



36-11A 12th Street
Long Island City NY 11106
718-433-4724

Winter / Spring 2009

Upcoming Events

Spring Fundraiser & Performance –
May 2009

Annual Golf Outing –
June 2009

Youth I.N.C. Celebration
Gala – **November 2009**

Want More
Information?
Want to Volunteer?
Want to Donate?

(718) 433-4724

www.hourchildren.org

info@hourchildren.org

Did you know ...

that Hour Children
has earned a
4-star rating from
Charity Navigator ?

For more information -
www.charitynavigator.com

★★★★

A Letter from Sister Tesa

Dear Friends,

Most of us take our apartments, our houses, the places where we live for granted. However, for very-low-income families, finding a place to live permanently in New York City has become, at best, a far-off dream. And it is even tougher for formerly incarcerated people, who are ineligible for most permanent, affordable public housing.

January 12, 2009 was a historic and exciting day for Hour Children. After years of planning, Hour Children purchased the site (36-11 12th Street, Long Island City, NY) where we have our office, our thrift shop and a small transitional residence for eight families. For the past 13 years, Hour Children has rented this site from St. Rita's Parish.

Now we are embarking on the development of an 18-unit apartment building that will provide **permanent, affordable housing** with supportive services to homeless families that currently live in transitional residences. The lower level of the building will also hold the Hour Children office. Because one of our transitional residences will be demolished, we are looking for another building to house 16 families in a communal setting.

This is a challenging year for Hour Children because, when there is a downturn in the economy, the poor and homeless suffer the most. But for more than 20 years, Hour Children has been successful in helping families end poverty by supporting low-income and formerly incarcerated women and their children in their pursuit of vocational training and education. While education is the obvious key to financial freedom and self-sufficiency, we believe that housing is a necessary first step to ending poverty. Housing along with our services ensures that our families will achieve stability and independence.

On behalf of the families we serve, I thank you all for your generosity and wish you a healthy and blessed year.

God's graces in abundance,
Sister Tesa Fitzgerald, CSJ

Executive Director



Sr. Tesa and Fr. Pizzo of St. Rita's Parish on the historic day

Hour Children After School Club Re-Opens

We were very excited to re-launch Hour After School Club on February 2 for Hour elementary school children. Sr. Tesa wanted to bring our children closer to home: closer to where they live and where their moms work or attend our programs, and closer to the caring attention we provide for our kids.

So far 14 of Hour Children kids, ages 6-12, are attending. Program coordinator Lisa Belfast, has worked in Hour Early Learning Program and in the Taconic Children's Center. Lisa, along with volunteers and some of Hour Working Women participants, provide homework assistance, tutoring, arts and crafts, trips to local fun spots, and other enrichment activities. *We are looking for additional volunteers for the After School program. If you're interested, please call Linda Manzione at 718-433-4724 ext. 14.*



Congratulations are in order to: Lisette Betances and Kellie Phelan for getting your GEDs, and **Kellie** for your promotion to Acting Mentoring Coordinator; **Maria Benson** and children Keionna and Nhoj for moving into your own apartment; **Tiffany Doweary** for reuniting with daughter Aniya and for graduating from Hour Working Women Program; **Jennifer Thomas** for reuniting with daughter Shakira and for new baby boy Xavier; and **Tony Rivera** (our only father) for reuniting with your sons Jose and Ruben.

Hour Friend in Deed Mentoring Program

Hour Friend in Deed matches children who have a parent in prison, in all five boroughs of New York City and Long Island, with an adult mentor. In the last year, as a result of our outreach to this community, we have grown from 50 to 100 matches of children with mentors, and we hope to add 50 new matches this year!

We're Busy, Busy, Busy

Our mentoring program coordinators are in high gear, speaking at events and working with community groups, churches and businesses, to identify more kids who need a mentor, to find new mentors, and to spread the word to families and foster-care caregivers in need of the extra support that Hour Children gives them. We also recently hired a bilingual Mentoring Assistant who is helping greatly with our work with the Spanish-speaking community.

Looking for A Few Good Mentors

If you, a friend, a neighbor or a family member have some time each month to have some fun, provide a little guidance, and show that you care to one of our kids with a parent in prison, *please call Kellie Phelan at 718-433-4724 ext. 13.*

Hour Mentors, They Give So Much, They Receive So Much



Three cheers for Sara Mar-towski-Barek who has been mentoring Chyan. Sara is a great friend to Chyan, and Sara and Chyan celebrated their second anniversary on Jan. 27. We think that this relationship will last for years.

Thank you, Sara!!!!
Great going, Chyan!!!!

Barbara Conde has been a mentor and friend to Ruben since July 2008. Ruben and Barbara already have built a great relationship. While it is clear that Ruben loves his mentor (*see Ruben's note*), we know that Barbara is getting back more than she is giving.

Thank you, Barbara!!!!
Great going, Ruben!!!!



A Note from Ruben

Barbara deserves the prize for "Best Mentor" because she is really special to me... she treats me like family and I love that. She's like a mom to me and I think that's really cool. Havana [her daughter] is really cool too.



For Girls Only ...a Pajama Party with 30 girls and their mentors.

Five Siblings Reunited... at our Bowling Party, and older brother Alphonso saw his sisters and brothers for the first time since their parents were incarcerated six months ago. The children are with different caregivers in Brooklyn and Queens, and have been matched with Hour Children mentors.



Spotlight on...

...**Natalie Credell**, an Hour Working Women Program graduate who lives in one of our residences with her 3-year-old son Nasir. Last year, Natalie completed NYC Department of Health training in Parenting Education. She now counsels and gives parenting workshops to incarcerated mothers twice a week as part of Hour Education and Advocacy Program at Riker's Island. Adding to her busy work schedule and caring for Nasir, Natalie is enrolled in the Credential Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) program and will receive her CASAC-T, or Counselor in Training designation in November 2009. In a few years, after she completes 6,000 hours working in the field and passes the CASAC test, Natalie will become a certified substance abuse counselor serving the community at clinics, hospitals and the like, and earning as much as \$60,000 a year! Way to go Natalie, we always knew you could do it!



Natalie and Son Nasir

Hour Children Community Outreach and Food Pantry



Hour Children Pantry Goes “Client Choice”

To combat hunger in our area of Queens, Hour Children, supported by the NY Community Trust, created its Community Outreach and Food Pantry Program in 2005 to serve the communities of Astoria and Long Island City which have the highest number of people, more than 49,000, at risk of going hungry in the borough. As many as 27% of families here live in poverty, four times the national average. The food pantry serves more than 1,000 families a month, among them the elderly, the disabled, and families with children. And the numbers have been growing every month, especially during the last year.

On Nov. 10, 2008, Sr. Tesa and Christy Robb, the Pantry Coordinator, implemented their long-envisioned plan to convert the Food Pantry to a “Client Choice” operation. A grand opening was held, a festive gathering of clients and our many wonderful partners: the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Food Bank for New York City, the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program, Just Food, the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, the Queens Chamber of Commerce, the United Way and numerous others.

Under Client Choice, the people who use the Hour Children pantry will no longer receive a bag of pre-selected groceries, but rather will “shop” supermarket-style choosing from foods in all the major food groups that best meet their cultural needs and preferences. Unwanted and unused food is a thing of the past as clients get what they want and like. We also label and offer foods that are, to cite just a few examples, “low salt”, “no sugar” or “whole grain,” for those with dietary restrictions.

Just as important, Client Choice allows struggling families and individuals to reassert some control over their lives and helps restore the dignity that is quite often lost when one must seek emergency food assistance. It has been rewarding to see our pantry customers become better-educated consumers and have some choice in the most basic of human needs — the food we eat.



The Pantry Responds to Growing Needs



You have probably read about the extra burdens put on emergency food programs in New York City during this time of economic crisis. On Thanksgiving Eve, Joel Berg, Executive Director of the NYC Coalition Against Hunger, presented his organization’s Annual Hunger Survey of the city’s food pantries at a **news conference** held at Hour Children’s Food Pantry. In attendance were U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, City Councilman Eric Gioia, and many other dignitaries.

Mr. Berg said that emergency food providers report an influx of new clients – 28% more than in 2007. And as pantries scramble to meet demand, they are also saddled with higher food prices and government cuts. Councilman Gioia said, “Eradicating hunger in New York City is a moral issue... and a problem that all New Yorkers should care about.” He also called

the situation “a silent crisis” with families now relying on food pantries who never did so before. Senator Schumer unveiled the hunger relief proposal he is making to Congress, which aims to head off a widening crisis. Christy Robb, the Pantry Coordinator, said that the number of people coming to the Pantry has increased, while funding and food supplies have decreased. Nonetheless, she said Hour Children is firm in its commitment that no hungry person from the community is ever turned away.

Hour Children would like to thank the Long Island City/Astoria chapter of the Lion’s Club for its generous donation, and for its call out to the Queens community to assist Hour Children and its Food Pantry in this time of need. *If you are interested in making a food or monetary donation to our Food Pantry, please contact Linda Manzione, 718-433-4724 ext. 14, or earmark your donation “Hour Children Food Pantry”.*

A Celebration Worth Celebrating

In November, we were honored to be part of Youth I.N.C.’s [Improving Non-Profits for Children] 2008 *Celebration* with 16 other non-profit organizations serving kids in the New York City area. Through the hard work and generosity of our Co-Chairs and Sponsors, we were the **#1 fundraiser** for this annual gala and fundraiser. **Thank you Co-Chairs and Sponsors!** We look forward to even greater success and an even more joyous time at the November 2009 gala.

Welcome to Hour Children: Lisa Belfast, Hour After School Club Coordinator; Yesenia Cheverez, Taconic Nursery Manager; Susan De Maio, Development Director; Courtney Dros, Samantha Galagan, Rebecca Hernandez, and Venita Pinckney to Hour Working Women Program; Leila Hernandez, Thrift Shop Manager; and Lisa Roldan, Mentoring Assistant.



Those Lazy, Hazy Days of Summer Are Not Far...

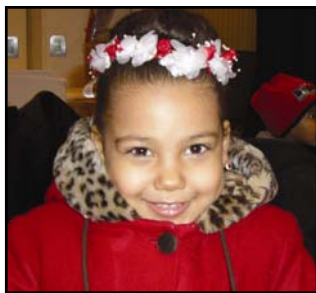
... off, and we are beginning to make summer camp plans for the older children who live with us. For the first time last summer, Hour Children sent 16 elementary school-aged children to camp. Many attended the local YMCA that has an excellent summer program. It is at camp that kids learn about the other side of themselves, the side that stays hidden during the school year.

Children learn so much from camp experiences. There is growth in self-esteem, improved social skills, increased self-sufficiency and new friendships. Studies show that kids' relationships with camp counselors are a strong example of positive mentoring. More to the point, young people who attend a day or overnight summer camp are less likely to drink, use marijuana, or become sexually active

than their non-camp peers. Camping also encourages children to adopt healthy lifestyles and to take positive risks in a safe, nurturing environment.

If you would like to donate to Hour Children for the summer days ahead, you can earmark your donation "Summer Camp 2009".

Christmas at Hour Children



Santa's Workshop was filled, and we thank from the bottom of our heart, the hundreds of schools, community, civic and religious groups, and kind individuals who donated clothing, toys, and school supplies. Your gifts made the 275 children who came to our Annual Christmas Party, and the infants and children in Hour care and in the prison nurseries, very happy. We don't have space here to thank you individually, but we hope that you will experience the joy you gave to us in your own lives this year.

Did you see ... our profile in the **November 2008 issue of the New York Nonprofit Press**? We were thrilled to be honored as Agency of the Month. (And in case you didn't see the article, we have enclosed a copy.)



NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LONG ISLAND CITY, NY 11106
PERMIT 1111

Hour Children
36-11A 12th Street
Long Island City, N.Y. 11106