

OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Winter 2020 Newsletter



Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

On September 23rd, high up on the riverbank at 32 State St, OCC made history and cut the ribbon on its 27,000 square foot child care and education center. Celebrating 125 years of community service, OCC was joined by distinguished speakers and guests: Assemblywoman Sandy Galef, Westchester County Executive George Latimer, Ossining Mayor Victoria Gearity and Ossining Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg.



Becky Samberg, long-time OCC Board member, addresses attendees.

Capital campaign co-chair Rebecca "Becky" Samberg and her late husband Arthur Samberg donated the property and the generous seed funding that made the project possible. "Art and I have always felt strongly that every child should be able to have the kinds of experiences that our children and grandchildren have had," said Mrs. Samberg. "This building will make those opportunities available to more children from our community." The new Center can accommodate up to 220 children in large state-of-the-art classrooms, indoor gym, and multiple outdoor recreation areas that provide ample space for children to learn, grow and play while staying healthy and safe.



Four-year old Astor Ruby and Xavier, 6, cut the ribbon for their new school.

While the fundraising campaign for the building has been very well-supported, the final funds are yet to be raised.



L to R: Ossining Mayor Victoria Gearity; Richard Wishnie, Building Committee; Karen D'Attore, Ossining Village Manager; Lindsay Farrell, CEO, Open Door Family Medical Centers.

Coming to Work with Grandma

These days OCC Assistant Executive Director Claudia Weger loves coming to work even more than before. She is greeted every morning by happy faces, and the biggest smile comes from her grandson, Ezra. Ezra is learning, playing and having a blast in the infant room with his teacher, Olivia Myles. "For parents, and grandparents, trusting someone else to care for your child during these uncertain times can be difficult," says Claudia, "Welcoming children back and then moving buildings during a pandemic has been challenging, but our new space at 32 State Street provides outside entrances for every infant/toddler, kindergarten and prekindergarten classroom. I'm really proud of the environment we have been able to create for our children at OCC."



Ezra is ready to learn and play



Claudia and Ezra

Child Care is an Essential Service

by Executive Director Howard Milbert

During this time of intense political polarization, a consensus seems to be emerging that government funding for child care is a needed investment in our economy. Without good, affordable child care, low- and moderate-income employees can't go to work, and small businesses can't function.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought child care, and the lack thereof, into focus. Numerous news articles in national, regional and local media have reported on the demise of child care centers that have succumbed to Covid-induced financial pressures. These pressures include closures, under-enrollment, and the cost of extra staffing, equipment and supplies needed to prevent spread.

The Wall Street Journal reported that "Coronavirus Threatens to Push the Child Care Industry Over the Edge," in its October 17, 2020 edition. The article quotes University of Minnesota Economist Elizabeth Davis: "If the virus magically disappeared, could we go back to where we were in January? We couldn't if there's no child care."

The business community has realized that good, reliable child care is an essential service for a functioning economy. And it has become patently clear that most child care centers run on a financial razor's edge. Another few months without an infusion of government support means more child care centers will be closing their doors.

I want to express my deep thanks to you – our donors and volunteers – for your generous support of OCC's service to the community. But philanthropy, alone, is not enough to sustain high quality, affordable child care. Please join us in advocating for Federal government stimulus funding for child care. Child care is an essential service. It's a non-partisan issue.

A Night to Remember – OCC's 125th Anniversary Celebration

On November 8th, two hundred supporters came together via livestream on Facebook, YouTube and the OCC website for the Center's 125th Anniversary celebration. Thank you to the honorees, the event committee and donors for supporting this first virtual fundraiser of the OCC.

The annual fall event has long been an important fundraiser, and with the opening of a new Center, decreased enrollment and a strenuous budget year due to COVID, the pressure was on. The live donations and event sponsors raised \$94,000, just short of the \$100,000 goal for Tuition Assistance to enable families at all income levels to take part in OCC's wonderful education and child care programs.

It is not too late to contribute to the Tuition Assistance Program via the Donate button at www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org or using the donation envelope enclosed.



The event honored our partner Raymond Sanchez, Superintendent of Ossining Union Free School District; long-time donor Sue Bicksler-Taub of Holbrook Cottage; and Volunteer Coordinator Stacey Winnick of Chappaqua Moms Sales.



A New Home Away from Home

On November 16th we were thrilled to welcome children and families to their new home away from home. Thanks to months of careful planning and an herculean effort by our teachers and staff, children transitioned smoothly into their new school, happy and eager to learn. Assistant Executive Director Claudia Weger says, "Our flexible spaces and outside entrances to classrooms allow for social distancing. The children love exploring their new space, especially the playgrounds, and running around in the Swope Family Multipurpose Room. The large indoor play space is a major improvement."



Three year olds play in the Swope Family Multipurpose Room



Step Into the Future with OCC!

Buy a personalized brick at the new OCC and support equal access to the opportunities, support, and resources that all children need to succeed. An OCC Brick is a wonderful gift for a loved one for the holidays; a way to honor a beloved friend or teacher; memorialize a loved one; celebrate a birthday or graduation; or add your name as one of OCC's special supporters. Order your engraved brick today at www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org.



*Painting of old OCC buildings: Gift from Melvin and Sondra Arteaga, OCC parents.
Artist: Aaron Gutierrez*



In Memoriam: Ann Conklin

Tributes from OCC parents, staff, and board. 1926-2020

Ann Conklin worked for OCC for more than 40 years. Most of us think of her as the receptionist and clerk, but she began as a kitchen assistant and then was an assistant teacher. Her longest held and most recent job was as our main office receptionist and clerk. But her most important role was "grandma" to everyone at the Center.

Some 25 years ago, a child called her "Annie-Pooh" because she was wearing a Winnie the Pooh sweatshirt. The nickname stuck.

The notice of her passing on the OCC Facebook page inspired more comments than any other post. Here are a few:

We loved and adored Annie Pooh! She was like a grandmother to Evan, Colin, and Peter, whose grandparents lived far away. She would give them hugs and little treasures that she had tucked away in her drawer. We are all so lucky to have known such a sweet and wonderful person. Our hearts go out to her family. – Stephanie Kloss

Ann was the first one in in the morning and her cheerfulness set the tone for the rest of the day. The Children's Center will not be the same without her. – Howard Milbert

Annie Pooh was so special. We shared an office for many years. She was so kind and she loved the children and the staff as if they were her own family! Annie loved OCC and that was what kept her going. She hated to miss a day of work. We sometimes had to make her take a vacation day. She was like a mom to me when I lost mine. She was always interested to hear what was going on in my life. I will always have a place in my heart for her. – Claudia Weger

I can still hear her voicemail messages about our board meetings. She always had a smile and she always inquired about my boys. – Natalie Gorlin



Annie Pooh was loved by all.

We Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

Moving into 32 State Street was exciting, as teachers and staff set up their new classrooms to welcome our children. But some were teary eyed as we said goodbye to 90-92 S. Highland Avenue, our home for several decades.

The buildings evoke memories of two giants in OCC history: **Joan Hovdesven** and **Terry Crandall**, long-time board members who gave time, talent and treasure to support the Center.



Joan Hovdesven 1935-1988

In the 1960s and 70s, Joan, an antiques dealer, managed the OCC thrift shop as a volunteer. The shop subsidized the Center's operating budget. Her daughter Susan remembers helping sort clothes and jewelry, and, Susan says, "Learning the importance of giving back to the community."

In 1995, Terry Crandall helped lead the capital campaign to purchase and renovate 92 South Highland Avenue. For her leadership and her personal generosity, OCC named the Infant and Toddler Center in her honor. Later, Terry's family established a scholarship in her name to subsidize child care for single parents in college or in a job training program.

Joan's daughter Susan also played a leadership role in that 1995 campaign. Susan reached out to family and friends and raised significant funds to honor Joan's memory. OCC named 90 South Highland Avenue for Joan Hovdesven.

OCC's new State Street home, and its rooms and play areas, bear the names of a new generation of leaders.



Terry Crandall, 1925-2010, with Claudia Weger



In Memoriam: Arthur J. Samberg – An Appreciation

When the late David Swope sold his mother's house, he told me that I had to meet the new owners because they were good people. Little did I know how good they were. Becky would eventually join our Board, and Art and Becky opened their home to us year after year for our annual Dine-A-Round benefit, and eventually they made our new state-of-the-art center possible.

Art loved life. He not only climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro but just a few years ago, he braved the jungle to visit gorillas in the wild. A difficult feat for someone half his age. He loved sports, and knew their importance for children. When my daughter's baseball tournament team played on a field in East Harlem, we were proud to recognize the Samberg name on the list of supporters.

Art was decisive and quick to act. When we needed a new home to replace our aging facilities, a beautiful site became available, which we could not afford. Art took one look at the site and made up his mind to purchase it and donate it to the Children's Center.

Art was a visionary. He wanted to help us create the center we always dreamed of having. He wanted to do this for Ossining, the town in which he lived, he wanted to do this for Becky, and



Samberg family at the Groundbreaking for 32 State Street on July 23rd, 2019

there was no time to waste. We were all hoping that Art would live to see the building completed. We are sad that this was not to be, but we are proud to be a part of his legacy.

– Howard Milbert

OCC Recognizes Young Philanthropist Meaghan Townsend: Have you ever heard of a Direttissima?

Meaghan Townsend, who attempted a White Mountains "Direttissima" to fundraise for OCC, won hearts as this year's OCC Young Philanthropist. The goal of this challenge was to hike the forty-eight, 4,000-footers of the White Mountains of New Hampshire in one continuous journey. Though Meaghan had to cut her journey short due to injury, she raised over \$9,000 for tuition assistance at OCC.

Meaghan said, "If you know me, you know how central a role education plays in my life. I ask that you join me in supporting the OCC because they are close to home, and they are changing kids' lives. Every child deserves access to affordable, high-quality childcare — a mission OCC promotes every day with their comprehensive student and family support. I volunteered there briefly growing up, and I'm so inspired by their team's competence and enthusiasm."



Meaghan raised \$9,000 for OCC Tuition Assistance!

Meaghan's fundraiser could not have come at a better time for OCC. "The economic strain of shutting down and re-opening under strict pandemic protocol has limited our ability to fund tuition assistance," said Executive Director Howard Milbert. "We are so grateful to Meaghan and to all our community partners who have stepped up for our children and families during these challenging times."



Helping Others Brings Happiness

Before Fernando Decampo became one of OCC's most hardworking and effective volunteers during the pandemic, he was dropping off his three young children at OCC on his way to work.

"I felt like OCC made my children part of their family," he says. "The staff were amazing and I knew the kids were in a safe place. My children learned so much and I never had to worry about anything," he continued. "All of my children attended from two years old through elementary school and OCC was there for them every step of the way."

As his children grew older, Fernando, like many OCC parents, came to rely on OCC to help navigate public school. Some OCC families are overcoming language barriers, and parents work long hours. Fernando appreciated that OCC helped the children to complete their homework when he came to pick them up at the end of a long day.

When the pandemic struck Fernando found himself out of work for two months. During this time he connected with Stacey Winnick and the two soon realized the extent of the struggles many OCC families were facing. Over the next several months Fernando put hundreds of miles on his car delivering groceries, often to ten families in one day.

When the heat became oppressive over the summer he drove to Albany to pick up an air conditioner for a very grateful family, "You never know what tomorrow will bring," says Fernando, "I believe what you get with one hand you should give with the other. Someone has always been there to help me and my family when we needed it most. It makes me so happy to be able to help others."



Fernando Decampo brings food to share.



Ossining Children's Center wishes you and your family a Happy Holiday! Thank you for your support in 2020!

Ossining Children's Center



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