

# OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER

Winter 2023 Newsletter



## Farm to Table



*Our photographer captured a happy moment with Marilyn Wishnie and Darryl and Cha Moy.*

Photo by Gregory Perry



OCC's June 10th *Farm to Table Experience* was a huge success, raising over \$190,000 for tuition assistance at OCC. Farmer Tom Deacon and his crew at Fable Farm welcomed OCC with open arms. Guests enjoyed beautiful scenery and locally-sourced food as we honored our good friends: Irwin Kavy, Marilyn Pesetzky-Pinsker, and Andrew Ziegler. A huge thank you to everyone who made the evening possible. We are grateful to be part of such a community that cares so deeply for our children and families.

**More Photos Inside!**

## A Testimonial

*One of our families moved away from Ossining this summer. We received this lovely note from them shortly after they moved.*

To our beloved OCC Community:

We miss you all so much already. We will never - ever - forget the calm, comfort, safety, and joy that the organization, building, and – most importantly – people provided us and Enzo from when he started in May, 2021 at seven months old through this past July as an almost three-year-old. These ages in a child's life are full of so many changes and transitions.

OCC made every aspect of our life as working parents and a new family easier, including a pretty special unintended surprise; it made us feel so much more connected to the local community of Ossining. Being a parent of little ones can be quite lonely and isolating, and OCC made us feel like we belonged to something. It's hard to articulate the lift this gave, repeatedly, to our spirits.

We are so bummed that our unexpected move away from Ossining results in OCC no longer being in our day-to-day lives. Thank you for so warmly sharing the magic you make with us.

Much Love,  
The Koch Family  
Nate, Alison, Alum Enzo, and Baby Brother Ivan



*Claudia Tillis Berk, OCC Assistant Director, with Enzo Koch*

## Community Partners: Puppies Behind Bars

This past August, Puppies Behind Bars paid OCC a special visit, bringing four friendly canine friends. Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) trains incarcerated individuals to raise service dogs for wounded war veterans and first responders, facility dogs for police departments, and explosive-detection canines for law enforcement. As the puppies mature into well-loved, well-behaved dogs, their raisers learn what it means to contribute to society rather than take from it.

Our OCC visitors served as facility dogs at the New London Police Department, assisting with officer wellness and community policing. The dogs were marvelous ambassadors showing off their trained skills and calmly receiving pats from our staff and youngsters. The pups settled in for a fun story from their handlers and finished off a session in style with a doggie bow.



## From Something Good in the World

by Barbara Sarbin, Director of Educational Programs

In June and July, the OCC kindergarten was treated to a series of field trips and workshops with educator Barbara Sarbin from Something Good in the World, thanks to funding from the St. Faith's House Foundation and the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation. Learning about our water systems and the origins of our foods was the main focus. Rebekah's 5- and 6-year old students went on a hike along the Hunterbrook Preserve to observe the water cycle in action, and find out how clean our drinking water is by identifying different types of stream life. The program continued later in the week with a visit to the Croton Dam, to see how the stream leads to the reservoir and becomes drinking water, and finally to the Hudson River, to see where the freshwater joins with the salt water of Mahicanituk (The Native American name for the Hudson: "The River that Flows Both Ways").

The kindergarteners also visited Fable Farm to learn about animal products, like how to make butter from scratch, and the power of calcium in eggs. Follow-up workshops at OCC included singing and dancing about the water, plants and animals, making "worm cake" (compost) and worm bins, creating mini-greenhouses and eggshell planters to grow veggies, drinking iced mint tea and fruit smoothies, making rainbow fruit kebabs, and discovering the importance of honeybees, tasting honeycomb, and making beeswax candles. Every step of

the way, the children were having brand new, hands-on, all-sensory experiences, outdoors and indoors, with nature as our classroom and the earth as our teacher. Students said it was the "Barbara-est" summer they ever had, and wrote their own rainbow "Book of Barbara" to show what they had learned. Thank you to Claudia, Rebekah, and the kindergartners for this amazing adventure!



## Volunteers in Action



*Stacey Winnick and Nance Dickinson lay out donations for staff and families.*



*Staff look through tables stacked with clothes as they find the perfect fit.*

**A huge shout out to Stacey Winnick and her dream team of volunteers** for their friendship and generosity. Volunteers surprised OCC staff with a boutique filled with specialty donated items. To help children stay warm and cozy over the cold winter months, the dream team collected over 100 coats, enlisting the help of Thornwood Environmental Cleaners to clean every single one. We are so appreciative to have them as part our OCC family.

## Sandy Galef Joins the Ossining Children's Center Board

Sandy Galef, former New York State Assemblywoman 95th AD, has joined the governing board of the Ossining Children's Center. A long-time supporter and advocate for OCC, Sandy has been committed to public service both as a volunteer and as an elected official almost her entire life. Indeed, the Ossining Children's Center is one of many community organizations that have enjoyed her support over the years.

In 1992, Sandy was elected to the New York State Assembly. Her district covered the Towns of Cortlandt, Ossining, Kent, Philipstown, and the City of Peekskill. She was a leading advocate for legislative reform in Albany as well as being deeply involved in matters pertaining to education, tax reduction, government efficiency, environmental issues, consumer issues, health, voting rights, organ donation, the disability community, and senior citizens, among other causes. Her tenure was marked by her ability to work across the aisle.

Prior to becoming a member of the New York State Assembly, Sandy served as a Westchester County Legislator for thirteen years, eight of them as minority leader of the Board of Legislators.

Sandy began her career as a teacher after graduating from Purdue University and earning a Master's Degree in Education at the University of Virginia. Her passion for the education of children has informed much of her volunteer service and her work as a legislator. She lives in Ossining.



*Sandy Galef*

# Good-bye, Summer

Here's a look back at some of our favorite summer moments.

## Soaking in the Summer



A huge thank you to Nicole Richè and the Stillwater Lake Association for welcoming our preschoolers and kindergarteners to their beautiful lake. The children had a wonderful time perfecting their mermaid kicks and building sandcastles on the beach.

## Skyscape Spy Museum



Juan Pomales, our school-age program director and his staff took our school-age youngsters on an adventure via subway and Metro North to visit the new Skyscape Spy Museum in NYC. Children explored hidden worlds, broke codes, and ran surveillance, all while developing their personal spy role and profile.



## Exploring our Natural World



Our school-age youngsters grew lots of tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, and fresh herbs in their very own summer garden.



Our older toddlers welcomed Gary the snail to their classroom as their pet. The toddlers learned how to care for a living animal and really took a liking to him. They eventually released him to the wild so he can be with his snail friends.

## Party on the Playground



OCC said goodbye to summer with our Annual Summer Dance Party featuring DJ Cheeky Star. We love being able to come together as one big happy OCC family.

# Hello, School Year

After a week of deep cleaning and staff training, OCC welcomed back friends, new and old. Children and staff hit the ground running, diving into projects and covering their classroom walls with colorful artwork. A huge congratulations to all of our staff and children for a successful beginning to the school year.



## All About Me

Our prekindergarteners learned all about themselves and their new friends through a series of engaging hands-on activities. Children brought special items from home to share for an “All About Me” show and tell. They created “mini me’s,” using a variety of materials, including colorful felt for clothes, string for hair, and gems for some extra bling. The activities made the children feel more connected to one another and to their teachers, laying the groundwork for an amazing year.



## Mark Levine, Long-Time OCC Board Member, elected Honorary Lifetime Director

Mark Levine, a 35-year veteran of the Ossining Children’s Center’s Board of Directors, has been named an Honorary Life Member for his outstanding service to the organization.

“It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Mark on our Board. He has brought a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to our work, and his collaborative style is a model of OCC values,” says Howard Milbert, Executive Director.



*Mark Levine has always been a hands-on board member, pitching in wherever help is needed. He’s pictured here with fellow volunteers at Festive Fair 2021. L to R: Sue Bicksler Taub, principal, Holbrook Cottage; Mike Risko of Mike Risko’s Music Store; and OCC board members Mark Levine and Debby Kittay.*

**Mark served on OCC’s Board of Directors for more than 35 years.** He did two different stints as President, and worked on many different committees and projects over the years. He was long-time chair of the Personnel Committee, which sets personnel practices, establishes the criteria by which staff are hired, and keeps standards high.

Mark’s connection to the Ossining Children’s Center began when, as an early childhood educator himself, he looked for a preschool for his son and daughter. He sought high emotional, social, and academic qualities and found them at the Center. His children are now adults with children of their own, but Mark’s commitment to the Center remains, as do the qualities that attracted him to it all those years ago.

Mark worked for the New York City Public Schools for 40 years as a supervisor of special education, education evaluator, staff developer, teacher, and principal of an elementary school.

## Farm to Table



*Guests enjoyed the cocktail hour on a beautiful June evening.*



*Framed by the Barn! L to R: David and Meg Ables, Justine Fontinell and Tom Becker.*



*A Happy Trio! L to R: Osei Essed, Fran Jacobson, and Eileen Macholl.*

### *A special thank you to*

Captain Lawrence Brewing Company • Tom Deacon and the staff of Fable Farm • Greg Perry Photography  
Mike Risko School • Patti Rallis • Something Good in the World  
Serenity Springs Recovery Center and the Cassidy Family

OSSINING CHILDREN'S CENTER  
presents

# Festive Fair

Visit with Santa • Sample Holiday Treats  
Enter raffle to win fabulous prizes  
Shop unique gifts for friends  
and family

**Festive Luncheon**  
November 17 @ 12:00 pm  
Donato's Trattoria  
Briarcliff Manor, NY



All proceeds benefit Tuition Assistance at OCC

**Thank you to our Festive Partners**  
Briarcliff Toy Shop  
Donato's Trattoria  
Holbrook Cottage  
Images Art Gallery  
Janniello's Specialty Foods  
Manor Wines and Spirits

**To purchase tickets for the Festive Luncheon, Scan Here.**



## The Economics of Child Care

Frequently, when making the case for child care funding, we're met with the question "Why is child care so expensive?"

When one considers the staff to child ratios in a child care classroom and the number of contact hours that teachers and assistants have with the children, a more appropriate question would be "Why isn't child care more expensive?"

A thumbnail comparison of, say, a child care classroom (per NY State Regulations) and a public school classroom tells the story:

	Toddler Child Care (18 Mos - 3 yrs)	Public School Classroom
Staff to child ratio:	1:5	1:20
Maximum Group Size	12	25
Weekly contact hours:	55	25

Early childhood day care takes up to quadruple the number of staff, interacting with children more than double the hours that are required to staff a public school class.

Staff salaries comprise close to 85% of a child care center's budget. The other costs are administration and overhead, which are lean and mean in most child care centers. Most child care centers have just two sources of revenue: tuition, and government child care subsidies for low-income working families (and government subsidies fall far short of covering the full cost of care).

Child care staff are underpaid. And Centers are struggling to hire qualified staff because they can't offer competitive salaries. Given current funding sources for child care, the only way to increase staff salaries would be to increase tuition.

And working parents are already struggling to afford child care.

The Ossining Children's Center and some other not-for-profit centers enjoy philanthropic support from their communities. This support helps to fill the gap between the actual cost of care, and what is covered by tuition and government subsidies. Some centers, like OCC, are even able to offer privately-funded scholarships.

**But philanthropic support alone cannot solve the child care funding crisis.** Child care centers are caught between rising costs and the inability to hire qualified staff because salaries are unacceptably low. Without additional government funding, child care will continue to operate on a financial razor's edge; many parents will be forced to place their children in substandard – even unsafe – care. When families suffer, communities decline. And fragile communities make us a vulnerable nation.

### You Can Help

The New York State child care community is launching an advocacy campaign this fall. We'll be sending postcards to the governor, calling legislators' offices, and demonstrating at the state capitol. The child care crisis affects all of us: parents, employers, child care staff, public school educators, and the community at large. If meaningful change is going to happen, our elected officials need to hear all of our voices.

**To participate in our child care advocacy campaign,** please call or email Shawn Cribari in our Development Office at 914-941-0230, ext. 313; shawn@OssiningChildrensCenter.org.

## The Power of Partnership

If you're reading this newsletter, chances are – you believe in the work of the Ossining Children's Center. Whether you are a volunteer, a donor, a community leader, or the parent of a child enrolled at OCC, you know that OCC does the most important work in the world: the care and education of children.

To accomplish our work, the Children's Center relies on a generous community of donors, who support tuition assistance and programs.

**We consider our donors to be partners in our work.** Without them, we wouldn't be here.

**The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of our child care system,** forcing 16,000 child care providers across the country to shut their doors permanently.

Although OCC survived the pandemic, budgeting year-to-year still leaves us vulnerable to the caprices of the economy, government funding, and public health emergencies. To ensure that the Ossining Children's Center can meet whatever challenges lie ahead, we aim to build a stronger financial foundation to secure the future for our children and families.

We are looking to you – our volunteers, our donors, and the larger community – to join us in equipping future generations of children for success, and in seeing the community through any challenges that come our way.

**With such an evident interest in OCC's work, you may consider partnering us in one of these ways:**

- **By making a multi-year pledge of support for tuition assistance and programs.** Having a core group of donors that we know we can count on will give our budget a stable foundation from which we can build new sources of support. By making a three-year pledge, for example, you can increase your impact on OCC's effectiveness in the near- and medium-term.
- **By donating the 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.



- **By making 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.
- **By including OCC in your will or estate plan.** After taking care of your loved ones in your will or estate plan, 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.

**Child care is a two-generation workforce issue because – it is essential to supporting the workforce of today – and it is vital to developing our workforce of tomorrow.**

*U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation*

## Ossining Children's Center



Howard Milbert,  
*Executive Director*

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