

OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Summer 2020 Newsletter

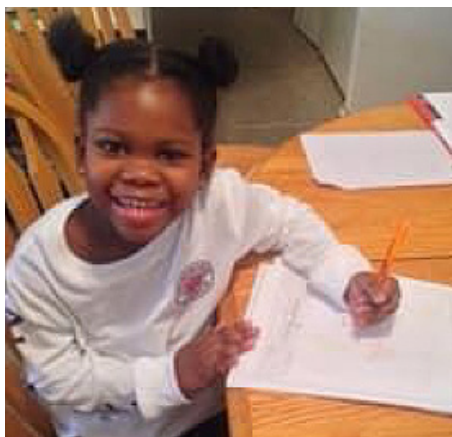
Kids Learning at Home

Thanks to the hard work of our amazing teachers who have adapted the curriculum for parents and suggested learning activities that can be done at home. OCC children are Learning at Home. All of these photos were sent to us by parents practicing OCC's signature play-based learning.

Parents and OCC teachers share daily correspondence on what is going on at home, and while we miss our kids so much, we really appreciate all that the parents are doing at home: infants using OCC games to learn fine motor skills, toddlers reading their favorite books and singing their favorite songs, preschool children keeping journals and the science of a frog's life cycle!

Our school-agers are working very hard on

their class assignments and we are able to help provide constructive, hands-on enrichment activities like sending thank you notes to first responders and hospital workers!



Partners Helping OCC Families

One thing has not changed and that is – OCC continues to depend upon and receive so much help from the community. While parents are the key to continuing education at home, families are struggling with basic needs like food, diapers, and mental health services. Our Social Worker, Terry Becker, LMSW is providing support to both parents and children to help them cope at home. She has also arranged for families to access counseling through Westchester Jewish Community Services, one of many partner agencies.

In addition, many of our families need food and help accessing it. We ensure they are connected to Grab and Go meals through the School District, and other donated food services like Gullotta House, Feeding Westchester, local houses of worship and the Ossining Food Pantry. Terry also coordinates with 914 Cares for diaper donations.



Parent Support During Virtual OCC



Vanessa Pairis, OCC Parent and Board member writes, “the remarkable thing about this lesson, (see photo left) which may seem simple on its face, is that the teachers clearly understand that since I’m working from home and caring for my children at the same time, I need activities that my children can do on their own, as well as activities which allow us to learn and play together. By putting together these types of thoughtful and multifaceted lessons, I have time to

focus on work, without missing out on the opportunity to really engage with my kids in their schooling.

These projects and activities are the highlight of both my and my children's days, as are the phone calls we receive from the teachers just to check in on us. Knowing that every family is getting this kind of care from the OCC teachers makes my family feel less isolated and apart during these strange and scary times.”

Foundation Support

OCC is fueled by our passion for early childhood education but we depend upon private donors, foundations and government partners to complete our mission. We wish to acknowledge and sing the praises of these generous foundations who have supported access to early childhood education for working families: **the Saint Faith's House Foundation, the Harry Chapin Foundation, Entergy Foundation, the Hope for Youth Foundation and Westchester Community Foundation.**

The Funds provided ensure that OCC is able to support teachers in their task to provide individualized, whole-child, family and community-centered child care and education to all children. OCC teachers, teaching assistants and the OCC Social Worker coordinate with parents on the curriculum goals of each OCC child.

Grant for Psycho-Educational Services

OCC was awarded a generous grant from the Westchester Community Foundation (WCF) in January of this year to support the work of OCC's Director of Children's Services, Terry Becker, LMSW.

The grant supports Ms. Becker's work with teachers and parents of children with special needs. She helps teachers develop individualized strategies for the children, and she helps parents obtain the educational and therapeutic services that their children need.

In addition to the grant for Psycho-Educational Services, WCF has recently awarded OCC a special grant to underwrite expenses necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis. This special grant is from the Westchester COVID-19 Response Fund.

Westchester Community Foundation, a division of The New York Community Trust, connects generous Westchester residents to meet local needs. The Foundation holds permanent funds to provide an enduring source of support for nonprofits working to improve the quality of life in the County. Some funds are for specific issues: youth development, the arts, or the environment. Other funds are for specific parts of the County, including Ossining.

The Foundation also sponsors donor-advised funds and assists donors with their philanthropic goals in Westchester or anywhere in the country.

"We are thrilled to support OCC through the Dorothy Patterson Fund, which was established to meet needs in the Ossining community. We know Mrs. Patterson would be very pleased to see her legacy continued in this way," said Laura Rossi of the Foundation.



Laura Rossi, CEO of Westchester Community Foundation.

To learn more, visit wcf-ny.org, and contact Laura Rossi, Executive Director, at lrossi@wcf-ny.org, or Donna Banks, Director of Donor Relations and Communications, at dbanks@wcf-ny.org.

Celebrating Mother's Day With OCC



A huge thank you to **Carolyn Townsend, Christine Wetzel, Lily and Holly Boes** (left to right) for working on a Mother's Day benefit project for OCC. Carolyn's beautiful flower arrangements raised more than \$3,400 for OCC's child care tuition assistance program.



And thank you to OCC's own master gardener/educator, **Andrea Sauro**, for making all of our OCC moms feel special. Andrea planted individual potted flowering plants for all of our moms, showing them our love and support on their special day.

From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

During this period of turmoil, we at the Ossining Children's Center stand in solidarity with victims of persecution and violence. Our center has been deeply committed to helping all families in our care, and to serving the community at large. We are in this together, and we will continue to follow our mission of inclusivity, equity and justice in the time to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus two facts that you – as a supporter of the Ossining Children's Center -- have known for years:

- good, reliable child care is an essential service for a functioning economy, and
- good child care educates the whole child – as an emotional, social, physical and intellectual being – as well as nurturing the entire family.

As our community rebuilds the post-COVID local economy, more working families are going to need our educational child care programs. Indeed, three years ago, when we embarked on our Capital Campaign to build a new, larger center on State Street, we had no idea how prescient our vision would be.

Your kindness and commitment have been transformative for the working families of Ossining who wouldn't have been able to afford the full cost of our programs without your help. And we have more work to do!

I am excited about the potential for even greater work that we can do together at our new Center at 32 State Street – as Ossining creates a thriving local economy.

With gratitude for your partnership,

Howard Milbert

Ossining Children's Center: 125 Years in the Making

Ossining Children's Center's long tradition of building meaningful partnerships with families has been helping our community overcome challenges for more than 125 years. At its founding in 1895, OCC enabled widowed mothers to work to support their families. During World War II, OCC's enrollment expanded as many women joined the workforce to support the war effort. During the 1960s, as more and more women chose to work outside of the home, OCC became a public advocate for child care. Indeed, while always changing with the times, OCC has been a consistent compassionate friend and advocate for thousands of families.



The original “Christ Child Day Nursery and Bethany Home” provided – not just child day care – but also a home for senior citizens – one of the first intergenerational programs of its kind.

From the outset, under the direction of an education-credentialed headmistress, the Center emphasized the education of the whole child – the entire emotional, social, physical, and intellectual being.

As women of every economic status joined the workforce, Ossining Children's Center's enrollment began to reflect the socio-economic diversity of Ossining. The Center was ahead of its time, providing a nurturing environment where children from different backgrounds could play and learn together.

The Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building: Slated to Open this Fall!



Architect's rendering, KG + D Architects



Installing the roof, May 15, 2020

Construction on OCC's new facility at 32 State Street started about a year ago. Despite challenges of weather and an abbreviated COVID-19 shutdown, thanks to a State waiver, the new Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building is slated to open on schedule this fall. The 27,000 square foot facility will house all of OCC's programs at one location, and allow us to expand our enrollment from our current 150 to more than 200.

"While we are all excited as we watch the new building take shape before our eyes, it's not really about the building," says OCC Executive Director Howard Milbert. "It has always been about our mission. We are thinking of the many new families we will be able to serve and the enhanced learning experience for all of the children in our care. Moreover, our dedicated teachers will have an environment and technology worthy of their skills, creativity and commitment."

Capital Campaign: Our Children. Our Future.

We are overwhelmed by the support of our community for our Capital Campaign. We started with a goal of \$17.8 million for a new state-of-the-art building, and a scholarship fund. To date, we have raised almost \$15 million in gifts and pledges to the campaign. This is a huge accomplishment for an organization with an annual budget of \$2 million!

We are especially grateful to our lead donors: Becky and Art Samberg, Connie Curran, and the late David Swope. Without their early and generous support, none of this would have been possible.

You are invited to join the visionary leaders of the Ossining community and become a partner in the creation of this model child care and education center.

Eighty per cent of the needed funds have been raised. The new building is slated to open in the fall of this year. If you haven't already made a pledge to the campaign, won't you join us in supporting this transformational project?

Buy a Brick to be a part of our community's future!

Our plans for the building include a beautiful brick walkway flanking the main entrance of the building. We have just launched our "Buy a Brick" Campaign, to help put the finishing touch on our welcoming entrance. See the enclosed flyer for information on ordering a brick to commemorate your commitment to OCC and/or to honor someone you love.

Celebrating Three Champions

OCC's rich history shows that when we come together, we can make our community better. At this year's **125th Anniversary Celebration, rescheduled for November 8th at Sleepy Hollow Country Club**, OCC will honor three community members who have shown an unwavering commitment to children and families: **Sue Bicksler-Taub of Holbrook Cottage, Stacey Winnick of Chappaqua Moms Sales, and Ossining Schools Superintendent Ray Sanchez.** Collectively, these individuals have been empowering children and families for a total of more than 60 years.



Sue Bicksler-Taub (right) with Clorissa Gioscia, chair of the November 2019 Festive Stroll.

Sue Bicksler-Taub, proprietor of Holbrook Cottage, created the Festive Stroll of Homes, some 20 years ago. The benefit event has become a beloved community holiday tradition. Over the years, the semiannual Stroll has raised more than a half million dollars for OCC's Tuition Assistance Program. Holbrook Cottage's signature customer service has created a community that enjoys supporting local causes. Sue and her team at Holbrook Cottage hold regular "Shop for a Cause" fundraisers at the cottage, benefitting many local charities. And Sue serves on the Board of one of our partner agencies,



Ossining Schools Superintendent Ray Sanchez at his desk.

Neighbors Link, which strengthens the whole community through the healthy integration of new immigrants.

Ray Sanchez was selected as a "Superintendent to Watch" in 2017-18 for his dynamic leadership of the Ossining Union Free School District. Thanks to Ray's collaborative style of leadership, the partnership between the Ossining schools and OCC's prekindergarten program has been fruitful for the children of the District. We value our partnership with public schools more than ever, as the Superintendent has worked tirelessly to help Ossining students and their families during this difficult time.



Stacey with third graders Amy Jaquez and Aaliyah Brown at last year's OCC after-school Christmas party. Every year Stacey throws our children a fun-filled Holiday extravaganza. She collects donated toys and recruits local restaurants to donate the children's favorite foods.

For more than 15 years **Stacey Winnick** has secured toys, meals and numerous other donations for hundreds of OCC families. Her "**Chappaqua Moms Sales**" Facebook page has grown into a network of more than 8,000 members to whom she reaches out on behalf of our children and parents. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Stacey has been working non-stop with her network of friends to make sure that no OCC family that has been hit hard by the pandemic goes hungry. She gets groceries donated, arranges for donated meals from several local restaurants, and asks her network to donate gift cards to local supermarkets.



We are Stronger Together!

THANK YOU –

We are so grateful to those who sent special donations to help us keep our programs going virtually during our COVID-19 closure.

We especially appreciate **our parents, many of whom have donated all or part of their weekly fees to help ensure we could continue to pay our staff.** Their generosity is a testament to the value they place on the quality of care and education their children receive at OCC.

As of this printing, we have raised a total of \$80,000 from the community. In addition, we have received funds from the CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program. Nevertheless, **we are still anticipating an operating deficit for this fiscal year.** If you haven't already done so, please consider a donation to help OCC through this challenging time.

AND THANK YOU – To these Briarcliff restaurants who have been donating, and continue to donate, delicious meals to the OCC families who have been hit hardest by the virus and the economic fallout from the virus.

- Orfino's
- Briarcliff Market and Deli
- Donato's Trattoria
- Janiello's Market
- Chatterbox 54

AND THANK YOU – to these individuals and partner agencies who have provided special help to our families during the COVID-19 crisis.

- 914 Cares: Diapers delivered to OCC for families in need
- "Martin Bancroft Community Dinners" of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Mount Kisco: Masks
- Westchester Jewish Community Services: Mental health telecounseling for families under stress
- Feeding Westchester: Mobile Food Pantry
- Ossining Food Pantry: Grocery store gift cards
- Ossining Union Free School District: Grab and Go Meals

- St. Theresa's Parish: Hosting Gullotta House meal distribution
- Gullotta House: Meals, including delivery to families that can't get out to pick up
- Neighbors Link, Ossining Site: Delivery of non-perishable groceries to families who can't get out to pick up
- RSHM Life Center: Meal distribution in Sleepy Hollow
- Ossining Community Action Program: Help with housing and other crisis intervention
- Dawn Greenberg and her network of angels: Donated grocery cards
- Stacey Winnick Pushkin and her networks through Chappaqua Moms Sales and Briarcliff Moms: Food and emergency assistance
- St. Vincent de Paul Society: Grocery store gift cards
- Briarcliff High School Girls' Basketball Team: Groceries

Individuals who donated handmade masks:

- Xiaowen Wang
- Jennifer Bound
- Christine Wetzel
- Christine Gordon

Festive Stroll 2019

Thank you to all of our friends who joined us for the Festive Stroll in November 2019. The event raised \$132,000 for child care tuition assistance. Pictured below are some of our friends who attended the Festive Stroll Luncheon.



Liz Susman Karp, Wendy Schwartzberg,
Natalie Gorlin, Alisa Gershman



Elaine Blair, Marilyn Wishnie,
NY State Assemblymember Sandy Galef



Laura Warnier, Kate Sanzenbacher,
and Amanda Carcaterra

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