

# OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Spring 2023 Newsletter



## A donor's observations on a visit to OCC

### Editor's note:

Carolyn Spence is a retired elementary school educator. After her introductory tour of the Center, we received this lovely letter in the mail.

– Shawn Cribari

Dear Shawn,

Touring the Ossining Children's Center with you made my week. There's no better place to be than in the presence of happy children, teachers, staff, and volunteers purposefully learning together. On stops along my tour, I saw/heard:

- Each member of the staff, no matter how busy, stopping to smile and offer words of genuine welcome to a visitor
- Teachers carefully observing and listening to each little one
- Bright eyes and beautiful faces belonging to young children from diverse backgrounds... all living and growing together
- Children exploring/working independently
- Youngsters playing cooperatively
- Inviting classroom environments designed with the needs of a specific age group in mind
- A toddler, out for a walk with a supportive adult, waving to big and little friends along the way
- A teary-eyed baby being held and comforted by a staff member as they traveled along the hallway stopping to study bright and beautiful curiosities
- A teacher propelling four youngsters on a tire swing as the group described the habitat of a designated animal
- Children's artistic expressions lovingly displayed everywhere... a veritable feast for the eyes

Thank you, Shawn, for introducing me to the Ossining Children's Center. It is a very special place. It resonates with joyful purpose and the clear recognition that all children deserve our very best efforts each day, every day.

Please share my appreciation and deep respect with the Center's teachers, staff, and administration.

Sincerely,  
Carolyn Spence



OCC's building and playgrounds may be brand new, but some classic games never really get old.

## OCC's Big Dinosaur Unit



Discover more dinosaurs and smiles inside on page 6.

## Volunteers Brighten Up Days for OCC Kids

Stacey Winnick and her dream team of volunteers spread kindness and warmth this holiday season collecting hundreds of coats for OCC children and staff.



*Pictured left to right: Amy Diaz, Meri Satran, Claudia Vincent, Stacey Winnick, Sara Kamen, Loren Ivlor*

Our school-age children were excited to receive their holiday goodie bags lovingly prepared by volunteer Nancy Beard.



*Nancy Beard and Executive Director Howard Milbert*

The Easter Bunny visited OCC a little bit early this year. Girl Scout Troop 1426 from Mt Pleasant organized an Easter Egg hunt on the playground for our three year olds, followed up by reading a fun spring story in the classroom.



*Brynn Clark, Kylie Bernhard and Fiona Clark with some of our three year olds.*

Local band “Men on the Hill” visited OCC in April, delighting the children with old favorites like “Old McDonald had a Farm” and “Wheels on the Bus.” The children learned all about the instruments and the sounds that they make. We hope they will come back and play for us again soon.

Members of the band are Larry Kunz, Phil Battiston, Dennis Donohue, Dario Ebbri, John Gallagher, Don Simon and Brenda Behan.



*Don Simon shows our preschoolers how to play the accordion.*

A huge thank you to all of our volunteers for bringing smiles and joy to OCC.

## Advocacy Works!

By Howard Milbert, Executive Director

Thank you to all of our friends and supporters who made calls and sent emails to our elected officials during the New York State budget process.

**Your efforts made an impact.** The combination of personal visits to legislators and persistent call-ins to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and to Governor Hochul added \$200 million to the child care allocation, raising it from \$300 million to \$500 million. This funding is specifically earmarked to increase salaries for child care teachers and caregivers.

This is great news, as child care staff are woefully underpaid for the highly professional work that they do; and child care providers struggle to recruit and retain qualified staff.

**There is also great news for families** who are struggling to pay for child care. There is an additional \$3 million in the State budget to open up access to child care tuition assistance to thousands more families.

**Nevertheless, much more needs to be done to address the staffing crisis** and to open up child care assistance to more families. We will be reaching out to you in the fall to redouble our efforts to get fair wages for child care teachers and caregivers.

## OCC Hosts Westchester Community Foundation Walking Tour of Ossining

On April 21, a walking tour of Ossining for 35 donors and friends of the Westchester Community Foundation (WCF) culminated in a tour of the Ossining Children's Center.

**The Ossining walking tour** included presentations at the Caputo Community Center, the Open Door Family Medical Center, the Main Street site of a planned retail/residential development, Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, and finally, the Ossining Children's Center. School Superintendent Ray Sanchez and OCC Executive Director both gave presentations at OCC.

**"Grants don't exist in isolation,"** says Laura Rossi, the CEO of Westchester Community Foundation. To that end, Laura organized the Ossining walking tour to help the participants see philanthropy through a broader lens.

**Indeed, looking at Ossining is an object lesson in that broader view.** Because there are strong working partnerships among Ossining's nonprofit organizations, as well as with the school district and local government, the impact of a grant to one of the organizations can be augmented by the work of the cooperating agencies serving the community.

In their presentations, both Superintendent Sanchez and OCC's Howard Milbert emphasized the partnerships that strengthen the educational experience and support systems for children and families. Howard also took the opportunity to educate the audience on the economic rationale for government support for child care, and to ask them to join OCC in advocating for more State funding for child care.



*OCC Executive Director Howard Milbert (back to the camera) shows OCC's playgrounds to our guests from the Westchester Community Foundation.*

# Ossining Children's Center

## Farm to Table Experience

June 10 at 6:00 pm

Take in the charm at beautiful *Fable Farm*



*Fable Farm, owned by good friend Tom Deacon, provides the community with healthy, nutrient-rich food, free of pesticides. Through events, education, and programs, Fable has become a welcome destination for those near and far.*

### Keeping Us Sustainable

**Fable Farm**, founded by Tom Deacon six years ago, is dedicated to sustainable agriculture and education. Our children love visiting the farm and engaging in fun activities from feeding goats and collecting chicken eggs to learning about composting and the life cycle of bees.

**Our honorees**, our amazing community partners, and our dedicated supporters like you make our children feel valued and connected to the larger community.

**By investing in our children** we are building a brighter tomorrow for all of us.

**The mission of the Ossining Children's Center** is to provide high quality, educational childcare for children of working parents in a safe, supportive environment. We prepare our children for success in school with a basis for life-long learning.

We create a socio-economically diverse environment that reflects the greater community by ensuring that children from families without sufficient economic means can also attend OCC. In this setting, our children are provided with a strong foundation for life, and our community is likewise strengthened.

### Indulge in a Delicious Meal



Enjoy extraordinary food prepared by **celebrity chef Dante Giannini**. Dante has a passion for the farm-to-table style of cooking, always sourcing the freshest local ingredients.

## Join us in acknowledging our inspiring honorees



*Irwin and his wife Lori love spending time with their eight grandchildren.*



*Andrew surrounded by his prekindergarten buddies.*



*Marilyn and her husband, Dr. Richard Pinkser, relish grandson Chris's playful joy and laughter.*

**To donate, visit our website at [www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org](http://www.ossiningchildrenscenter.org)**

## Support Tuition Assistance at OCC



**Our prekindergarten children** love spending the day at Fable Farm. The children were given lots of hands-on opportunities to experience farm life! They fed the chickens and collected their eggs. They learned about goats and the life cycle of bees. As a special treat, they were given an apple from the farm as a yummy snack.

## Classroom Corner

This March our youngest children journeyed back in time and learned all about their favorite prehistoric beast. The month was filled with dinosaur activities from reading books about dinosaurs, to painting dinosaurs with different types of paint, to digging for dinosaurs in Kinetic sand. The youngsters even created their own namesake dinosaurs, including Stella's yellow Stellasarus or Rowan's purple Rowanasuaras with orange spikes on its back.

**The unit engaged all of the children's senses**, sparking their curiosity and fostering a love for science. Studies have shown that "intense interests," like the fascination young children often have in dinosaurs, are a big confidence booster for kids. Intense interests at a young age have proven beneficial for cognitive development, helping children to develop a better attention span and information-processing skills.



## Enjoying the Eagles at Eaglefest

A huge thank you to **Teatown Lake Reservation** for inviting our families to this year's Eaglefest at Croton Point Park. Festival goers helped celebrate the return of this magnificent bird, watching in awe as hawks spread their wings at the live bird-of-prey shows, and observing wild eagles with viewing scopes alongside Teatown's educators. We can't wait for next year!



## Horace Greeley Interns Get Hands-on Experience at OCC

**This year OCC became a student intern site for the Life School**, a program of Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua. Founded in 2001, the Life School provides opportunities for students to learn interdependently from experience. Interns Savanna Maysonea and Anderson Mejia spent a portion of their school day twice a week in OCC's pre kindergarten classrooms, engaging students in various activities.

Anderson could be found helping students learn how to write their numbers or playing games on the playground with them. Savannah often shared her love for art, assisting the children with their creative projects. During structured play, Savannah jumped right in, always encouraging kindness and cooperation.

**Savannah and Anderson were mentored under long-time OCC teacher and volunteer coordinator Gerri Desilva.** The program required students to submit a lesson plan for approval, teach the lesson to the children, and have their performance assessed by Gerri. Both interns passed with flying colors leaving behind fond memories and smiles.



*Savanna Maysonea*



*Anderson Mejia*

## Social-Emotional Learning Matters

The Ossining Children's Center has always focused on educating the whole child – the entire emotional, social, intellectual and physical being. To that end, we have had a social worker on staff since the 1960s.

**Terry Becker, OCC's current social worker**, has been on staff since 1989. She is an invaluable resource for teachers aiming to meet the individual needs of our children, particularly in our early childhood classes where each child's developmental journey is truly unique. She is also a fount of information and support for parents; she does counseling and therapy with families and with individual children.

### Thank you, NY-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital

One of Terry's myriad responsibilities is a social-emotional learning program, which has been partially underwritten by New York-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital.

**Terry meets with our Pre-K classes once a week** to engage the children in "Second Steps," an evidence-based psycho-social curriculum.



*Terry Becker, OCC's social worker, helps our preschoolers develop emotional intelligence.*

The program helps preschoolers to develop focus, manage their emotions, develop empathy, and get along with others. Terry utilizes puppets, songs, games, role play and physical activities that engage the children at their developmental level.

"We greatly appreciate NY-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital's commitment to the local community," said OCC Executive Director, Howard Milbert. "Their support for

'Second Steps' is invaluable for our little ones who are preparing to enter kindergarten next year."

### Helping Children with Developmental Delays or Special Needs

Terry helps teachers and parents discern when a child has substantial learning differences and/or developmental delays. Because there is a wide range of typical development patterns in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers it can be hard to distinguish when a child can benefit from Early Intervention therapies or preschool special education.

Terry walks parents through the process of obtaining a professional evaluation of their child's development, and then helps them get the appropriate therapeutic and educational services for their child.

**During the height of the pandemic**, when many of our parents lost their jobs or had their work hours cut, Terry connected families with sources for food and other necessities. Moreover, with many families under pandemic-induced stress during the pandemic, the need for Terry's counseling and therapy services increased significantly.

## A Delicious Way to Support OCC

A huge shout out to **Darryl and Cha Moy** for hosting two amazing Chinese Banquet fundraisers to benefit OCC's tuition assistance program. The banquets featured nine delectable courses, as guests celebrated 2023, the year of the rabbit. Also a BIG thank you to Aberdeens Restaurant in White Plains for donating the ducks for this delicious meal.



### "We Must Cultivate Our Garden" – Voltaire

On Earth Day, our children get a head start on the OCC garden by planting seeds in pots; they will transplant the seedlings into raised beds.



## You Don't Have to be a Millionaire to Make a Significant Impact on OCC's Work

The Ossining Children's Center has a remarkable donor community. Many of you have been supporting our mission to working families for 10, 15, 20, 25 years or more!

Your consistent support has provided stability to OCC's annual operating budget, and – consequently – stability for the families who rely on us as a consistent, nurturing presence in their children's lives.

### Consider an Endowed Gift

Donors with such an evident commitment to OCC's mission, may want to consider establishing an endowed fund to support OCC's work in perpetuity. Named endowed funds are available for gifts of \$10,000 or more.

Here are some ways of giving that allow you to make an endowed gift:

- **Minimum Annual Distribution from your Individual Retirement Account.** If you don't need the money from the required annual minimum distribution from your IRA account, consider transferring the money directly

to OCC. IRA funds transferred directly to OCC are not considered taxable income.

- **A Gift of Appreciated Stock.** Donating appreciated securities held for more than one year entitles you to a charitable income-tax deduction for the full market value of the shares on the date of your gift. Donors of appreciated securities avoid capital gains taxes and may use their income-tax deduction up to 30% of adjusted gross income with a five-year carryover.
- **A Bequest.** After taking care of your loved ones in your will, adding a simple charitable bequest is an easy way to contribute to the enduring impact of OCC's mission. A bequest is deductible for federal estate tax purposes and bequests are generally not subject to state and inheritance taxes.

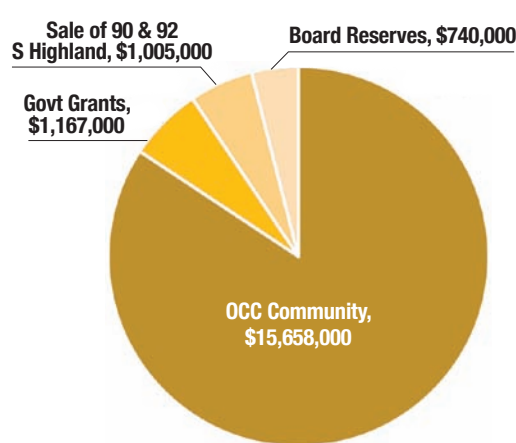
Of course, be sure to consult your own financial advisor to determine whether one of these options is right for you.

**For more information on the above options, please call Shawn Cribari, 914-941-0230, est. 313.**

## THANK YOU to our community... for support of our Capital Campaign.

Having made the final payment on our construction loan for the building of the Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building, we reviewed the total costs and sources of revenue for our Capital Campaign.

The figures speak for themselves: THANK YOU to our community for your tremendous generosity.



Source of Funds (Total raised: \$18.57 M)



Use of Funds (Total Cost: \$18.57M)

## Ossining Children's Center



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*Executive Director*

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### The Rebecca and Arthur Samberg Building