

CAAS NEWS

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People achieving more
by working together

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CAAS' youth leaders want to keep immigrant workers safe at work. The Jovenes Latinos, four teenage Latino residents of Somerville, are educating their community about health hazards and safety in the workplace.

Many immigrants work for little pay at dangerous jobs. These jobs include house cleaning, house painting, and beauty salons, which all use toxic chemicals. Immigrants also work in construction and perform labor with heavy machinery. Workers who do these jobs often lack knowledge of the environmental hazards associated with such work. The workers frequently develop illness and suffer injury. They need to know how to prevent these problems and where to go for help if the problems occur.

To help inform immigrant workers, Jovenes' program coordinator Ismael Vasquez teamed up with Tufts' School of Engineering Professor David M. Gute. Together, they put a four-year grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to good use in Somerville. This collaboration between Tufts and



Young people serve as effective agents of change

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CAAS Head Start Welcomes "Raising A Reader Program"

Eight lucky CAAS Head Start classrooms will participate in the Raising A Reader Program beginning Spring 2007. Raising A Reader is a take-home book bag program that lets students discover the joys of books.

The centerpiece of Raising a Reader is a ready-to-use Classroom Kit, a bright red bag filled with beautiful picture books that each child can borrow in turn. Over 200 literary-



acclaimed books featuring appealing artwork, age-appropriate language, and multicultural themes are part of this program. The child drives the "read-aloud" process by falling in love with the red book bag and begging his or her parents to share the new books inside each week. Parents are trained to "read the

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Fathers Continue to Count at CAAS

a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton

In its early years, the national Head Start Program paid very little attention to the importance of fathers. CAAS Head Start was an exception. We first began a fatherhood group called FACE-IT (for "Fathers Are Critical Educators Impacting Tomorrow") over ten years ago. Over the past few years, the popular view has changed dramatically. It is now accepted that fathers play a crucial role in the education of their children. CAAS Head Start has continued to be a leader in the field.

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the major funding source for CAAS Head Start, recognized FACE-IT as very effective since it began. FACE-IT has helped fathers get more involved in raising their children. It has improved the communication between fathers and mothers of Head Start students. Members of FACE-IT have taken classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages over the past three years. They want to be able to help their children with their homework, as well as to use

"CAAS began its fatherhood group over ten years ago."

English in obtaining better jobs.

In 2000, Head Start Director Donna Cabral took the lead in organizing a local conference on fatherhood at the Somerville Holiday Inn. It was extremely well attended and well received. So, the next year and every year since, we have organized a large regional conference. The New England Fathering Conference draws attendance from the six New England states, New York, and other regions. The conference now attracts national figures like Pulitzer Prize finalist Jason DeParle, author of *American Dream*, as keynote speakers and workshop leaders.

As always, CAAS does not work alone. In organizing these conferences, we enjoyed the very active participation of ACF, the Fathering Project of the Medical Foundation of Boston, the Children's Trust Fund of Massachusetts, Family Services of Greater Boston, Catholic Charities, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, and many others.

This year, the 8th Annual New England Fathering Conference will be held on March 21st and 22nd, at the Sheraton Colonial Center in Wakefield. For further information, contact Donna Cabral at 617-623-7370 x111, or visit our web site at www.caasomerville.org.

Peace!

New Technology Saves Time, Builds Teamwork

by Margarita Ashton

How do Head Start teachers keep track of children's progress? How can teachers come up with lesson plans that hit the moving target of each child's development? And how can teachers keep working parents informed about their children's progress in the classroom? CAAS Head Start has a new tool for doing all of this. It is an online curriculum system called Creative Curriculum. Teacher Hortense Pereira speaks for many when she says, "[The new system] makes our work easier and faster."

The "raw material" teachers enter into the system are the observations they make daily about children. Creative Curriculum helps teachers sort these observations into four areas: socio-emotional, cognitive, language and physical. In these four areas, we are looking to see the child achieve objectives including "Child understands cause and effect," "follows two-step directions,"



and "uses five-word sentences." Teachers' written observations are both enhanced and supported by an *electronic portfolio* for each child that includes photographs and scanned samples of the child's work.

The second tool Creative Curriculum provides is the *seasonal checklist*. These checklists are general assessments of each child's progress toward each of fifty-five objectives. Teachers can do these assessments easily by clicking the correct boxes. Teacher Eidy Williams remembers that before CAAS adopted the computerized system, she had to make dots with

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CAAS Youth Bring Safety to Workplace

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Roberto Barillas, Jack Hamilton, Ismael Vasquez, Jennifer Escobar, Emelyn Guevara and Dena Greenblum, Tufts Intern

CAAS is based on findings that young people serve as effective agents of change within immigrant communities.

For the past two years, the youth in Jovenes Latinos have developed a survey to measure the depth and extent of hazards encountered by immigrant workers in Somerville. They also received in-depth training about how to administer the survey, and they learned about specific occupational health hazards.

Workers need to know how to prevent problems and where to go for help.



extent of hazards encountered by immigrant workers in Somerville. They also received in-depth training about how to administer the survey, and they learned about specific occupational health hazards.

Although they have only completed the investigation stage of the study, and the education stage will follow

the analysis of the survey results, members of Jovenes Latinos have already learned a lot about themselves and their community. Estefani Tejada, a high school sophomore, said the interviewing training she received really helped her communication skills. “You don’t have to push people,” she said.

The number of immigrants who were unable to talk about health risk concerns with their employers surprised Roberto Barillas, an eighth grader and another member of Jovenes Latinos. Says Roberto, “A lot more people than I expected are afraid of talking out to their boss.”

Program coordinator Ismael Vasquez says the youth have become increasingly professional: coming to meetings and training sessions on time, asking intelligent questions, overcoming shyness, learning how to run and facilitate meetings. He says, “Our goal is to move kids up, no matter what kind of programs. To create a network and good partnerships, that is our goal.”

To help them set their goals high, last fall, Jovenes Latinos took a trip to Tufts to get a taste of the college atmosphere. (See *CAAS News* 2:1, September 2006). Estefani has also extracted a promise from Professor Gute to write her college recommendation letters.

Personal rewards seem to be the last thing on the Jovenes Latinos’ minds, however. Helping others comes first. Of her work with Somerville immigrant workers, Estefani says, “It’s amazing. You are someone they can go to, and you can point them in the right direction.”

CAAS Head Start Welcomes “Raising A Reader Program”

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pictures” and draw upon storytelling traditions as ancient as mankind.

Included in the kit is the *Read Aloud: Share A Book With Me* parent video. Raising A Reader produced this video for parents to watch with their children. As book characters and toddlers jump from whimsical clouds, this playful video shows parents how to enjoy a picture book with a child—even when they face significant language barriers or cannot read at all.

Research shows that regular parent-child book time physically wires the brain so a child is better prepared to learn throughout school, and throughout life. Raising A Reader at CAAS Head Start supplies the tools and information that engage and empower parents in their most important role: as their child’s first teacher.

Launched in Chelsea in March 2006, Raising A Reader is the second initiative that the GreenLight Fund is helping to establish in the Boston area. The GreenLight Fund supports organizations that address urban issues affecting low-income families and children. CAAS is proud to cooperate with the GreenLight Fund to bring Raising A Reader to our Head Start families.



Children at CAAS Head Start enjoying their reading time.

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*People Achieving More
By Working Together*

New Technology Creative Curriculum

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colored markers in narrow grids that taxed her vision. "There was no room for mistakes. At the end of the day, I would see dots.... The new system is much easier on the eyes as well as on the nerves. Mistakes can be easily 'unclicked.'"

For teachers, taking notes, organizing and reorganizing those notes and filling out forms have been a big part of our day. Our mantra at CAAS Head Start is, "If it is not documented, it has not happened." Using this new tool, teachers have more time to come up with creative lessons for their classrooms. They can also keep in touch more easily with parents and get them involved in their children's learning.

Computer knowledge is now spreading like wildfire at Head Start. Teachers cannot wait to share each new discovery with one another. Teacher Kathy Rock raves

about the new computer system. "It helps you organize thoughts and what you want to write about each child." According to Teacher Aleyda Pizzuto, "The typed reports look more professional. Also, through the new computer system, we are able to generate reports automatically translated into Spanish for non-English speaking families. I only wish these were available in Portuguese as well." Teaching and learning together, in a tolerant cooperative atmosphere, is bringing added excitement to our jobs and has fortified our team spirit.

Looking ahead we are hoping for more parental education (and access!) to computers for a more direct and comprehensive communication that includes family feedback and questions. More computers are also part of our wish list. Presently, we share three computers on site at the Allen Street building among 22 staff!

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