

CAAS NEWS

Volume 1 Issue 3

People achieving more
by working together

March 2006

THE WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD



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Renew our Work**

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CAAS Head Start Celebrates "The Week of the Young Child"

April 1st through April 8th is "The Week of the Young Child," a national celebration and recognition of the importance of children, families and the work that is done in the community to support them.

CAAS Head Start, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Advisory Council, is planning a variety of events to join in this celebratory week.

On Saturday, April 1st, there will be an Early Childhood Festival held at the Capuano Early Childhood Center at 150 Glen Street, Somerville, from 10:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M. The Festival's main objective is to provide information about preschools to the families in Somerville. This year the focus of the Festival will be on family literacy.



Happy students pose with teacher Norma Melendez

Look for the CAAS Head Start table where there will be fun activities for children and families. On Friday, April 7th, CAAS Head Start will hold an Informational Open House at our newest site located at 29 Allen St., Somerville. We will be sponsoring this fun-filled event from 8:00A.M. until 7:00 P.M. Families will be able to **stop by any time during the day** that meets their schedules.

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YOUNG CHILDREN: PRIORITY ONE

Somerville Kiwanis Helps CAAS Head Start Children Celebrate the Joy of Reading



Head Start families read books donated by Kiwanis.

The Kiwanis Club's continuing service emphasis is called "Young Children: Priority One." This service focuses on the special needs of all children from prenatal development to age five.

The Somerville Club and CAAS Head Start are committed to helping children celebrate the joy of reading. Kiwanis supports projects like literacy development and "Reading is Fundamental."

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Celebrate, Reflect and Renew our Work

a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton

This year CAAS is celebrating its 25th anniversary. We were founded in 1981 by then-Mayor Brune, working with a small group of Somerville residents who wanted an anti-poverty agency just for Somerville (and not to be part of a Cambridge/Somerville agency). Some of the founders are still involved in Somerville and with CAAS. You will hear more about the celebration in future mailings.

For us, this is a time of celebration but also of reflection. We will be celebrating all the good work we have done in the past twenty-five years. With a lot of help from our friends in the community, we have accomplished much and helped many people to move out of poverty.

But unfortunately, poverty and its constant partners (homelessness, poor health care, poor nutrition and under-education, to name a few) are still very much

“Indexing Social Security... improved the quality of life of the elderly. We must do the same for the working poor.”

alive in America today. It seems that for all the people we have helped, there are that many more in need of our help.

It is clear, on reflection, that we need to do more to address the systematic and societal causes of poverty. We must redouble our efforts against the forces that keep people down and prevent our society from being a just and healthy one.

Specifically, in the coming months we will be working with our legislators and partner agencies to push for a real improvement in health coverage. The growing number of people in Massachusetts without adequate health insurance is nothing short of scandalous. There are definitely solutions to this problem. We need to find them and push to implement them.

The second very important issue is the minimum wage. We will be working with others not only to increase the terribly low minimum wage, but also to index the minimum wage to inflation or some cost-of-living formula. In the seventies, indexing Social Security very significantly improved the quality of life of the elderly. We must do the same for the working poor.

Please join us in these efforts. Peace.

Foster Grandparents: A Child’s New Friends

By Margarita Ashton

Monica de Leon has been a foster grandparent for CAAS for three years, two years at the Western site and one at the new Allen Street building. She came from Cuba thirty-seven years ago, where she was an elementary school teacher. After raising her son, Monica wanted to go back to being with children. She missed that special type of communication in which her one simple gesture or word could profoundly influence a child. She missed children’s authenticity and willingness to form friendships with trustworthy adults.

Foster grandparents are an integral part of CAAS Head Start classrooms. Requirements to become a foster grandparent and maintain that position are strict. First, a physical examination, then a rigorous pre-service training lasting forty hours, sponsored by Catholic Charities of Greater Boston. Training includes role playing and learning specific skills as well as learning or (in Monica’s case) relearning the way preschoolers think. There is a



Monica de Leon helps a Head Start child with a puzzle.

Foster Grandparents

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three-month probationary period, followed by monthly in-service training meetings, as well as an annual evaluation. Foster grandparents learn and adhere to a code of ethics that stresses confidentiality.

During my February vacation, I took a few minutes to chat with Monica.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU OFFERED THE PROGRAM?

I love doing arts and crafts at home, so I look forward to sitting at the art table with the children and giving them that one-on-one attention they need.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT CHILDREN?

Their willingness to chat with me. They are thirsty for adult ears. Children are very open: they come to me eager to tell me about their pet, their favorite TV show, or their new sibling. Their enthusiasm is contagious.

WHAT DO YOU FIND THE HARDEST?

Listening to children's more sensitive information. I make sure to share it only with the teacher, and do so promptly.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ROLE OR TASK?

To give teachers support, so they can do their work. Also, to provide an extra pair of eyes. I know from personal experience how valuable this is in a classroom of nineteen children.

TELL ME ONE IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED IN YOUR ORIENTATION SESSION.

To respect children's need for psychological and physical space. To let them first approach me and not the other way round, to remain non-intrusive.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FUNNY STORIES TO TELL?

One day, when Maria Bentubo, the classroom's family advocate, came into the classroom [for her weekly meeting], this little girl ran to her and said, "Maria, I would like you to meet Monica. She is my new friend!"

Young Children: Priority One

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The club purchases and distributes books and the members read books to preschoolers attending schools in Somerville, including CAAS Head Start programs at North Street, Mystic Housing and Allen Street.



Whether it's recent literary heroes or age-old book stars such as Dr. Seuss, there's no denying the positive influence books have on children's lives.

"By providing an opportunity for children to come together and explore reading in a fun and interactive environment, we will be inspiring children to read and ultimately to discover the magic of reading", said one Kiwanis Club member.



"after raising her son, Monica wanted to go back to being with children ..."

TAX TIME COULD PAY !!

Did you work in 2005? If so, you may be eligible through the Earned Income Credit (or the Child Tax Credit) to get money back from the IRS! CAAS collaborates with National Student Partnerships (NSP) to offer FREE tax filing assistance.

Call 617-623-6111 ext. 234 to schedule an appointment.

Translation services are available upon request.



Week of the Young Child

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Highlights of this event will include:

- ♥ Enrollment ~ children may be registered for our program at this time
- ♥ Special family activities
- ♥ A tour of our new school

For further information please contact the Head Start office at 617-623-7370.

Join us as we celebrate
25 YEARS
of Community Service

**Head Start
Advocacy
Youth Programs**

GALA CELEBRATION

Holiday Inn, Somerville, MA

Keynote Speaker: Rep. Michael Capuano

Friday, May 12, 2006, 7:00 p.m.

Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.

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**For more information
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*People Achieving More
25 years
by Working Together*

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