

Safety Net

The newsletter of Coalition for the Homeless

Summer 2008

Summer at Camp Homeward Bound





A Letter From Mary: The Dreams of A Homeless Child

Our summer issue of *Safety Net* traditionally focuses on children because our kids programs are in full swing. We recently partnered with a group called Starworks, which assigned graduate students majoring in writing to help boys and girls in our afterschool program write poetry.

What do homeless children dream of? [Here is a glimpse.](#)

Soon I'll Be

by Shanice

Once I was a little girl
Now I am a teenager
Soon I'll be a woman

Once I was loud and crude
Now I'm shy and cute
Soon I'll be bright and sexy

Once I was happy and calm
Now I'm sad and trapped
Soon I'll be free and confident

Once I was a middle-class girl
Now I'm poor
Soon I'll be living Big with all the stars

Once I was that girl
Now I'm I know that girl
Soon I'll be I love that girl

Magic Box Poem

by Thomas

I will put into my box
The moon and the milky way
The sun and the stars and the fire
from cars
A house that can float up on top of
the water

I will put in my box
A tv and ballgame so I can be at peace
Dragons and dinosaurs to entertain
and scare me
A leaping tiger that roars so loud

I will put in my box
A violet wish spoken in Chinese
The scent of the beautifullest woman
The first smile of a baby tiger

I will put in my box
A dog that is half cat
A cat that is half bird
A fifth season and a blue sun

My box is from the sun
Set on fire
White hold protecting secrets

Chinese Vegetable Monster

by Christian

He is made of carrots, onions
and broccoli
Rotten fish smell
Living in the refrigerator

He was going to eat my cereal
But I grabbed his onion eye
He was more scared of me

Super Power

by Nick

I would move people out of shelter
And into the future
In Florida
A vacation forever
Breakfast for free
Pool in the middle of the night

No more bad food
No more small room
No more fighting
No more bad luck

I would move people out of the shelter
They could have anything they want
Food
A bed
An oven
A doorknob
Tickets to the Nets

People don't get hurt no more

The Coin

by Moises

The coin was in the pocket
It knew the pocket
It was happy with its owner

But first it was a dollar
In some other land
Across the ocean
Then spent
It became change

It came to NYC
To visit me
To show its face
A Queen

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Corporations Give Back to Camp Homeward Bound

By Alison Dichter

While summer may pass within the blink of an eye, it takes months of planning and preparation to open Camp Homeward Bound for its more than 300 campers each summer. Earlier this year, the Coalition welcomed friends, family, and supporters new and old for two days of tent pitching, cabin scrubbing, canoe painting, and furniture assembly. Despite the hard work, we were pleased to hear about the positive impact the experience had on many of our corporate volunteers.

In their first trip to Harriman State Park, 16 members of the **HBO Out** volunteer group enthusiastically rolled up their sleeves and joined in the effort. “From painting the gym and setting up tents, to grilling out at the fabulous bar-

becue and enjoying the lakeside setting, the day was one that we will all remember,” recalled Chairman, Jonathan Graf.

“To top it all off,” he said, “we know that we left the camp in the capable hands of its amazing staff!” As a volunteer or donor, it is so important to know that your time and money are being put to good use. We were glad to see that this first Camp experience provided that confidence.

New York Life has been a longtime supporter and friend of Camp and the Coalition’s youth services. Listening to veteran Volunteers for LIFE Team Leader, Debbie Tendler, you can understand why. “It’s a fun way for friends and family to connect and most importantly, to give back to our community.



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Corporate Volunteering Makes a Difference

From organizing camp supply drives and volunteering at clean up days to sponsoring camper scholarships and attending special events, the Coalition offers several rewarding opportunities for groups or individuals that want to make a difference in the lives of homeless boys and girls – our most vulnerable neighbors.

If you are interested in getting your company involved, please contact Development Director Kim McCall at 212-776-2050 or kmccall@cfthomeless.org today.

Corporate volunteering is a win-win for everyone – the Coalition gets much needed manpower and expertise, while corporate partners get increased employee pride and teamwork. Camp Homeward Bound is just one of the Coalition's eleven direct service programs. See how you can help today!

New York Life believes in nurturing children by providing safe places to learn and grow – and Camp Homeward Bound is a natural fit!”

This year, New York Life brought 15 volunteers determined to work until the job was done. In recognition of their service, the New York Life Foundation will generously award a grant to Camp Homeward Bound. We greatly appreciate their invaluable support and dedication.



Volunteers from New York Life (above) and HBO Out (right) help the Coalition get ready for Camp.

Going Back to Camp

By Pamela Grove

Many of us look back at our childhoods and longingly remember summer vacation. Whether playing baseball with friends down the street, swimming at the local pool, vacationing with family at the beach, or going away to summer camp, it was a time to celebrate being young and feeling free.

But for more than 14,000 New York City children, summer can be bleak and depressing. These boys and girls will spend their vacation waking up in homeless shelters, wondering when they will eat their next meal. They have little access to safe playgrounds or parks and, because of constant relocation, have been unable to make or keep many friends.

Each summer the Coalition for the Homeless gives 300 homeless and low-income children a well-deserved summer vacation at our sleep-away camp in the idyllic Harriman State Park. We understand the physical and emotional distress that children face in the shelter system and created Camp Homeward Bound to provide stability along with added excitement. We like to keep some aspects of Camp the same, year after year, so that returning campers feel like they are coming “home” to what they know. We also offer new, different pursuits, so they can learn additional skills and further explore the world around them. During Camp’s three 16-day sessions, youngsters can leave their worries behind.

In early July, it was my pleasure as Director of Programs, to go back to camp and join the kids in four of my favorite activities.

Boating

“Want to come out in the canoe with us?” ask Vicky and her friend Maria. “Sure,” I say. “What do I have to do? There are some rules, right?”

The 11 year-olds at first found the rules “so boring,” but now understand that following water-safety guidelines



At Camp Homeward Bound, kids get to create new friendships...

play sports...



allows them to go out in a boat by themselves (of course staff supervises from other boats). The three of us don life vests, pick out paddles, and shove off in one of the newly donated canoes. In a short time, we’ve coordinated our strokes and slice through the lake’s sun-lit ripples. We spot a turtle on a rock, its head stretched towards the sun, but when we startle it, it slips back into the water.

swim in the lake...



On the way back to shore, we wave to another camper who prefers the single-passenger kayak. “This is so cool,” says Tessa to us, “we didn’t have all this last year. I like my little boat better! I can steer it easier than that big thing you have.”

You know how it is... whatever floats your boat!

Music

While pulling on my sneakers after the boat ride, I hear children nearby singing, “In the jungle, the mighty jun-

gle..." from *The Lion King*. When I actually enter the lakeside Music Cabin, the kids have quieted down. They've broken up into four groups to create their own songs, gently tapping the polished wooden drums to provide the beat for their original compositions. Next week, this co-ed group of 12 year-olds will learn the fundamentals of playing the electric keyboard and guitar; these instruments are so brand



edit their own photography...



learn to cook...



...and play musical instruments.

new, they shimmer. There are also simple percussion xylophones and bell sets, all painted in primary colors for the younger campers.

The counselor, Phoebe, plans to have her music groups perform in the Talent Show later in the session. When she asked the kids what kind of music they wanted to showcase, their answer was a resounding "Hip-Hop." She'll suggest a fusion with other types of sound, but if they remain steadfast in their preference, she'll "go with the Hip-Hop flow."

Photography

Later on, I meet four girls taking pictures with digital cameras on the gravel path leading back to the center of camp. They tell me that once they snap their nature shots, they'll be able to edit them with a graphic design program. Intrigued, I hurry back to the newly established Photo Cabin and find several enthralled campers busy clicking their mouse buttons a mile a minute in front of two iMac computers with huge monitors.

The photographers, Trina and Kamesha, have taken self-portraits, which they've downloaded, edited, and cropped. Then, they've copied the image nine times in a three-by-three arrangement to create an aptly titled project, "Nine of Me." Lastly, the girls explore the art tools so they can customize each of the pictures differently. Trina is a big fan of the tool that leaves her picture with a chrome-looking finish. She says, "Look, I'm like a smooth metal sculpture!" Kamesha is fascinated by color and uses the stained glass and watercolor treatments, because she wants to paint herself "into a rainbow-colored beauty." These two returning campers are very excited that Camp has become "so high-tech that we can learn cool programs like this!"

Cooking

Next, I follow my nose to the Cooking Cabin, where the scent of today's featured recipe, grilled hamburgers, wafts through the air. The lesson's purpose is

to show campers that burgers exist "beyond Mickey D's." Following a helpful demonstration and under close supervision, the boys and girls use their cutting boards and paring knives to chop peppers and scallions to add to the beef mixture. A new camper, Jose, tells me, "I didn't even know that peppers came in red! And, did you know that scallions are like skinny onions?"

Then, seasonings are mixed into the meat. Counselor Paddy wants to introduce different spices to the children, so "they don't just pour mountains of salt on everything! In fact, next week we're making Thai green chili. I think the kids will really like cooking and sampling ethnic foods. Also on the agenda are blindfolded taste tests, so that campers will learn to eat according to taste, rather than by sight alone."

The cooking class wraps up as campers create mini-burger patties and take turns cooking them on an electric grill. Next to me, teenaged Anthony bursts out, "I love cooking and can't wait to do it at home, too. Seriously, I'm even thinking of becoming a chef. I never would have thought about it before, but it's true!"

At the End of the Day

Before my long drive home, I unwind by shooting baskets in the gym. A spunky youngster tells me I should be shooting "granny-style" underhand shots. I ask her, "Why? Because I'm old or because I don't shoot well?" Her eyes sparkle, but she refuses to take the bait. "Well," I say, "it's okay to have opinions. But tell me, how is Camp this year? Medium good or really good?"

To this, she answers, "This camp is the very best!" And, I believe her.

This summer, hundreds of deserving boys and girls will have the chance to "just be kids" – and so much more. As I reflect on my amazing trip and on all of my new friends, I am thankful for the many individuals, families and corporations that make Camp Homeward Bound possible.

The Bloomberg Administration's Misguided Plan to Move the Homeless Men's Intake Center Out of Manhattan

By Patrick Markee

Since modern homelessness began in the late 1970s, the City of New York has always maintained an intake center for homeless men in Manhattan. The reason for this is simple: Manhattan has the highest concentration of street homelessness among the five boroughs, particularly in the midtown business district, and the large majority of street homeless New Yorkers are single men.

However, the Bloomberg administration has announced a plan to move the homeless men's intake center outside of Manhattan to the notorious Bedford-Atlantic armory located in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn.

This dangerous plan will inevitably lead to more street homelessness and may lead to more death and injury among street homeless New Yorkers. It also flies in the face of everything we know about helping street homeless people.

The Coalition for the Homeless has joined dozens of City and State elected officials, as well as community groups and service providers, in urging Mayor Bloomberg to halt this misguided plan and to commit to keeping a homeless men's intake shelter in or near midtown Manhattan.

How Best to Serve Street Homeless New Yorkers

When assisting street homeless people, access is everything. Shelter and services must be easily accessible and have few barriers to entry. Most important, on cold winter nights, when securing shelter is literally a matter of life and death, emergency shelter must be located near to street homeless people.

All in all, the Bloomberg administration's current plans threaten to severely diminish access to emergency shelter for homeless New Yorkers. We ask you to join us in urging New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and her fellow Council members to pass legislation and take any other steps necessary to halt this misguided plan and to ensure that there is an intake shelter for homeless men located in Manhattan.

The Facts: The Mayor's Plan Will Lead to More Street Homeless People

This spring, Bloomberg administration officials announced a plan to close the Bellevue men's shelter, located on Manhattan's East Side, and create a luxury hotel in its place. Shortly afterward, officials announced the controversial plan to move New York City's only homeless men's intake center – which has been located at the Bellevue shelter since the 1980s – to the notorious Bedford-Atlantic armory, located in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn – **nearly nine miles from the current intake facility.**

The Mayor's plan sparked immediate outrage among Brooklyn and Manhattan community leaders and elected officials. Most troubling, the plan contradicts everything we know about helping street homeless New Yorkers. Here are the facts:

- **Each night thousands of New Yorkers sleep rough on our streets** and the large majority of street homeless New Yorkers are individuals living with mental illness or other severe health problems. Four out of five street homeless New Yorkers are men.
- The New York City Department of Homeless Services estimates that **58 percent of homeless people found on the streets were located in Manhattan**, compared to only 16 percent in Brooklyn.
- **In the first four months of this year, there were more than 11,000 walk-ins by homeless men at the current Manhattan intake center** – an average of 93 homeless men seeking shelter each day. City data shows that one out of three homeless men seeking shelter at the intake center are coming from the streets.
- **In the winter months, the intake center typically serves over 100 homeless men seeking shelter each day.** On January 3, 2008, the coldest night of this calendar year, 241 homeless men sought shelter at the Manhattan intake center.
- The Bedford-Atlantic armory – which is located nearly nine miles from midtown Manhattan – is a uniquely poor choice to become the new homeless men's intake center. **The armory currently has a 350-bed men's shelter, directly operated by the Department of Homeless Services, which has perhaps the worst reputation of any men's shelter in the city.** Many homeless men avoid the Bedford-Atlantic shelter because of its forbidding reputation and poor services.
- Mayor Bloomberg's 2004 homeless plan, "Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter," included a commitment to "decentralize men's intake" by creating "three smaller intake centers...throughout the city to ease entry into the shelter system for single adult men." **However, in late 2007, the Bloomberg administration abandoned plans to decentralize homeless men's intake**, and cancelled agreements with service providers to create intake sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.
- City officials have told service providers that outreach teams and "safe haven" shelters – which are low-demand shelters targeted to chronically street homeless adults living with mental illness – make intake centers "obsolete." **However, the Department of Homeless Services plans to have only 500 "safe haven" beds by the end of this year**, outreach teams are already maximizing their limited resources, and thousands of homeless men use the current intake center each year.

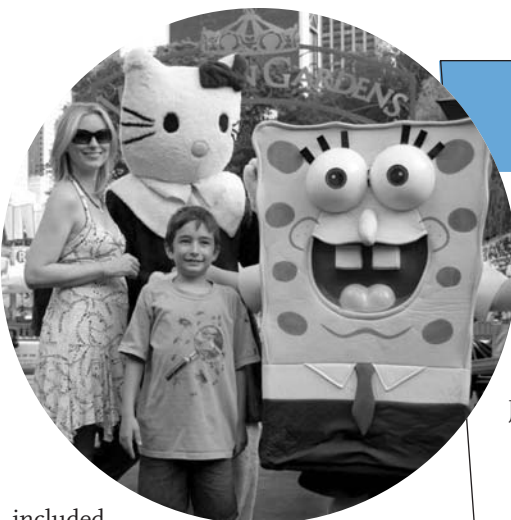
The recently adopted City budget does not include resources to significantly expand permanent supportive housing for street homeless adults (i.e., so-called "housing first" units) nor to expand outreach services.

Carnival Night Raises \$150,000 for Summer Camp and Youth Services!

By Rachel Edelman

Coalition supporters turned out in record numbers for the twelfth annual Carnival Night for Kids held at Victorian Gardens in Central Park on Wednesday, June 11th. With more than 500 attendees – our biggest crowd yet – the event raised over \$150,000 for the Coalition's Youth Services programs, including Camp Homeward Bound and Bound for Success After School and Summer Day Camp.

Guests enjoyed a fun summer evening filled with carnival rides, games, delicious BBQ food, ice cream, cotton candy,



included a weekend stay at the W Hotel, watches by DKNY and Diesel, a family membership to the Guggenheim Museum, and gift certificates to fabulous spas and restaurants like Café des Artistes and Chanterelle. Guests also took home gift bags filled with goodies including *Al Capone Does My Shirts* by Gennifer Choldenko, the travel issue of *Animal Fair* magazine, complimentary yoga classes at Yoga Works, and cupcakes from Crumbs Bake Shop. One lucky winner even walked away with our wonderful door prize – a set of watches from Fossil, Burberry and Armani.

The Coalition extends a special thank you to our dedicated Event

Co-Chairs, Andrew and Julie Kramer and Adam and Elizabeth Gold, as well as our enthusiastic Benefit Committee for their donation of time, energy, and resources. Our sincere appreciation goes to the generous sponsors who helped make Carnival Night for Kids a success!

Families enjoyed a fun-filled evening of rides, games, food, and entertainment at this year's Carnival Night for Kids.

S·U·P·P·O·R·T·E·R·S

Masters of Illusion

Helen & Lou Lowenstein

Fire Breathers

Terry Andreas & John A. Hewig
Candice Bergen & Marshall Rose
Jane Orans

Daredevils

Adam & Elizabeth Gold
Julie & Andrew Kramer
Nardello & Co., LLC

Lion Tamers

Sean & Anne Coffey
Teresa Donahue
Heavenly Bricks Charitable
Foundation
Mara & Baron Silverstein
Eric & Caroline Yoon

Jugglers

Adsetts Family
Alison & Barry Berke
Jennifer Blessing
Michelle & Asher Edelman
W. James Hall
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Foundation
Maria-Isabella Niarchose-
Gouaze
Thomas A. & Georgina
Russo
Susan Sarandon



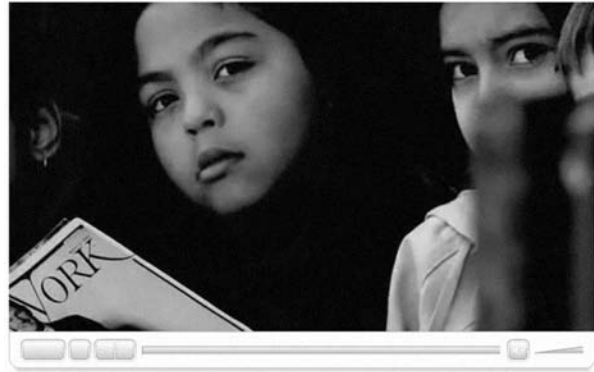
and other treats. Kids had a great time riding the Mini Mouse rollercoaster, the Family Swinger classic swings ride, and the Fun Slide; having their faces painted and caricatures drawn; and trying their luck at winning stuffed prizes. Families visited our new photo booth to capture the moment, while magicians, stilt-walkers, clowns, and characters like Sponge Bob and Dora the Explorer were on hand to entertain the crowd. Boys and girls even learned a few new science tricks during the popular Vinnie Voltage Science Show!

Our balloon pop raffle once again attracted lively crowds. Donated prizes



On the Coalition's New Website You Can...

- **TAKE ACTION** Learn about volunteering opportunities.
- **GET INVOLVED** and sign up for email alerts.
- **WATCH** "When All Else Fails," a new Public Service Announcement narrated by Alec Baldwin.



Visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org today!

Save the Date

ARTWALK **14TH ANNUAL** NY

Benefiting Coalition for the Homeless

November 3, 2008 at the Metropolitan Pavilion

A tribute to Robert Rauschenberg

Co-Chairs Richard Gere and Carey Lowell

Silent and Live Art Auction & Cocktail Party

For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit www.coalitionforthehomeless.org, or call (212) 776-2056.