

Working to end poverty
where we live

September 2009

Visualize a Great Child Care Program!

by Margarita Ashton

CAAS Head Start families and staff have been hard at work all year towards becoming a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited program. The NAEYC accreditation process is designed to document the high quality of child care in our program and help us raise it further. Photos are invaluable pieces of evidence documenting over 200 of NAEYC's criteria. I would like to share a few of the photos with you.

"Children are provided varied opportunities and materials to learn key content and principles of science such as the difference between living and nonliving things and life cycles of various organisms."



We observed how baby caterpillars metamorphosed into adult butterflies.



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“The Stimulus is Helping Put the Brakes on the Recession”

*President Barack Obama
July 31, 2009*

a message from
Executive Director
Kimberly Smith - Cofield



Somerville is fortunate to have a large amount of economic stimulus funds come to the community, with a plan to positively impact the lives of many individuals and families. CAAS has been excited to be a part of that plan right from the start, seeking critical and meaningful ways to work with low-income men and women around economic stability for the future. Housing crises, legal issues, medical concerns, child care, unemployment, and other specialized case management challenges become major distractions in the lives of our families. We address day-to-day issues so families can focus on their long-term self-sufficiency goals.

In the first six months since the economy crashed, CAAS has made an impact in the community.

While the foreclosure rate is up 18% since January 2008 and evictions continue to rise nationally, **CAAS kept 120 tenants from being evicted from their homes** right here in Somerville, protecting them from homelessness before it even started.

The sad state of affairs with the hungry in our country reveals that hunger and food insecurity rose for the third year in a row (according to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture). But **CAAS welcomed 130 Somerville residents to apply for food stamps or fuel assistance** right here at the CAAS office in Union Square.

Given the joblessness that continues to plague most

of our cities today, **CAAS has provided free child care and early education for 364 children** of low-income families in Somerville and Cambridge, allowing their parents to work and support their families. In fact, 23 parents worked as substitute teachers for CAAS Head Start.

So many people need a hand or a break more than they may have in years past. **CAAS directed more than 200 families to obtain free tax assistance.** Each family ended up saving almost a month's rent in the process.

When there has seemed like there's no hope for so many these days, **CAAS has made a way for 60 Somerville High School students and parents** by bringing in expert financial aid officers to assist them in **applying for college** scholarships and building hope for a better future.

We have so much more work to be done. The demand is high and CAAS takes seriously the responsibility of being the only anti-poverty organization in the area with the charge of addressing these ills affecting vast numbers of families in our community. The stimulus funds will support CAAS' ability to continue to help the Somerville community with these issues during these most challenging times.

“We have so much work to be done.”

Thank you for your support of CAAS! ♦

Clarendon Hill Tenants Elect Leaders

This summer, CAAS worked with the Clarendon Hill Tenant Association (CHTA) and the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) to hold the first election for the CHTA’s five member Executive Board in years. Twelve candidates ran for the Board, making this the most competitive election in recent memory.



Voter Joe Picket speaks with candidates Cliff Pitts and Jocelyn Scott before casting his ballot.

Representatives from the City of Somerville Election Commission and the League of Women Voters ensured a fair election. Tenants Jose Rivera, Jocelyn Scott, Abdul Reyes, Cindy Nixon, and Linda Kebreau were elected to the board.

The Tenant Association is an organization of residents who want to improve their community. They plan to work with the SHA to make repairs in the units, create a community garden, and offer more educational opportunities for youth and adults. ♦



A Home to Heal In

The doctor said Sandra (not her real name) had a “highly aggressive” tumor on the right side of her brain. She needed chemotherapy every month, and the success of the treatment would depend greatly on her living conditions. But Sandra was living on a couch, in a small apartment she shared with her pregnant sister, her brother-in-law, and her teenage niece.

“An apartment of her own could be a matter of life or death.”

CAAS. Advocate Gleisson Araujo appealed to the Somerville Housing Authority. He obtained letters from Sandra’s doctors and nurse proving the lack of suitable housing would be a substantial impediment to treatment or recovery. After reviewing the documentation and arguments submitted, the Executive Director of the Housing Authority overturned the previous decisions and put her on the top of the list. Sandra is now waiting to move into her new apartment.

For Sandra, getting an apartment of her own could be a matter of life or death. After she applied for public housing and was denied—twice— she turned to

Your support allows CAAS to keep on helping Sandra, and people like her, to find and keep the homes they need. **Thank you!** ♦

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“Children are provided varied opportunities and materials to build their understanding of diversity in... non-stereotypical ways.”



Two girls are pretending to be firefighters.



A boy and a girl are changing a diaper tog.

"Children are provided opportunities and materials to explore social roles in the family and workplace through play." ♦

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