyard. During the spring months, you are just as likely to find Gene weeding in the garden as writing briefs in his office!

And if you want to know where to find the best desserts, just ask Gene. He is an expert taster with an eye for hidden treats!



Mercy Center

377 145th Street
Bronx, N.Y. 10454

Phone: 718-993-2789

Fax: 718-402-1594

Email: info@mercycenterbronx.org

ADDRESS BLOCK

*We are on the web:
www.MercyCenterBronx.org*

**MC LOGO
GOES
HERE**



Photo taken by 2008 raffle winner Nancy Braithwaite from her seats on the 30 yard line

Win two tickets to Super Bowl XLIV!

February 7, 2010 at Dolphin Stadium,
Miami Gardens, Florida

\$100 per ticket

Only 500 tickets will be sold!
All proceeds support Mercy Center
Drawing SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2009
(Location and time to be determined)

Go to www.mercycenterbronx.org or
call Sinead at **(718) 993-2789** to get your tickets
Reserve your tickets now before they sell out!!

Winner need not be present
NY State Raffle Registration #: GC 58-190-199-08890