

# OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Fall 2022 Newsletter



## Howard Milbert: Our Hero!

On September 30, 2022, the Child Care Council of Westchester inducted our very own Howard Milbert into its Early Education Hall of Heroes. Howard has been Executive Director of the Ossining Children's Center for more than 35 years. The Hall of Heroes event, acknowledging 13 child care leaders this year, honors those who work hard to prepare Westchester's children for success in school and in life.

"I am honored to accept this award on behalf of all of our Ossining Children's Center staff," said Howard.

The Child Care Council of Westchester is a not-for-profit organization that champions the healthy development of children by promoting quality early care and education, and by providing an array of services for working parents and child care providers.



*Members of the OCC community attended the Child Care Council of Westchester event honoring Howard. Front row, L to R: Arnold Cribari; Howard and his family, Marilyn and Sarah Paisner. Back row, L to R: Shawn Cribari, OCC Director of Development; Betsy Block, OCC Board member; Tanya Vanegas, OCC Bookkeeper; Juan Pomales, OCC School-age Enrichment Program Director; Terry Becker, OCC Director of Children's Services; and Vanessa Pairis, OCC Board President.*

## Sliding into the New School Year



After a summer of OCC camp and vacations, friends and family, staff and children were thrilled to all be back together again.

**Our prekindergarten team** welcomed the newest members of our OCC family with smiles and enthusiasm. Children explored their classrooms, met new friends and tested out the slides on their beautiful OCC playground.

**Providing a welcoming and supportive environment for children**, from the babies to the big kids, ensures that children feel secure, confident and ready to learn.



**"Old" Friends Reunite:** Our day care closed for a few days at the end of the summer, allowing teachers to clean and update their classrooms. Those few days can seem like years, as demonstrated by old friends' Ezra and Briana's joy at reuniting.

# Christmas in September

Thanks to our incredibly dedicated team of volunteers, Christmas visited OCC a little earlier than usual. Volunteers surprised OCC staff with beautiful new blankets and bathrobes, racks of gently used designer clothes, and a delicious lunch courtesy of Susan Lawrence Catering in Chappaqua. Volunteers organized the festivities to express the immense gratitude felt throughout our OCC community for our staff's commitment to our children and families.



Toddler Teachers Ismenia and Sarah are delighted with their "Christmas" gifts.



Pictured L to R. Volunteers: Cari Newton, Nance Dickinson, Stacey Winnick, Claudia Vincent. OCC Staff: Claudia Weger, Hilary Clark



## 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.

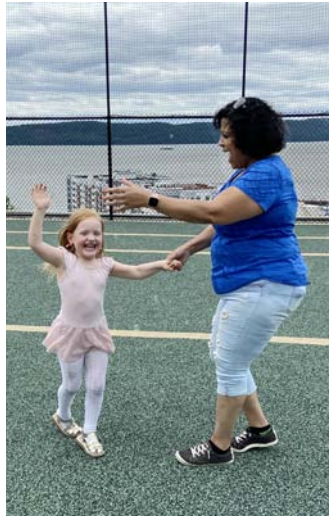


Going Green: Baby Rowan and our Infant Program Lead Teacher, Olivia Myles, are both sporting green sweat-shirts. And no one got a memo!

## Outdoor Fun and Flair

### Family Party on the Playground:

Parents and children alike had a blast at OCC's Party on the Playground. Attendees danced the afternoon away to the beats of DJ Shawn, learned the Salsa with OCC's infant caregiver and dance enthusiast Ilia Ponce-Roche, all while enjoying some pizza and admiring the beautiful views. After two years of limited in-person interaction, parents appreciated the opportunity to spend time together and get to know their children's friends. We are looking forward to more family events throughout the upcoming year.



*Party on the Playground*



**OCC's Own Little Free Library:** Thanks to Sara Agabob of Girl Scout Troop 1442 in Pleasantville, OCC now has its own "Little Free Library." For her Silver Award, with her dad Keith's help, Sara built and installed this charming mini-library for our families.



**Summer Fun in the Sun:** This summer our preschool campers were thrilled to return to Stillwater Lake for splashing, sandplay, and sunshine. Homeowners from the lakeside community not only welcomed OCC with open arms, they also contributed towards buses and lifeguards to keep our youngsters happy and safe. As you can see by the smiles, the children absolutely loved their days at the beach. A huge thank you to Nicole Riche and to all of the homeowners who donated. We look forward to many more beautiful summer days at Stillwater Lake next year.

Ossining Children's Center Presents

# Festive Fair

A Celebration of Peace and Kindness

November 18 & 19, 2022 • 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Shop Unique Holiday Gifts at  
March Boutique, Wondrous Things and Holbrook Cottage.  
A Percentage of Purchases Supports Ossining Children's Center.

Win a Beautiful Holiday Display Sample Holiday Treats,  
Take photos with Santa, Enjoy Holiday Music from the Mike Risko School

Start at 1143 Pleasantville Road, Briarcliff Manor

## Festive Benefit Luncheon

Friday, November 18th, 12 pm  
at Donato's Trattoria

Tickets: 914-941-0230 ext 313  
[www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org](http://www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org)

## Fall Festival 2022

Our annual Fall Festival is back after a two-year interruption due to COVID precautions. This beloved tradition at OCC features the Ossining High School (OHS) Marching Band.



*Everybody Dance Now!* The OHS Band inspires everyone to move to the music.



*Meet the Instruments:* Members of the OHS Band give our youngsters an introduction to their instruments.

*Celebrating a Long-Time Partnership:* OHS Band Director Rodrigo Vargas and OCC Assistant Director Claudia Weger can't remember how many years they have collaborated on the OCC Fall Festival.



*“And the yellow sunflower by the brook, in autumn beauty stood.” (William Cullen Bryant)*

Our “garden lady,” Andrea Sauro, brings passion and creativity to her work with our children. “We learned that sunflowers face the direction of the sun,” said one of our three-year-olds.

## Classroom Corner

Welcome to our new feature, *Classroom Corner*. Every issue, one of our extraordinary staff will highlight an engaging activity, giving readers a glimpse into the life of an OCC kid. This month features an excerpt from our kindergarten teacher Rebekah Shactel's weekly communication with parents, describing a long-time OCC kindergarten tradition.

This week we read two wonderful books for storytime, "All the Colors of Us," by Karen Katz, and "Shades of People" by Shelli Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. Both books talked about all the different colors that people can be.

One of the books made an interesting distinction; we are not really different colors, but different shades of the same color. Another one of the books said something that we loved, "Our skin is just our covering like wrapping paper. And, you can't tell what someone is like from the color of their skin." I love that.

After we read the books, the kids worked on a project that is a kindergarten tradition – their little people. Each child gets a plain person-shaped handout, and then we look through all of our skin-toned pencils to see which one matches each child.

There were some very interesting discussions while we were coloring. "Why don't the pencils match us exactly?" "Why are we different colors?"

Once we were all colored in, the kids got their little people dressed, and created their faces and hair. Between bow ties, pink hair, suspenders and sparkly noses, our little people are looking good! They will hang up in our classrooms, and remain there until our last day of school – our first project together, and the final piece of artwork sent home.



## How OCC Fosters Upward Mobility

An article in the August 1 issue of *The New York Times* cited a new study that confirms what has been intuitively obvious to the OCC community for years: "Growing up in a community connected across class lines improves kids' outcomes and gives them a better shot at rising out of poverty," said Raj Chetty, an economist at Harvard and one of the study's principal authors.

OCC has always held that a diverse group of children – diverse ethnically/racially, culturally and socio-economically – is our ideal classroom community. We believe that children from different backgrounds enrich one another's learning experiences. Hence, our tuition assistance program enables children on child care

scholarships to learn side by side with children from full paying families.

### Cross-Class Friendships Advance Upward Mobility

According to the study, there seem to be three means by which cross-class friendships can improve a person's chances of moving up the economic ladder:

- Raised ambitions: social familiarity can enrich one's sense of what is possible.
- Basic information: such as how to prepare to apply for college and financial aid.
- Networking: such as getting a recommendation for an internship or a summer job.

The friendships that children form at OCC endure through elementary and secondary school. Having been doing child care in Ossining for 127 years, we know that many OCC scholarship kids become first generation college graduates, business owners, professionals, and community leaders. Although we don't have the ability to track data scientifically, we have plenty of anecdotal evidence.

**An investment in tuition assistance at OCC is an investment in higher adult achievement levels for a child from a low-income household.**

## In Memoriam: Jean Robbins

Jean Robbins, a long-time friend of OCC, died peacefully on June 21, 2022 at age 98. Jean was an outstanding writer, editor, and producer of educational videos. A woman ahead of her time, her career in publishing spanned 50 years. Many women and girls have cited her influence as a role model and/or mentor.

OCC was the beneficiary of her writing and editing talent; she worked on OCC newsletters and marketing materials for many years. "We can thank Jean for the high quality of all of our written materials," said Shawn Cribari, OCC's Director of Development. "She set a high bar, and we have continued to maintain that standard."



Jean Robbins

## OCC Instills a Love of Science

**Brianna Cauthen**, a recent graduate of SUNY Stony Brook with a B.S. in Human Evolutionary Biology, traces her interest in science back to her days as an OCC preschooler.

“The hands-on discovery-play that we did gave me a love of learning,” says Brianna. “And there were always guest teachers coming in. I loved it when the Teatown teachers came with animals. Thanks to OCC, I’ve always loved science.”

**Brianna has vivid memories of her first day at OCC** as a shy three-year-old. She remembers how warm and welcoming the teachers were. She also remembers meeting her classmate, Natalie Pelaez, who became her best friend throughout elementary school.

“Natalie’s family spoke Spanish at home. I was in the Ossining Public Schools’ Dual Language Program starting at Pre-K; spending time with Natalie’s family improved my Spanish skills. So the diversity at OCC is another big asset,” says Brianna.

**Brianna’s passion for science** continued through elementary and middle school, and then blossomed with her participation in Ossining High School’s signature science research program. Brianna pursued research in neuroscience, and later, endocrinology, while in college under the tutelage of university professors. Her work culminated in awards including NAACP ACT-SO, Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, and the American Academy of Neuroscience awards for achievement in science.

“**Paying it Forward**” is a value Brianna has internalized, both from her family, and from her OCC experience. For her Girl Scout Gold Award, she created a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) project for OCC’s summer program. When she got to college at Stony Brook, Brianna continued her pursuit of science, as well as her interest in improving her Spanish skills. She graduated from Stony Brook in December of 2020 with a human evolutionary biology major and a Spanish minor.

Brianna found a job that enabled her to “pay it forward” to middle and high school students pursuing interests in STEM. Through the “STEP” program at Mercy College, Brianna serves as a counselor to students from Ossining, Peekskill, and Sleepy Hollow schools.



“**This is why I do what I do.**” Gerri DeSilva (right) was Brianna Cauthen’s first teacher when she was a three-year-old at OCC. When Brianna dropped in for a visit – and to update Gerri on her most recent achievements – Gerri got a little teary eyed. “This is why I do what I do,” she said.

**She is also working on her Master’s in Public Administration.** Her goal is to be an administrator in health care, where she can help people receive the care they need as efficiently and effectively as possible. Another way of paying it forward.

**The Cauthen family’s relationship with OCC actually began in 1993** when Brianna’s older sister, Renee, came to OCC at age three. Renee and Brianna’s mother, Mona, recalls, “I was a new mom when Renee started at OCC. The teachers were so supportive and I learned a lot from them.”

Renee continued at OCC through fourth grade. “As a working parent,” says Mona, “I needed care for Renee – not just after school – but on school holidays and vacations, as well. OCC’s school-age program was a God-send.”

Having had such a good experience at OCC with Renee, when Brianna came along, Mona enrolled Brianna at OCC. “Brianna was a very different child from Renee,” says Mona. “The teachers treated them both as individuals. There is no ‘one size fits all’ experience at OCC.”

## Ossining Children’s Center



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*Executive Director*

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