

OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

March 2022 Newsletter



Meeting the Need for Infant Care in the Community



Our infants love "Grandma Angie," who has worked in our infant program for 23 years.

This past fall, OCC added two full infant classes to our program, increasing infant enrollment from eight to twenty-four children. High quality infant care is difficult for parents to find and, as is our tradition, OCC stepped up to meet the need.

Indeed, over the past ten years or so, OCC hadn't been able to accommodate many families looking for infant care. We had only one class with eight infant slots at 92 South Highland Avenue, and no way to expand there. At a strategic planning retreat in 2014, OCC's board and key staff identified the need for infant care as one of our most important challenges. That, and the need for a permanent home for our school-age enrichment program, inspired the decision to explore options for expanding.

Today, at our new home at 32 State Street, we have three fully-enrolled state-of-the-art infant classrooms. Beautiful classrooms notwithstanding,

the hallmark of our infant program is what it has always been – loving teacher-caregivers. Caregivers who play and interact joyfully with infants shape a child's ability to focus, self-regulate emotions, and bounce back from stress. Moreover, with our low staff turnover, the attachments that infants form with our caregivers are stable and secure.



Infants discover what "sticky" means by touching contact paper.



Our infant teachers created this homemade game for our babies to match colors and fit the balls in the circles. This teaches our infants about object permanence.



Zoe Fisch (standing), a sophomore at Mamaroneck High School, is volunteering one afternoon a week to teach coding to our fifth, sixth and seventh graders. Coding is how we communicate with computers; writing code is like creating a set of instructions. Code tells a computer what actions to take. With Zoe's guidance, our youngsters are using coding skills to design and build tall structures that will not fall down.

Access to Child Care: The Key to New York's Economic Recovery

By Howard Milbert, Executive Director

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the perilous state of child care into focus. Indeed, over the past two years, all of the major news media have put forward the need for a robust child care system to support a healthy economy. A twenty-first century economy requires a twenty-first century child care system.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation calls high quality early childhood education and care “The Bedrock of the American Economy.” Right now, the bedrock is more like eroding sand.

New York State has an opportunity this year to differentiate itself as the state for twenty-first century business. By making high quality child care available and affordable for all working families, New York can attract young professionals, entrepreneurs and other new business.

The U.S. Chamber website states, “Investments in high-quality early childhood care and education support our current workforce (working parents) and strengthen business today while building the workforce we’ll depend on tomorrow and for decades to come. Lack of access to quality and affordable child care is a significant barrier that limits the supply of talent.”

High quality child care is expensive. Child care teachers should be well educated and compensated appropriately. In every other industrialized nation, the government makes that investment.

There is a legislative proposal for the upcoming New York State budget year, to invest \$5 billion in high quality, accessible and affordable child care. This investment would bring New York on a par with the rest of the developed world.

In the twentieth century, New York led the nation in establishing its stellar state university system. New York can again lead the way – this time for a national effort to bring our child care system into the twenty-first century.

For more information on the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, and to help advocate with our elected officials, please contact Shawn Cribari in our Development Office, 914-941-0230, ext. 313, shawn@occ-ny.org.



Leave your mark on the future

There are ways to support the Ossining Children's Center for many years to come. You can begin today – with a legacy gift through your estate plan.



Of course, your family comes first. After you have taken care of your family in your estate plan, please consider a gift to the Ossining Children's Center. Contact us for more information on the different ways to plan your legacy for the future, for example:

- A bequest through your will
- Donate life insurance that your heirs no longer need
- A charitable remainder trust
- Designate OCC as the beneficiary of your IRAs

Of course, always consult with your own tax advisor when considering a significant charitable gift.

For more information, please contact Shawn Cribari at 914-941-0230, Extension 313.



Bubble Science: Our third and fourth grade after-school class did a science activity called Magic Bubbles. Why are they called Magic Bubbles? Because these bubbles are unpopable! What makes these bubbles sturdier and harder to pop? They are made with sugar in the soap solution. Water in ordinary bubbles will usually evaporate quickly, which makes the bubbles pop faster. The sugar slows this evaporation by making the skin of the bubbles thicker. So they don't pop as easily.



"A love of books, of holding a book, turning its pages, looking at its pictures, and living its fascinating stories goes hand-in-hand with a love of learning."

(Laura Bush)

Festive Fair Spreads Holiday Cheer

This past holiday season, the community came together to put on the "Festive Fair," a holiday benefit for the Ossining Children's Center. The Fair, the brainchild of Sue Taub, owner of Holbrook Cottage, marks more than 20 years of partnership with the specialty store. This year, the annual holiday festivities expanded, bringing in Wondrous Things and March Boutique. All three stores donated 10% of their sales over the two days to OCC.

The Fair also featured a raffle of lovely items donated by the stores. Students from the Mike Risko Music School serenaded

shoppers with holiday music and rock and roll classics. The highlight for the youngest fairgoers had to be a special visit with Santa. Briarcliff Manor Fire Department transported Santa directly from the North Pole bringing smiles and cheer. Local photographer Greg Perry donated his time and talent, sending every child home with a festive souvenir photo.

The Fair raised over \$5,000 for tuition assistance. A huge thank you to all of our wonderful community partners for bringing holiday joy to children at OCC



Baby Felix seems intrigued by Santa's firefighter's helmet.



Paul and Sarah Bloomquest with son Enzo stop at Holbrook Cottage for some holiday shopping.



A Team Effort: Pictured here are just four of the many volunteers who made the Festive Fair a success. Left to right are Sue Bicksler Taub, principal of Holbrook Cottage; Mike Risko of Mike Risko's Music Store; and OCC Board members Mark Levine and Debby Kittay.

Volunteers Make a Difference

Nowhere is our community's generosity and compassion more evident than in our volunteers. Over the last year a core team of inspiring volunteers has come together for children and families. Whether it be spreading cheer during the holidays, providing a warm winter coat on a snowy day, or sending a parent home with some much-needed groceries, our volunteers are always there. We are so grateful to all of them for continuing to give their time and energy to OCC. Below is a small sample of what they've been up to.



In the chaotic summer of 2020 Ben Jelineck, then a sophomore at Briarcliff High School, decided he wanted to do his part to make the world and his community just a little bit better. He connected with Stacey Winnick through Briarcliff Moms and hasn't looked back since. Ben has been picking up, unloading and dropping off donated groceries for OCC families weekly, sometimes more. If an item is needed any time anywhere, Ben is there for our children and families. We wish him the best of luck as he prepares to go off to college in September.



Volunteers collected and distributed more than 200 coats to OCC families and staff. Thanks to the volunteers' thoughtfulness, energy and effort, every child at OCC, as well as our staff and their children, were warm and cozy during the cold winter months. Pictured left to right: Nance Dickinson, Stacey Winnick, Elaina Hone, Amy Diaz, Merrie Satran.



Parents deserve holiday treats, too. Thanks to generous donations from Clutch Palmer & Purchase of Rye, NY, volunteers set up a beautiful boutique in OCC's lobby, featuring stylish new clothes and handcrafted jewelry. Pictured left to right: Sarah Pasquale, Elaina Hone, Cari Newton.



Nancy Beard, long-time friend to OCC, secured toys and goodies to create festive holiday goodie bags. Nancy and her team of volunteers assembled over 60 goodie bags, sending all of our school-age youngsters home with their own special holiday treat.

Community Partners Donate Goods and Services

A huge thank you to our community partners for supporting children and families at OCC. We are so lucky to be part of such a generous, compassionate community!

<i>Baked by Susan - Croton</i>	<i>Roots to Rise - Pleasantville</i>
<i>Big Apple Collectables</i>	<i>Sarang 7 Dry Cleaners - Briarcliff Manor</i>
<i>Bobo's of Chappaqua</i>	<i>Scattered Books - Chappaqua</i>
<i>Briarcliff Public Library</i>	<i>Shoptite - Croton-on-Hudson</i>
<i>Clutch Palmer & Purchase - Rye</i>	<i>Starbucks - Briarcliff and Ossining</i>
<i>Dirty Dog Farm - Germantown</i>	<i>Trader Joe's - Larchmont</i>
<i>Fable Farm - Yorktown</i>	<i>Wildly Cakes and Sweets - Dobbs Ferry</i>
<i>Moonbean Cafe - Briarcliff Manor</i>	

Michelle Grant – a living legacy.

Michelle Grant, a former board member and long-time supporter of OCC, left a generous bequest to us for a child care scholarship fund.

"We are so grateful to Michelle for this living legacy in her name," said Howard Milbert, Executive Director. "As an educator, she knew that what we do at OCC is so much more than the average day care."

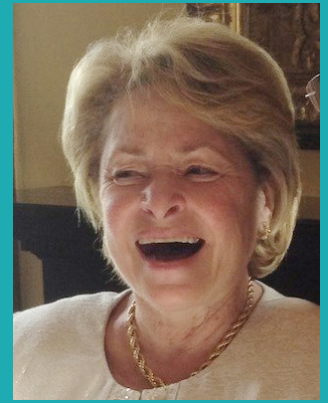
A former elementary school teacher and principal, Michelle was passionate about the value of early childhood education. She earned a bachelor's degree at Connecticut College in early education. She finished college in three years, instead of four, so she could start a family sooner with Alan, the love of her life and her husband of 56 years. She then went on to earn a master's degree at Sarah Lawrence College, attending night school while raising her children and working as a teacher.

"Sarah Lawrence's teacher education program is child-centered, which is consistent with our philosophy at OCC," Howard said. "Michelle really understood the underpinnings of our program."

In addition to her personal support of OCC, as a member of All Saints Episcopal Church in Briarcliff, Michelle advocated for her church's support of OCC. All Saints has also been a consistent long-term supporter of our programs.

An avid reader, Michelle was a life-long learner. She took great pleasure in words and ideas, reading and writing. She also had a passion for music, and played her baby grand piano often, sometimes singing along. She thrived on gardening, sailing, hiking, snowshoeing, tennis, swimming and being surrounded by nature. Above all, she loved her family.

Michelle's love of children and of education lives on in the OCC scholarship in her name.



Michelle Grant

OCC: A "Protective Factor" in Children's Lives

The 1998 Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, and several subsequent studies, have documented the relationship between adversity in childhood and health outcomes in adulthood. Toxic stress from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can cause changes in the immune system as well as in the structure of the brain and its function.

Further studies have shown, however, that "protective factors" can shield children from the effects of trauma. Six protective factors have been identified: nurturing and attachment to a caring adult, parental knowledge of child development, parental resilience, social connections, concrete support for parents, and social and emotional competence of children.

OCC has always provided protective factors in children's lives. Some 50 years ago, OCC recognized the impact that trauma can have on children, and hired a psychologist to work with staff and families to support children under stress. In the 1980s we partnered with Phelps Memorial Hospital on an experimental mental health support program for our staff and families.

Today, our child-centered program embraces the entire family when a child is enrolled at OCC. Our teachers are expert at identifying signs of stress in a child. And we have a social worker with expertise in child development on staff who works as a team with classroom staff to support the child and the entire family.

"Frankly, every child and family has experienced terrible stress during the pandemic," says OCC Assistant Director Claudia Weger. "Some of our families have lost loved ones, but everyone has been traumatized by quarantining and other isolation, online learning, distancing, mask-wearing, and fear of contracting COVID."

OCC staff recently participated in an ACEs training given by the Westchester Child Care Council. Amy Swan, a teaching assistant in one of our Pre-K classes commented, "As classroom assistants, we spend so much time with the children, we get to know them really well. We can recognize when a child's behavior is showing signs of stress; we alert the head teachers if we are concerned. Then we all work as a team to provide the support that the child and their family need."



We love dinosaurs: Young Three's learned about dinosaurs, discovering their names, the different kinds, what they ate, and how they lived such a long, long time ago.

Gym on Wheels comes to OCC

Development of fine and gross motor skills is an important task for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. OCC has enhanced our physical education program for our preschoolers by bringing Gym on Wheels to our program one day a week.

Our pre-k classes are enjoying developmentally appropriate experiences in gymnastics, aerobics, physical games, and other activities. CPR-certified instructors help our children take on new physical challenges, while they simultaneously develop self-confidence and teamwork.



JOIN US FOR A

Celebration of Community Leaders

TO BENEFIT THE OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Honoring
Richard Wishnie and Natalie Gorlin

Sunday, April 3rd at 5:30 pm
Abigail Kirsch at Tappan Hill, Tarrytown NY

For event and ticket information visit our website at
www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org

Ossining Children's Center



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