

Involved Parents Help Young Learners Thrive (Continued from page 1)



children learn, families succeed and the whole community prospers.

In order to expand programming, the Family Center is seeking a Program Facilitator for its parenting classes. Once fully operational, Parent-Child Together programs will serve 300 adults and 250 children. ■



also devotes 20 to 30 minutes to educating parents on topics such as nutrition and public school involvement.

Top priorities of the program are to improve school readiness and academic achievement for immigrant children in our community. Neighbors Link is addressing these goals through strong parent education programs that engage mothers and fathers in their children's development from infancy through high school and beyond. Through a "whole family" training approach, parents teach,

New Director Says Family Center Helps Immigrants Find their Way

Originally from Uruguay, Inés González and her family migrated to the United States to escape political violence. "We left grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, fearful of their fates." Those were hard times for her family, isolated in a new country, Inés recalls. "We could have used an agency like Neighbors Link."

Now Director of the Neighbors Link Family Center, Inés is pleased that families can come here for help as they try to make a new life for themselves in a new country. "I think about what a huge impact an agency like Neighbors Link would have had on my family when we moved to this country. I want that for our client families."

Both a licensed clinical social worker and psychoanalyst, Inés has worked in the field of family and children's services and mental health for nearly 20 years. For the last seven years, she worked in Westchester County at the North American Family Institute, a social service agency where she was Deputy Executive Director.

She has also worked in New York City for the Harlem Children's Zone, the International Center for the Disabled in East Harlem and for St. Dominic's Home in the Bronx. Inés holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work from New York University. She lives in Washington Heights with her spouse and son.



Family Center Director Inés González enjoys play time with a toddler in the new Family Center at Neighbors Link.

FAMILY CENTER WISH LIST

- Fat pencils
- Fat crayons
- Child-safe modeling clay
- Light table or activity table
- Train table

For more information or to donate items to the Family Center, please contact Gayle Hudson at ghudson@neighborslink.org or (914) 666-3410 x 16.



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Neighbors Link



VOLUME 19

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



FESTIVAL DE PRIMAVERA

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COCKTAILS, DINNER, DANCING & LIVE AUCTION AT SLEEPY HOLLOW COUNTRY CLUB
May 11th 6:30PM



"TOGETHER WITH THEIR PARENTS, WE ARE HELPING CHILDREN BLOSSOM."

—INÉS GONZÁLEZ
FAMILY CENTER DIRECTOR



Neighbors Link families traveled to Washington, DC on April 10th to rally for comprehensive immigration reform.

Involving Parents as 'First Teachers' Helps Young Learners to Thrive



Together with their parents, we are helping children blossom." Inés González, director of the Neighbors Link Family Center, sees the steady positive impact that the new center's parenting classes have on children of recent immigrants. For these young learners, their mothers and fathers are "first teachers," she says. "Children thrive when parents are engaged in their education."

Launched in November, Parent-Child Together classes meet each weekday in the new Family Center at Neighbors Link. Targeted primarily to parents and their children, birth to four years of age, the classes incorporate circle time, stories, free play, art, puzzles and special themes such as colors and sequencing. For children entering the program, "Ours is likely their first structured classroom experience," said Inés. Exposure to such an environment is key to developing important pre-kindergarten skills such as independence, sharing, and making successful transitions between activities.

"Kids learn more from their moms and dads at this age," noted Inés. So each two-hour class teaches parents techniques they can use at home with their children. Inés



Continued on page 5

2013 Volunteer Award Winners Recognized for their Commitment

Neighbors Link volunteers serve in numerous capacities, range in age from high school students to retirees, and hail from throughout Northern Westchester. Volunteers participate in a variety of programs, including ESL tutoring and Family Center programs. For information, please contact Gayle Hudson at ghudson@neighborslink.org or (914) 666-3410 x 16.

“We are so grateful to all these remarkable individuals for their commitment to the families we serve,” said Carola Bracco, Executive Director of Neighbors Link. “At Neighbors Link, we lead by example. Our volunteers embrace diversity in their lives. Through their work, our mission of integration is achieved.”



SUZANNE GRANT – OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER AWARD

Suzanne Grant of Mount Kisco NY won the Neighbors Link Outstanding Adult Volunteer Award for donating countless hours to Neighbors Link over the past seven years, conceiving, writing and designing the biannual Neighbors Link Newsletter. About her volunteer experience at Neighbors Link, Suzanne said, “I enjoy sharing news of all the ways Neighbors Link supports our community – and our community supports Neighbors Link. I get to write about topics that build understanding and strengthen ties among new and established residents. Volunteering with Neighbors Link has been a real education for me, helping me be a better neighbor.”



THURSDAY EVENING ADULT ESL TUTORING PROGRAM

Neighbors Link’s weekly Adult ESL Tutoring Program brings volunteer tutors and adult learners together, one-on-one, to practice and improve English language skills. Thursday evenings at Neighbors Link exemplify community building and further our mission of actively promoting healthy integration for the whole community. Westchester Community College provides the program’s training, leadership and curriculum, which has recently expanded to include literacy and citizenship preparation. The special relationship that develops between learners and volunteer tutors in this trusted environment is the hallmark of this 11 year-old, highly-valued program which we salute this year.



CHRIS WAFUL – MARY WEISS VOLUNTEER SPIRIT AWARD. Chris (right) with Café Manager Jose.

The Mary Weiss Volunteer Spirit Award was presented to Chris Waful from Katonah, NY. Chris has served as the Volunteer Coordinator of the Adult Volunteer ESL Tutoring program since 2010. He began volunteering at Neighbors Link in 2008, and over the years has served in programs as diverse as ESL tutoring, website development and support, and event support. “One of my favorite experiences at Neighbors Link was helping two of our learners pass the US Citizenship Test,” Chris says. “It took months to prepare for everything and every single week both of my students came back ready to try even harder. After months of work, I got to ask them both how their tests went and neither of them could stop grinning.”

"OUR VOLUNTEERS EMBRACE DIVERSITY IN THEIR LIVES. THROUGH THEIR WORK, OUR MISSION OF INTEGRATION IS ACHIEVED."

—CAROLA BRACCO
NEIGHBORS LINK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CARA GOLDFARB – AGNES HASSELL YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD. Cara (left) tutors an ESL learner.

Cara Goldfarb of Chappaqua, NY, a senior at Horace Greeley High School, was chosen to receive the Agnes Hassell Youth Leadership Award for her dedication to tutoring the English language learners in the Neighbors Link High School Volunteer ESL Tutors program. Cara began volunteering at Neighbors Link in ninth grade, and in her junior and senior years, was appointed a “Student Executive” of the program. About her time at Neighbors Link Cara says, “What is most important to me are the connections I have made with the clients, learners, staff and other volunteers. Neighbors Link has really shown me the importance of being an active community member and reaching out to those around me,” she added.



ZAK KROOKS – STUDENT VOLUNTEER AWARD. Zak (left) with fellow Student Executive, Cara Goldfarb.

The Neighbors Link Student Volunteer Award for “exceptional contribution and dedicated service” was presented to Zak Krooks of Chappaqua, also a senior at Horace Greeley High School. Zak has volunteered at Neighbors Link since his freshman year and as an upper-classman, has served as Student Executive for the High School ESL Tutoring Program. About volunteering at Neighbors Link, Zak says, “My time at Neighbors Link will forever remain in my memories and I could not imagine a high school experience without it. I can honestly say that every week I look forward to Tuesdays, knowing that I will be returning to Neighbors Link and the amazing community there.”

Neighbors Link Families Rally for Immigration Reform

For the first time in a long time, there is hope and momentum for immigration reform.

At this pivotal moment, Neighbors Link families headed to Washington D.C. on April 10, to join tens of thousands of participants from across the country in a rally with a message that the “Time is Now” for fair and just immigration reform.

Recognizing that the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants working in industries across the nation—from meat packing and farming to hospitality and construction—are critical to our economy and our society, the rally called for a comprehensive legalization program that provides a true path to citizenship, acknowledging the vital contribution of immigrants to our workforce and our rich cultural diversity.

Rally attendees urged lawmakers to reform immigration with legisla-



Neighbors Link families participated in the “All In For Citizenship” Immigration Rally on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol Building.

tion that provides a solution to the current outdated system which is tearing families apart, leaving children without parents and shattering lives. Participants called for a broad immigration reform program



that prioritizes family unity, protects workers, meets our nation’s economic and labor needs, restores human rights, honors our heritage as a nation of immigrants and—most importantly—provides a clear path to citizenship.

Neighbors Link clients were part of a group of more than 2,000 New Yorkers who headed to the Capitol on April 10 to rally for an immigration reform bill, including 42 buses filled with the state’s diverse immigrant, faith, labor and community leaders.



J O B O P P O R T U N I T Y

FAMILY CENTER – PARENT/CHILD PROGRAM FACILITATOR

Neighbors Link is seeking an energetic, enthusiastic and creative Parent/Child Program Facilitator to run educational classes for parents and their infant or toddler. The successful candidate will be bilingual with fluency in Spanish and demonstrate a high level of cultural competence. The Neighbors Link Family Center provides innovative programming for immigrant parents and their children with the goal of improving school readiness and academic achievement, and promoting healthy family relations. The Program Facilitator will lead parent/early childhood groups in Spanish using evidence-informed curriculums and run 5-7 cohorts of the groups weekly.

- Requirements:
- Masters degree in education, human services or a related field required.
 - Candidates with a B.A. or B.S. in education, human services or other related field, plus 2 years of relevant experience will also be considered.

Please send resume and salary history via email to srosado@neighborslink.org.

Volunteer Teachers Help Build Workplace Skills

“We wanted to teach specific skills that Neighbors Link workers need,” said Westchester Community College undergraduate Delaneyah Fritze.

Together with her WCC scholarship partner Zulima Munoz, the two women recently taught classes at Neighbors Link on sheetrocking and computer literacy. They are scheduled to conduct an upcoming class on home painting, as well as a workshop on the tool lending system they organized.

By offering Neighbors Link clients skills development and access to quality construction tools, said Delaneyah, “Hopefully we can help people get jobs where they can hold their own and earn a little more.”

A biology student with a career interest in neuropathology, Delaneyah

previously helped launch a company that taught women construction-based skills.

Zulima, an accounting student from Panama, is bilingual and tech savvy. She led the workshop on computer literacy and will assist with the inventory and check-out process for the tool lending system.

Both women are beneficiaries of WCC’s Kathryn W. Davis global community scholarship. After hearing a compelling presentation by Neighbors Link Volunteer Coordinator Gayle Hudson about the many service opportunities at the center, Delaneyah and Zulima decided to fulfill their community service hours by sharing their skills here.



Above, Delaneyah Fritze (left) and Zulima Munoz (right), shown here with a computer literacy student, conducted workshops at Neighbors Link as part of their undergraduate scholarship program at Westchester Community College. Below and left, students in sheetrocking class measure and cut drywall prior to installation.



“HOPEFULLY WE CAN HELP PEOPLE TAKE JOBS WHERE THEY CAN HOLD THEIR OWN AND EARN A LITTLE MORE.”

—DELANEYAH FRITZE



Volunteers Jennifer Kramer, standing in front, and Amy Bellsey, behind, assist clients learning English through the Rosetta Stone program, each Monday afternoon at Neighbors Link.

Neighbors Link is fortunate to have another enthusiastic duo of volunteers, Jennifer Kramer and Amy Bellsey, conduct our Rosetta Stone computer-based language program.

Held each Monday afternoon, the two-hour class offers an additional layer of instruction for English language learners. The software tracks each student’s individual lessons and assesses their progress.

Said Jennifer, who has taught the Rosetta Stone program at Neighbors Link for three years, “This teaching method works for our clients because it builds on what they already know from being immersed in the language that is all around them.”

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Skills training is an important part of the Neighbors Link mission. Teaching your knowledge to others feels great and builds our community. If you have a skill and a willingness to share it, contact Gayle Hudson at ghudson@neighborslink.org or 666-3410 x 16.