

OPENING DOORS

TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTHCARE NEEDS

Friends and Champions at the 4th Annual NAC Kids Olympics



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A Strong New Voice for Parents

The Fund for Social Change's Parent Advocate Initiative has awarded a grant to NAC to support a Parent Advocate. Parent Advocates in the child welfare system are parents whose children have been in foster care, have successfully reunified with them, and who subsequently choose to be trained to work within the child welfare system. The parent advocate movement reflects a rising consciousness that parents are leading experts on the needs of their own families and communities. Parent Advocates understand the trauma of family separation and can connect to their peers in a uniquely authentic manner. The parent advocate is also living proof that a family can be reunited. (continued on page 2)

Adoption News

Congratulations to these NAC children and parents on their recent adoptions!

Jack was adopted by Angie Vives and Richard Maldonado on May 12, 2009.

Tatianna and Brianna were adopted by Angie Febres on May 14, 2009.

Jonathan was adopted by Dixia and Jose Munoz on June 16, 2009.

Fred was adopted by Valisa and Chris Henry on June 23, 2009.

Barbara, Brycen and Justin were adopted by Helen Flock on June 24, 2009.

Ebony was adopted by Beverly and Ira Gerald on June 30, 2009.

If you know a family who can give a loving foster/adoptive home to a medically fragile child, please encourage them to go to:

www.nac-inc.org/recruitment

or call:

NAC's Homefinding Department
212.696.1550 or 646.352.9047



**New Alternatives
for Children, Inc.**

37 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10010
T 212.696.1550
F 212.696.1602

15 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10010
T 212.994.7940
F 212.994.3003

www.nac-inc.org



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Arlene Goldsmith
is assisted by a NAC
athlete at the Olympic
Ceremonies.

2009

Dear Friends,

Increasing numbers of New Yorkers are experiencing hunger as a result of the current fiscal crisis, including NAC families and children, most of whom live in poverty. Our families typically live in neighborhoods lacking large supermarkets with fresh produce. Our clients rely on small markets with high prices. NAC has met this challenge with our Food Pantry, which parents can access daily, and with fresh food fairs where families receive eggs, milk, frozen foods, bread, fresh produce, and staples. Every Monday morning a shipment of delicious donated food arrives from Trader Joe's. Our thanks to Trader Joe's, the Food Bank of New York, and United Way. Thanks also to Guard Insurance Group for the gift from their annual Christmas in July office food drive, helping our clients feed their families in these difficult times.

I am thrilled to report that NAC supported 80 children in attending day and sleepaway camp. Letters from campers describe happy camping experiences. I want to thank NAC friends who supported this critical endeavor. We are now helping NAC children get ready for school, making sure they have everything they need for classroom success.

NAC staff spent the summer planning our future growth. We responded to requests for proposals from the NYC Administration for Children's Services for contract renewals that will fund this agency for the next nine years. We applied to expand both foster care and preventive services so that we can accommodate the growing number of our City's families who need our help.

As you plan your fall schedule, be sure to include the upcoming NAC Benefit Event on October 20 (see page 4). We are thrilled that Leo Hindery, Jr., Managing Partner at InterMedia Partners, will be our Honoree. State Senator Tom Duane and State Assemblyman Micah Kellner will both receive NAC's Outstanding Public Service Award. I look forward to seeing you on October 20.

Arlene Goldsmith, LCSW, Ph.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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A Strong New Voice for Parents

Many of our parents stay connected to NAC, even as their reunited families continue to thrive, giving us a pool of highly qualified candidates for this exciting position.

We are thrilled that Felicia Alleyne Davis, a graduate of NAC's foster care program and proud mother of Tyrese, has agreed to take on this position. With training supplied by the Fund for Social Change and NAC, Felicia will come to incorporate her own experiences into practice and give voice to other parents' needs.

The presence of a Parent Advocate at NAC will enhance our successful model of concurrent permanency planning. We are very excited about this position's potential for giving a stronger voice to our parents who are working to bring their children back into their homes. We are deeply grateful to the Fund for Social Change for the opportunity to enhance NAC's services with the addition of a Parent Advocate.



This past summer was notable for the number of rainy days. However, our recreation staff came up with ways to keep the vacation days exciting. There were trips to the **Children's Museum of Manhattan**, the newly renovated **Museum of the City of New York**, the **New York Transit Museum**, and **Children's Day at South Street Seaport**. Seventeen NAC kids enjoyed the **Movie "Up."** Bowling at **Gun Hill Lanes** is always a popular event, as is the **Sony Wonder Technology Lab**. Everyone was excited to see the **Brooklyn Cyclones** and **Auburn Doubledays** baseball teams play at **KeySpan Park**, followed by ice cream on the **Coney Island** boardwalk. Groups at NAC included the **Parent Open Art Studio**, **Young Adult Art Therapy**, **Music with Kiki**, **Animal Assisted Therapy**, and **Drama Therapy**. For older NAC youth, there were monthly meetings of the newly formed **Alumni Group** (see page 6), and for families, there was also a weekly ongoing **Food Fun Fitness** group, with extensive nutritional information and delicious healthy meals. There was something for everyone, which is what NAC always tries to do.



Parents SPEAK

When NAC staff first discussed the possibilities of the Parent Advocate position, Felicia Alleyne Davis came to mind as the ideal candidate, and we welcome her as a NAC staff member. The Parent Advocates Initiative (PAI) Kick-Off Forum on Monday, July 27 gave Felicia and Patricia Bryant-Reid, NAC's Associate Executive Director of Clinical and Program Services, the opportunity to meet the other trainees who will form a cadre of Parent Advocates in the NYC child welfare system. When asked to speak to the group, Felicia eloquently expressed herself about her evolving relationship with NAC:

“Having the opportunity to assist parents that are going through the traumatic, heart wrenching experience of having a child in foster care is such a needed element in the process. Having the ability to speak from the heart and say to a parent that ‘I’ve been there – I know what you are going through,’ can and will be such a relief. Hopefully, the successful reunification of my family will be a powerful example to the families that I would have the honor of working with. By no means is my family perfect, we still have difficult and challenging days. But, what we are is open-minded and receptive to the services and staff at NAC. Once I changed my way of thinking from US against THEM, put down my fist and opened my arms, I was able to put my family back together. So, it’s OK for parents to have feelings of anger or resentment. But you must let it go!”

“Parents are the key element for a quality family life. Working with NAC in this process is truly a team effort. Not only do they work for the betterment of the child, but they embrace the whole family. I have such a special place in my heart for NAC, why would I ever want to leave?”

PARENTS’ LUNCHEONS

On May 6 and May 8, NAC held its annual Parents’ Luncheons at Blue Smoke/Jazz Standard. The events honored the dedication of the families who care for medically fragile children. Parents spoke about their experiences with NAC and how their lives have changed. Mothers received gifts of cosmetics and fragrances generously donated by Estée Lauder. A lunch of ribs, salmon, macaroni and cheese and delicious desserts made the day even more celebratory.



Parent Advocate Group

Felicia Alleyne-Davis (third from left) and Patricia Bryant-Reid (fifth from left) at the Parent Advocate Forum.

OPENINGDOORS STAFF

Editor **Marcia Scanlon**

Contributors **Stephanie Gardner, Lara Hanson, Adrienne Lawler, Jessica Lutzke, Linda Peck, Yolanda Ruiz, Jenny Traslavina, Brian Schatz, Carolyn Synol, Steve Walton, Johnny Yuen**

Distribution **Lydia Roman**

Designer **Shari Finger Design LLC**

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, October 20, 2009

We anticipate a dazzling evening at the beautiful Pierre Hotel as the NAC community celebrates the successes of the past year and looks to the future. The theme this year is *Thinking Outside the Box*, a concept created by a NAC client who is in college studying graphic design. For more information, please call Cindy Cavalli at 212.696.1550 x262.

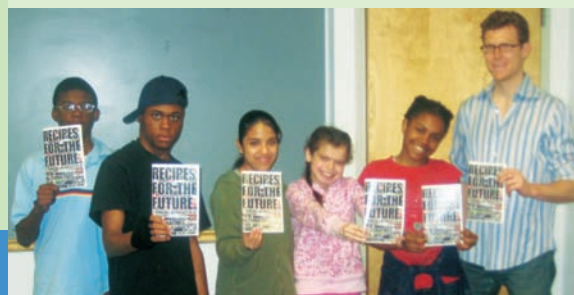
HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are many ways to support NAC. We welcome financial gifts and in-kind donations. We invite you to volunteer for NAC activities and to attend our benefit events. The rewards of getting to know NAC children and families are extraordinary. For more information, please contact Jessica Lutzke, Director, Volunteers and Community Relations, at 212.696.1550 x230 or jlutzke@nac-inc.org.

Artists’ CORNER

Starlight Group Anthology Reading

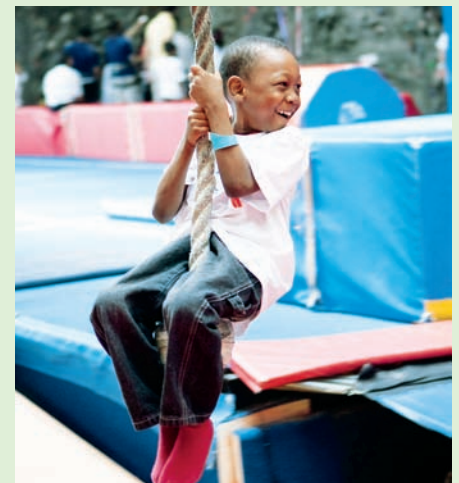
We always have a wealth of creative writing talent at NAC, and with the guidance of an instructor from the Starlight Children’s Foundation, NAC youth produce astonishing work. This year they came up with a collection of poetry entitled **Recipes for the Future**, offering a range of expression from feelings about the election of Barack Obama to long rides on family vacations. The workshop ended with a spirited poetry reading attended by NAC staff, and gifts of reading materials for the summer.



We are also thrilled to report that NAC alumnus Darnell A. Peterson has published his first book of poetry, **Grudge ‘n’ I**, through Publish America. Darnell has the ability to express deeply felt beliefs and ambitions for himself. He has come through extraordinary difficulties with incredible strength. You may purchase this fine book online at: www.publishamerica.com, www.amazon.com, or www.barnesandnoble.com



Chelsea Piers Field House – what a treat! NAC held the **4th Annual NAC Kids Olympics** at this popular venue, giving our young athletes the opportunity to experience new activities, along with some of the usual favorites. On Saturday, June 6, with the sun flashing off the Hudson River, NAC staff, families and volunteers gathered to share camaraderie as the kids eagerly joined in the games. Lunch came first, and then on with the games! Olympic activities included fantastic gymnastic equipment, a rock-climbing wall, and batting cages. There were games of slow pitch, Wiffle Ball pitch, pick-up basketball, wheelchair basketball, double-dutch, free throw, bean bag toss, T-ball, egg and spoon races, ring pass, potato sack races, soccer drills, and the parachute game. There was a hip-hop dance-off in the dance studio. Races included the wheelchair obstacle course, mixed obstacle course, non-wheelchair obstacle course, suit case races, and relay races. Quiet activities included the toddler gym, arts and crafts, face painting, and pet-assisted therapy. Finally, there was the traditional hi-five line and an exhilarating medals ceremony. **State Assemblyman Micah Kellner** spoke, and was thrilled to hand out our special NAC medals.





Above: **Alumni Club** Micah Kellner and NAC's Alumni Club members discuss the challenges of negotiating New York City.



At left: **Wendy M. Geringer, Ph.D.**, Comprehensive Health Care Center Director

Below: **Career Day Attendees** Ten volunteers from Goldman Sachs led a Career Day for NAC teens on July 7th. The volunteers talked about their educational experiences, career paths, and first jobs. Hearing about how these professionals started out in the work place helped the teens think about possibilities for their own futures. The teens practiced interview skills and shared what they had learned with the group. Everyone enjoyed lunch and made new friends. The day was a huge success!



Below: **Steve Walton and Myra Mae King join ReServists** feted at Gracie Mansion ReServe connects the City's retired professionals with service opportunities where their lifetime of skills can be applied to the public good. NAC has the good fortune of having ReServists MyraMae King, LMSW, ACSW, Quality Assurance Associate, Steve Walton, Information Management Specialist, and Redessa Taylor, Administrative Assistant, as valuable additions to the NAC family. On June 17, Steve and Myra Mae attended a festive ReServist Recognition Reception at Gracie Mansion, where they were honored by Mayor Michael Bloomberg.



NAC ALUMNI CLUB

The recently formed NAC Alumni Club supports continuing friendships among the growing number of older NAC youth, gives them a voice in the agency, and fosters brainstorming on how to change challenges into opportunities. Alumni Club attendees were honored to have NYS Assembly Member Micah Kellner as a guest at their July meeting. Micah listened as the group, many of whom use wheelchairs or other assistive devices, shared with him their particular challenges. Among these are taxis that will not stop for them, inadequate subway and bus systems, inaccessible college classrooms, Medicaid limitations on acquiring, repairing, and replacing wheelchairs, and even the need for adaptive umbrellas.

Micah himself has cerebral palsy; his understanding of these obstacles on both the personal and public policy levels makes him an exceptional advocate for people with physical disabilities. He encouraged the Alumni Club members to join advocacy groups, and supplied them with a list of groups to contact. As always, NAC is grateful to have him for a friend.

Grants AT WORK

The New York Community Trust has supported NAC with grants that have enabled us to expand our programming while maintaining the individualized care and personal interactions that we offer each child and family. Most recently we received support for our Comprehensive Health Center (CHC), which integrates NAC's Article 31 mental health clinic and Article 28 diagnostic and treatment clinic into an entity that can be more easily coordinated and administrated. We will also use this support to identify and advocate on behalf of policy improvements that enhance the provision of effective medical and mental health care.

Wendy M. Geringer, Ph.D. has joined NAC as the new Director of NAC's CHC, offering a wealth of research and program development experience. She will support the easy access and seamless coordination of services, which are attributes of all NAC programming, as the ultimate goals of this combination of program integration and informed advocacy.

Thank You DONORS

NAC is pleased to acknowledge the following corporations and foundations that have made grants to us since May, 2009:

Credit Suisse Americas Foundation, Ira W. DeCamp Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Fund for Social Change, Hedge Funds Care, Goldman Sachs, Hyde and Watson Foundation, Paramount Group, Inc., Time Warner Cable, and TJX Foundation.

We thank the following government officials for their recent support:

State Senator Thomas K. Duane, State Senator Liz Krueger, State Assembly Member Micah Kellner, State Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, State Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal, NYC Council Member Daniel Garodnick NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Council Members Bill de Blasio and Rosie Mendez, as well as the Bronx City Council delegation, with the assistance of Bronx Council Member Maria Del Carmen Arroyo.

We also thank the following sponsors to the 4th Annual NAC Kids Olympics for their generosity: Evian spring water, HGI Foundation, and News Corporation. Enthusiastic volunteers from the following companies and groups offered invaluable support:

Project Sunshine, Accenture, Centro Properties, Credit Suisse, The Estée Lauder Companies, New York Life Insurance Company, nycTIES, Société Générale Group, CIT, Allen Partners.