

The Groundwork Gazette

The Quarterly Newsletter of Groundwork Inc.
Building "Powerful Youth for Powerful Communities" Since 2002

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Message from the Executive Director

Richard Buery

Greetings, and thank you for reading this inaugural edition of the *Groundwork Gazette*. This quarterly newsletter represents one of many steps Groundwork is taking to improve how we communicate with our many supporters.

2007 marks Groundwork's fifth year of building powerful youth for powerful communities – a landmark in which we take great pride. Our growth has been rapid and our impact wide ranging. The *Groundwork Gazette* allows us keep its readers abreast of highlights as they happen and as importantly, it will serve as a running history of our young institution's growth and progress.

We welcome your comments, feedback, ideas and most importantly, your contributions to this and future issues.

Richard Buery,
Co-Founder and Executive Director

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FRC Begins Program for Infants, Toddlers and their Parents

In October, the Family Resource Center successfully launched an exciting new program called "Baby & Me." This represents Groundwork's first foray into programming for infants and toddlers, ages zero to three years old. Through the creative use of developmental playgroups, Baby & Me promotes the nurturing attachments between parents and young children that are critical to the healthy development of children.

In its first three months, Baby & Me has been well received by parents and children.

"I think it's a great program," says Giselle Byers, who along with her two year old daughter, Veronica, are regular Baby & Me participants. "It lets her interact and socialize with other children her age, which I think will really help her when she starts pre-school."

"Groundwork runs the program through a partnership with SCO Family of Services," states FRC Director, Erica Ahdoot. SCO originally developed Baby & Me as a way to improve the quality and quantity of visits between parents and their infants and toddlers in foster care. Many organizations have gone beyond the foster care model. At Groundwork's Baby & Me sessions, parents and children enjoy themselves but it's more than just play for play's sake.

"Supportive networks reduce parental isolation, especially for first time parents and single parents, and that's a critical factor in supporting parents' efforts to raise healthy and happy children."

gle parents, and that's a critical factor in supporting parents' efforts to raise healthy and happy children." "So far, we've averaged four or five families per week, and we are expecting to reach our target of eight to ten families per session by mid-winter," says Ahdoot.

Baby & Me sessions take place at noon every Thursday at 692 Blake Avenue, where for two hours the second floor student lounge is transformed into a toddler-friendly play space, complete with toys, snacks, and music. "Most of our supplies were donated by various neighborhood parent associations and by some of our own Groundwork family members," says Ahdoot, who's already expanded Baby & Me to include activities like baby yoga. "In the near future, we'd like to pilot some other interesting avenues for parent-child activity during or preceding the weekly sessions."



2 year old Veronica Byers and 3 year old Mutasim Ali do Baby-Yoga with their mothers




Baby & Me parents discuss potty training

Credits: Monte Givhan: Writer and Editor
Suzie Oh: Designer

GWS Partners with Adelphi University on Sophomore Writing Program



Groundwork for Success, our comprehensive four-year college preparation program for East New York high school students, will once again collaborate with Adelphi University on a writing program called "Reading and Writing in the City."

Funded by the Teagle Foundation, "the program improves the writing skills of GWS sophomore scholars," says GWS Director, Mary Adams. "Students will receive essay writing instruction from Adelphi faculty two full evenings each week. Their personal essays can later be developed for use with college applications." 

Back on Track:

FRC Program Offers East New York Students a "Fresh Start"

Fresh Start, Groundwork's school-based, day time counseling program is expanding its services in PS 149, IS 292, and PS 328. "We are supporting principals by providing individual and small group counseling to students during lunch hours, and now also during PM School," says Erica Ahdoot. "In addition, we have targeted a number of students at PS 328 who are currently living in neighborhood shelters. These students are in need of more comprehensive support to deal with their recent life transitions and with the general challenge of living in a temporary shelter."

In fall 2004, PS 328 Principal Douglas Avila approached Groundwork to help his school develop alternatives to detentions and in-school suspensions that would be more productive and responsive to root causes of behavioral issues. FRC immediately began holding regular individual and small group sessions for PS 328 students who were chronically acting out.


By early 2005, Groundwork had replicated the PS 328 Fresh Start model on GWY's Fiorentino campus, which includes IS 292 and PS 149. "They saw a need for our services during the school day," says Ahdoot. "IS 292 has only two guidance counselors to serve about three hundred students. They were doing their best, but they were overwhelmed. They see us as a resource because we add to their capacity to work with students to ensure their social-emotional well being."

Fresh Start utilizes FRC's professional social workers as well as a team of six social work interns from schools like Long Island University, NYU and Columbia.

"Currently, at IS 292 and PS 149 we go in twice a week to facilitate small group counseling sessions with students who've been suspended," says FRC's Jamali Moses. PM School is a form of suspension wherein students are required to come to school from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. "We're trying to target students who are habitually placed in PM school."

Group sizes range from as few as three to as many as twelve students and last about forty-five minutes. "The students seem to love it," says Moses. "They look forward to it and come in prepared to work through problems. Many of our students express that they feel better able to make decisions that are productive, not destructive."

The focus of counseling sessions is determined by what's taking place at any given time. Group sessions may entail helping students to think through problems and exhibit better behaviors in class. Individual sessions may focus on crisis intervention, for instance, dealing with the death or loss of a loved one.

Ahdoot views Fresh Start as being a critical piece of Groundwork's efforts to support literacy and build powerful youth. "Any time something's going on in a kid's life where a situation impedes on their learning, that's where Fresh Start comes into play." 

Feelin' Free!

Groundwork to Partner with the Caribbean Cultural Center to Sponsor Community Events in East New York in 2007




CCC will bring its unique brand of cultural programming to Groundwork this summer

Groundwork has entered into an exciting new partnership with the Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute ("CCC") to sponsor "First Saturdays," a series of cultural events and workshops to take place at Groundwork's community playground at PS 328 during summer 2007. These events will be free and open to everyone, young and old, living in the community surrounding PS 328. They will take place the first Saturday of each month from June through September and will include workshops and performances of Afro-Cuban, Afro-Haitian and Afro-Puerto Rican music, drum and dance as well as a story-telling workshop geared for younger children.

First Saturdays was made possible by a \$1500 grant by the Trust for Public Land, which developed the playground with major support from the Charles Hayden and New York Life Foundations.

"Groundwork is an exemplary community partner," says Julieth Rivera, a program coordinator with TPL's City Spaces program. "We're happy to support this project. From our perspective, the more positive, structured, community inclusive programming that takes place in the playground, the better."

The Caribbean Cultural Center is a thirty year old organization that celebrates and promotes Caribbean arts, culture, and history. "We're ecstatic about this new partnership and really looking forward to the events this summer," said Monte Givhan, Groundwork's Director of Communications and Special Projects. "Given the large number of people of Caribbean descent who participate in our programs and who live in this community, these events should be well attended and a lot of fun for everyone." 



Single Stop Ushers in a New Era

In December, Judith Guerrero announced that she was leaving Groundwork. Judith, who holds a master's degree in economics and finance, will become a budget analyst with Bank Street College. Her last official day with Groundwork was January 5, 2007.

As Groundwork's first Single Stop Coordinator, Judith was the driving force behind the success and growth of Single Stop over the past three years. Judith joined Groundwork's staff in the winter of 2003, when Groundwork was still housed in the Blue Ridge Foundation's office space in Cobble Hill. Under her watch, Single Stop reached thousands of East New York residents, providing on-site services, hosting and coordinating on-site tax prep for Groundwork families and neighbors, and assembling a strong team of partners and staff to elevate Groundwork's Single Stop Program to the top ten such programs in New York City. Judith went out on top, increasing the number of families served from 252 in 2005 to 429 in 2006. In 2006, Single Stop's combined services put over \$204,000 directly into the pockets of East New York residents, an average of \$17,000 each month. Single Stop is funded by the Robin Hood Foundation.

Returning to Groundwork to replace Judith will be Rosanna Cruz. Rosie has worked as a community organizer for Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) since September 2004. Before that, she worked for Groundwork as a Senior Team Leader at the PS 328/Unity Campus for three years. Rosie is completing her Master's of Science in Criminal Justice with a specialization in Criminology and Deviant Behavior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. She will officially re-join the Groundwork Family on February 5, 2007.



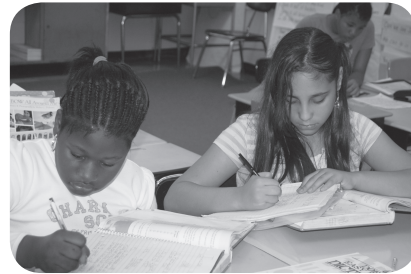
Groundwork for Youth Receives Major Grant from New York Life Foundation

The New York Life Foundation has awarded Groundwork for Youth a three-year, \$225,000 grant to expand "Middle Ground," a year-round program that addresses the academic and social needs of middle school students. GWY, our literacy-based, academic enrichment program for elementary school students, currently operates Middle Ground at GWY's IS 292 (Fiorentino) campus but will soon expand it to include the PS 328 (Unity) campus as well.

With the goal of helping students succeed academically and go on to college, the program will maintain a "strong focus on literacy and personal development," Groundwork Executive Director Richard Buery explained. Instructors will have students hone

lence is really the time when many young people decide the course of their lives. It's a time when students make critical decisions about which way they're going to go – are they going to be focused on [education]...or are they going to go down another path," Buery said.

To show Middle Ground students that success is possible if they remain devoted to learning, high school and college students will act as tutors and role models, which will offer "a real rich opportunity for mentoring," Buery said.



Middle Ground will soon expand to PS 328

Peter Bushyeager, president of the New York Life Foundation, said Groundwork received financial support because of the organization's dedication to underserved communities and middle school students as they maneuver through a critical point in their lives. "We try as a foundation to focus really as much as we can on middle

"Generally speaking, children of this age are underserved so whenever we can find an excellent organization like Groundwork... we want to support those efforts."

school programming," he explained. "Generally speaking, children of this age are underserved so whenever we can find an excellent organization like Groundwork...we want to support those efforts."

The efforts come at an important time for youths, as the middle school years are believed to be a critical time when students decide either to focus on their studies or begin on a path that often leads to dropping out. "Early ado-

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"Early adolescence is really the time when many young people decide the course of their lives."

GWS "Career Week" a Success



GWS Success Coach Roscoe Boyd introduces career week's presenters

a doctor from the National Institute of Health, and Groundwork Board member Elisha Wiesel, a partner at Goldman Sachs.

Groundwork for Success' first Career Week was held in October. Roscoe Boyd, GWS's Freshman Success Coach, coordinated this successful project.

Ten professionals presented and fielded questions from GWS scholars during the week. The guest presenters included a representative of the United Nations, a dentist,

The week commenced with an exciting singing performance by one of the speakers, professional singer, Autumn Rowe and her guitarist.



GWS Launches Saturday English Academy

In October, Groundwork for Success began a new initiative that will provide freshman and sophomore scholars with additional English Language Arts instruction. The English Academy will focus on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence and paragraph structure, using a curriculum developed by Legal Outreach.

Freshmen and sophomores attend English Academy classes three Saturdays each month. Scholars must do homework that prepares them to teach the class sessions the following week. The English Academy curriculum focuses on improving grammar and vocabulary skills.

In addition to developing the curriculum, Legal Outreach provided technical assistance to GWS staff. "Legal Outreach conducted two professional development sessions for GWS related to the English Academy," says GWS Director, Mary Adams. "The training offered guidance to teachers and staff on curriculum delivery, engagement of students, teaching students to take notes as well as a review of homework assignments and recommendations on how to improve students' performance."



The Moore, the Merrier: Former Parent Organizer, Beverly Moore joins Groundwork's Board of Directors.

East New Yorker and former Groundwork Parent Organizer Beverly Moore has joined Groundwork's Board of Directors. She was voted onto the Board and participated in her first Board meeting on December 13, 2006.

Firmly rooted in the East New York community, Beverly currently serves as Parent Support and Operations Coordinator for the East New York Preparatory Charter School. The *Groundwork Gazette* recently sat down with her to discuss her appointment to the Board:

GG: You had your first Board meeting last month. Was it what you expected?

BM: It really opened my eyes. I thought they'd just be discussing money and figures, but the Board is interested in all the same things as parents and staff are interested in, things like student and staff recruitment and retention.

GG: What do you think you bring to the Board?

BM: I bring a perspective of a GW parent, staff member, and East New York community member. I have first hand knowledge about a lot of things.

GG: In your former life, you were a nurse. How would you describe Groundwork's health?

BM: Groundwork's health is good. Really good. It's a strong organization and it's moving in the right direction.

STAFF CHANGES: Comings...

Since October, five new members have joined Team Groundwork:

- Gregory Bailey**, GWY AmeriCorps VISTA
- Rosie Cruz**, Single Stop Manager
- Katrina Huffman**, GWY Breukelen Campus Director.
- Charles Miller**, IT Coordinator
- Katie Regan**, GWY/UFT Campus Coordinator

... and Goings

- Judith Guerrero**, Single Stop Coordinator
- Michelle Mackenzie**, FRC Support Services Coordinator
- Kennda Mims-Burt**, Community Organizing/FRC VISTA
- Chayda Pleasant**, Middle Ground AmeriCorps VISTA

Did you know?

Groundwork offers free notary services.

No appointment is necessary. To utilize the service, drop into our administrative building at 595 Sutter Avenue during regular business hours.

Groundwork Selected as Linus Foundation Nonprofit Partner

The Linus Foundation has chosen Groundwork as its 2007 non profit partner. The Linus Foundation is a national charity started by a group of college students with the goal of organizing young professional events with all of the proceeds benefiting children's charities. In each city they partner with a local non profit agency for one year. Over the course of that year they organize two events and all of the profits are donated to the non profit.

The first event is taking place Saturday, February 10th at the Union Square Ballroom.

For more information or to purchase a ticket to the event, visit Groundwork's website, www.groundworkinc.org.

Board of Directors

- Matthew Klein, **Chair:** Blue Ridge Foundation New York
- Ojeda Hall-Phillips, **Vice Chair:** Local Development Corporation of East New York
- Richard Buery: Groundwork Inc.
- Mark Pendarvis, **Secretary:** The New York City Office of the Comptroller
- Joshua Wright, **Treasurer**
- Alexandra Anido: Goldman Sachs & Co.
- Cass Conrad: City University of New York
- Angelia Dickens
- Gregory Fowlkes: JPMorgan Chase
- Godfrey John: IAC/InterActiveCorp
- Beverly Moore: East New York Preparatory Charter School
- Christina Van Tassel: Centurion Holdings, LLC
- Julius Walls, Jr.: Greyston Foundation
- Elisha Wiesel: Goldman Sachs & Co.

The Groundwork Management Team

Executive Leadership

- Richard Buery, Co-Founder and Executive Director
- Richard Souto, Associate Executive Director

Program Directors

- Mary Adams, Director of Groundwork for Success
- Erica Ahdoot, Director of Family Resource Center
- Rosanna ("Rosie") Cruz, Manager of Single Stop
- Tanya Wiggins, Director of Groundwork for Youth

Senior Management

- Aasha Abdul, Director of Evaluation and Assessment
- Jonathan Brake, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer
- Mercer ("Monte") Givhan, Director of Communications and Special Projects
- Brenda Jones, Director of Human Resources and Administration
- Sadie Sloatsky, Director of Development

SUPPORT

GROUNDWORK'S PROGRAMS!

To make a tax deductible gift by credit card or to donate stock, visit our website at www.groundworkinc.org, or send a check payable to "Groundwork Inc.", Attn: Director of Development, 595 Sutter Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

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