



New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and Ruth Silber at the Opening Meeting.

Schools Chancellor Recognizes Veteran Volunteer, Announces Great School Volunteer Week

Over 1,000 Learning Leaders volunteers filled the Broadway Ballroom of the New York Marriot Marquis on September 25 for Learning Leaders' annual Opening Meeting. WCBS TV anchor Dana Tyler served as an emcee for the two-hour event, which included entertainment by Staten Island's Curtis High School Jazz Ensemble and Brooklyn's P.S. 5 Chorus and featured a roster of notable speakers offering a hefty dose of volunteer recognition and appreciation.

The keynote speaker, the **Honorable Merryl H. Tisch**, Deputy Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, conveyed the deep and lasting impact that volunteerism has on individuals. "I am a better person today because, along the way, I was touched by a volunteer, I learned to volunteer, and I hope to teach my children to be volunteers," Tisch said. "As Learning Leaders, you have come to epitomize the power of volunteerism."

After listening to veteran volunteer **Lydia Martinez** of P.S. 81 in Queens, **Randi Weingarten**, President of the United Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, commented on her own relationship with the organization. "I've watched Learning Leaders grow. I've watched it become a pillar of what we do in schools. I can't tell you how proud I am of this partnership."

New York City Schools **Chancellor Joel Klein** spoke to the volunteers directly, drawing attention to the power of sustained volunteerism in midst of hard times. "I do think our schools are making progress... I believe we have a lot more work to do. One of the things that will truly matter is whether each of you, and your friends and your communities, continue to volunteer."

The Chancellor also announced the First Annual **Learning Leaders Great School Volunteer Week**, which will take place April 20-24, 2009, and recognized **Ruth Silber** for her 13 years of volunteer service at P.S. 273 in East New York (see related stories). Other distinguished speakers included **Dr. Marcia Lyles**, New York City's Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning; New York City Council Member **Gale Brewer**; and **Dennis Walcott**, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development, who closed the event with a rousing Volunteer Countdown, a yearly ritual that recognizes individuals by years of service as Learning Leaders.

For photos of the event, see "Back to School," page 3



Learning Leaders Trustee, the Honorable Merryl H. Tisch, delivers the Opening Meeting keynote address.

ask me about
Learning Leaders Great School Volunteer Week
April 20-24 2009

www.learningleaders.org

For more about Learning Leaders Great School Volunteer Week see page 8.

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Learning Leaders is

12,000
volunteers

900 schools

235,000
New York City public school students served

Un Día to Remember

More than 220 parents, many of them Learning Leaders volunteers, gathered at Scholastic's Soho headquarters to celebrate **Día: El día de los niños/el día de los libros** on April 30. Acclaimed children's book author Pat Mora first conceived of *Día* in 1996. Now in its twelfth year, the day is recognized nationwide as a

President Mindy Duitz. "April 30th will be a day to celebrate the proud heritage of our City's Latino families, and provide an opportunity for us at Learning Leaders to continue to promote literacy by encouraging families to discover their cultural and linguistic traditions together."

The event featured keynote remarks by noted Spanish radio host **Doctora Isabel** and "standing room only" workshops that addressed how parents could support their children's literacy skills and educational success

using cultural traditions and Spanish-language literature.

Teresa Mlawer, President of Lectorum and a Learning Leaders volunteer, initiated the partnership and co-hosting of this year's event and reminds everyone to save the date for *Día* next year, April 30, 2009. Please visit www.youtube.com to see *Día* featured on **NY1 Noticias**.



Radio host Doctora Isabel with *Día* participants at Scholastic Headquarters.

celebration of children, families, literature, and culture. Co-presented by Learning Leaders and **Scholastic** and **Lectorum**, the largest distributor and publisher of Spanish-language books in the United States, New York City's *Día* was a special event for Latino parents.

"We were thrilled to help bring *Día* to New York City," remarked Learning Leaders'



Clockwise from top left: Cari Kamm, Elizabeth McGarr, Sarah Needham, Jamie Davidson, Shawn Williams, Maggie Ryan, Leah Wittman; Geula and Josh Solomon; Raleigh Ann Blank, Stephanie Van Hassel and Pia Armand; Amanda and Pamela Awad. Photos by Jay Brady Photography.

Young Friends of Learning Leaders Earn Top Marks with Back to School Kick-Off

Guests at the Go Back to School celebration on September 25 at BLVD lounge on the Lower East Side smiled for photos against a school library backdrop and sipped cocktails named "Detention," "Hall Monitor," and "Principal's Office." The event was hosted by the Young Friends of Learning Leaders, a group of young professionals including second generation founders and trustees, volunteers, and friends, and co-chaired by **Geula** and trustee **Josh Solomon**, **Danielle Axelrod** and **Jamie Magid**, and **Amanda Awad**.

Despite stormy weather, the party was a great success, raising \$44,000 for Learning Leaders. The 200 guests browsed a wide-ranging Silent Auction and sampled refreshments donated by **Barefoot Wine & Bubbly**, **Inocente Tequila** and **Evelyn's Chocolates** while DJ **Isaac Flanagan** mixed the music. Learning Leaders President, **Mindy Duitz**, hailed the crowd of young New Yorkers as the new generation of volunteers and civic leaders. Next steps for "YFOLL"? The group will launch their own Book Buddies Club and help Learning Leaders spread the word about volunteering in schools.

A Message from our President

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Learning Leaders

helps New York City public school children succeed by providing them with tutoring and other support from our trained volunteers, and by equipping all parents to support their own children's educational development.

Dear Friends,

As I celebrate the end of my second year as Learning Leaders' president, I am pleased to report to you the preliminary results of our intensive program planning process, made possible by support from the New York Community Trust and Altman Foundation. Through this, we intend to re-envision Learning Leaders' programs and maximize our impact on students, schools, and communities.

With the capable direction of Holly Delaney Cole of Community Resource Exchange (CRE), we convened teams of experts to offer insights and feedback on our programs while staff participated in numerous workgroups. The result of this includes several program pilots, already underway:

Learning Leaders Partnership Schools will be those in which strong communication between the school and Learning Leaders results in more in-depth service delivery. We have confirmed five in the last month: P.S. 96 in East Harlem; P.S. 73 in Ocean Hill, Brooklyn; P.S. 182 in Jamaica, Queens; Bronx Early College Academy for Teaching & Learning in Riverdale, the Bronx; and P.S. 30 in Staten Island.

A systematized **Needs Assessment** process will enable us to identify and meet the needs of a school and ensure commitment from school leadership. Principals have reacted very positively to deploying volunteers in specific ways that support their goals and vision.

An updated **Training Model** for Elementary Volunteer Training will help volunteers motivate children and improve their self-esteem while they gain a better understanding of what happens within a school.

Family Literacy workshops have been redesigned to better equip parents to foster their children's educational development. New content is grade-specific, more focused, and extends to grades 4 and 5.

A **borough-centered** model of program delivery and management in Brooklyn will better capitalize on the skills and talents of staff, customize service delivery to local needs, and encourage community building.

A series of **Middle School Workshops**, supported by the **New York City Council**, will build upon the findings of the Council's Middle School Task Force. The goal is to maintain parent engagement in middle schools by educating parents about curriculum and providing access to school support teams.

Program planning led us to reaffirm the value of our specialized programs — the newly-dubbed **ABCs@learningleaders** — and spawned a comprehensive program evaluation.

With all of this, and the launch of the **Learning Leaders Great School Volunteer Week** in April 2009, I am confident that we embark on our second half-century with a program vision that honors our founders and the tens of thousands of volunteers who have given their time, energy and creativity to the City's children. Our work together is more important than ever in these challenging times. Thank you for your friendship and your investment in our future

Yours truly,



Mindy Duitz



Jay Brady Photography

Ellen Needham is Elected Board Chair

Ellen Needham, a former Vice President at Saks Fifth Avenue, recounts first hearing about Learning Leaders in the early 1990s



Melanie Einzig

through an acquaintance who served on the Board of Trustees. Inspired, she began volunteering in 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms as a "teacher's helper," assisting with everything from reading to math and working with both gifted and struggling students. Needham found that she enjoyed working with children and cherished the kinship she developed with teachers in the classroom.

Over time, Needham learned more about the work of the organization as a whole and in 1996 began to serve as a Learning Leaders trustee, where she devoted her attention to numerous committees including Development and Program. She has served as an officer since 2000.

Co-chairing Learning Leaders' Fiftieth Anniversary Gala last November, however, is what Needham cites her greatest success as a board member. The gala, she says, was "wildly successful," raising a record \$1.1 million, and "had a great energy behind it."

Needham views her role as Chair one of "enabling"—helping President Mindy Duitz and the Learning Leaders team accomplish their goals. She is excited to see what is in store for the organization in the coming year, as the year-long program planning process culminates in the implementation of several pilot projects.

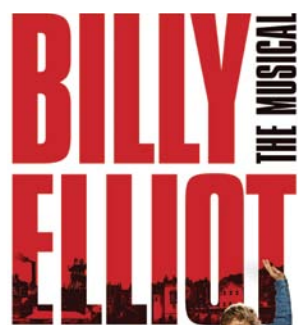
To the committed Learning Leaders volunteers, Needham says: "Keep it up!" To those that are thinking of becoming involved, she says: "Come on in!" "At the core of Learning Leaders," she says, "are volunteers who love what they're doing, and students who love working with them."

Thank you, Iris Weinshall Schumer



Melanie Einzig

Learning Leaders thanks Iris Weinshall Schumer for her continued service and tireless advocacy as she steps down as Chair, a post she held from 2005 to 2008. Weinshall Schumer, who is Vice Chancellor of Facilities Planning, Construction, and Management for the City University of New York, will continue to serve on the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee of the organization.



Theater Benefit Supports Project Homestretch

Learning Leaders 2008 Theater Benefit, **Billy Elliot: The Musical**, raised a record \$120,000 for **Project Homestretch**, Learning Leaders' College Planning and High School Tutoring programs. The event, which took place on October 21, was chaired by **Edith Cassidy** and **Richard Hanley**; **Phyllis** and **Herbert Chernin**, and **Suzanne** and **John Redpath**. Over 100 people attended.

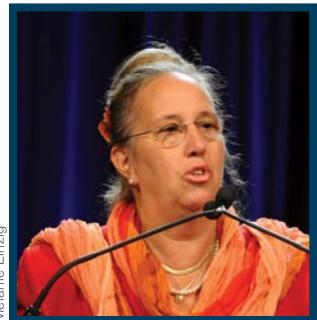
Through Project Homestretch, Learning Leaders recruits, trains and supports over 500 volunteers who work individually with students at 60 New York City public high schools. The proceeds from

the evening will support Project Homestretch's expansion into several new high schools in Brooklyn as well as new partnerships to provide tutoring, SAT prep, and assistance with college applications to students during afterschool hours.

High School volunteers (individuals who can tutor 1-2 hours a week in advanced subject areas) are urgently needed. Training is provided. **Please contact Gene Laughorne at 646-519-8344 or Ricardo Lazo at 646-519-8375.** For information about College Planning, see page 4.

New York City Council Supports Middle School Programs

With the backing of City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, as well as Council Members Gale Brewer, Robert Jackson, and David Yassky, Learning Leaders was awarded a grant of \$80,000 to support the recommendations of the City Council's Middle School Task Force. The Task Force seeks to improve academic performance in New York City middle schools and provide greater resources to students, parents, teachers, and administrators.



Council Member Gale A. Brewer speaking at Learning Leaders 2008 Opening Meeting.

Over the course of this school year, Learning Leaders will create family/school bridges in ten middle schools by conducting workshops for parents of rising sixth graders. The program of workshops will provide parents with tools to help their children transition from elementary to middle school and achieve academic success through the middle school years. Learning Leaders will also offer an information session for parents with guidance on how to further their own education. Learning Leaders will encourage workshop attendees to volunteer in their children's middle schools, where parent volunteerism often declines.

Learning Leaders Launches Partnership with New York City Teaching Fellows

In the fall of 2008, over a dozen new high schools approached Learning Leaders for volunteers who could tutor upper level subjects and serve in schools in the outer boroughs. Fortuitously, Learning Leaders had just started conversations with representatives of the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, who were looking to offer their incoming teachers real-world experience in the New York City public school system before they started the program, and also to provide them with the opportunity to build a career network.

While Learning Leaders maintains a healthy base of over 12,000 school volunteers, volunteer recruitment remains a constant effort. This is particularly true in the case of high school volunteers, who have more demanding requirements. Many NYCTF applicants meet these requirements and are highly motivated.

This past winter and spring, 40 incoming Fellows were placed at 14 high schools or academic support-based organizations across the five boroughs. The program was a great success, particularly effective in schools with well-organized supervisory structures for tutoring and volunteer services. Fellows were granted relative autonomy during tutoring sessions, and many claimed to have learned nearly as much as they taught.

"I developed more confidence in the classroom after each session."

As one volunteer put it, "Getting used to the public education environment was so helpful." Another remarked, "I developed more confidence in the classroom after each session." Feedback from school staff and administration was also very positive; Learning Leaders received several calls requesting additional volunteers. Learning Leaders and New York City Teaching Fellows are now implementing plans to expand the program this year.



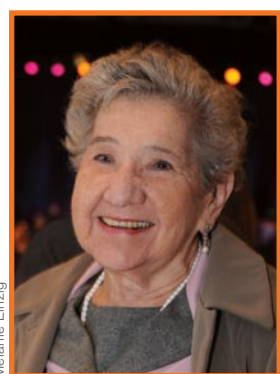
Counter-clockwise from top left: Learning Leaders Program Coordinators Sally DuFore, Marion Pomeranc and Marilyn Shimon; Parent Volunteers from P.S. 126 in the Bronx; UFT/AFT President Randi Weingarten with Volunteer and Special Guest Speaker and volunteer Lydia Martinez; Martine Guerrier, Chief Family Engagement Officer, Office of Family Engagement & Advocacy; Friends of Learning Leaders breakfasting at the Opening Meeting; Queens Parent Coordinators Marvel Belton of P.S. 132, Greta Nathaniel of I.S. 192, Nasrin Shafi of P.S. 95 and Laura Rowe of P.S. 499.

Photos by Melanie Einzig.

Back
TO
SCHOOL
LEARNING LEADERS
OPENING MEETING
SEPTEMBER 25
2008



Learning Leaders Volunteer Awarded New York Post Liberty Medal



Ruth Silber, 83, was both "shocked and thrilled" to be the 2008 recipient of the Leadership Medal. One of only nine Liberty Medals awarded by the New York Post, the Leadership Medal is intended "for a compassionate, disciplined person whose activities during the past year most improved the quality of life in a borough or neighborhood." Silber, a retired union bookkeeper who tends to the library at P.S. 273 in East New York, Brooklyn, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. every weekday, is in a "class" by herself; she has been an active Learning Leaders volunteer and full time elementary school librarian for 13 years.

"She's a phenomenal, energetic lady. She's patient. She's kind and the children love her," says P.S. 273 Principal Melessa Avery. "I enjoy doing it," Silber says. "I love the children. It's so important, when they read. I would like to make the library an important part of the children's lives."

Silber has had to adjust to her newfound celebrity. After her nomination was announced, students began requesting autographs in the hallways. Then there was a television interview on **News 12 Brooklyn**. Most recently, Silber was recognized publicly by New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein on September 25 at Learning Leaders' Opening Meeting, in front of 1,000 volunteers and friends, at the New York Marriott Marquis in Times Square.

"Volunteering keeps you functioning, it keeps your mind alert."

"On behalf of our schools, I salute Ruth Silber, and all of the Learning Leaders volunteers city-wide who help teachers, tutor students, monitor cafeterias, and contribute to positive learning environments every day," said Chancellor Klein.

Silber is grateful for the award and thankful for the opportunity to do what she does. She considers these recent accolades a chance to urge New Yorkers to volunteer "rather than sitting home thinking of your aches and pains." "Volunteering keeps you functioning," Silber avows, "It keeps your mind alert."

"Ruth Silber is an inspiration to us all," remarked Learning Leaders President Mindy Duitz. "She personifies the value of volunteer service and exemplifies over fifty years of Learning Leaders support in the public schools."

College Planning Websites

Look to the internet for information on colleges, financial aid, careers, and campus life. Below are websites that will be helpful as you go through or steer a young person through the college process.

Career Resources

My Future

www.myfuture.com

Occupational Outlook Handbook

www.bls.gov/oco

Financial Aid Resources

College Answer

www.CollegeAnswer.com

College Board

www.collegeboard.com/paying

FastWeb

www.fastweb.com

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

www.fafsa.ed.gov

College and University Lists

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

www.naicu.edu

Community Colleges

www.utexas.edu/world/comcol/alpha
www.communitycollegereview.com

College Rankings

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

www.hsf.net

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

www.smart.net/~pope/hbcu/hbculist.htm

United Negro College Fund

www.uncf.org

Ventures Scholars Program

www.venturescholar.org

Study Skills

Resources

Homework Helper

school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck

Resources for the Student Athlete

National Collegiate Athletic Association

www.ncaa.org

“When students begin to seriously consider college, they see new hope—a new opening.”

Program Spotlight

**LEARNING LEADERS
GIVES IT THE OLD**

COLLEGE

TRY

**TUTORS HELP STUDENTS
PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION**

The college application and admissions process is not easy to unravel without help, particularly for students who were not raised in a college-bound culture. These are facts that **Carla Shere**, Ed.D., who has run the College Planning Program at Learning Leaders for the past six years, knows well.

Shere has quite literally written the book on College Planning (Learning Leaders' *College Planning Guide*, which she updates every two years), and she's built the program in its current form from the ground up. College preparation was Shere's chosen field of academic study, and after eight years as a College Planning volunteer at Learning Leaders, she was the clear choice to head the program.

Shere is motivated primarily by her ability to serve a need in the community. “Out of everything we do,” Shere says, “I'd say the most important is giving the students options.

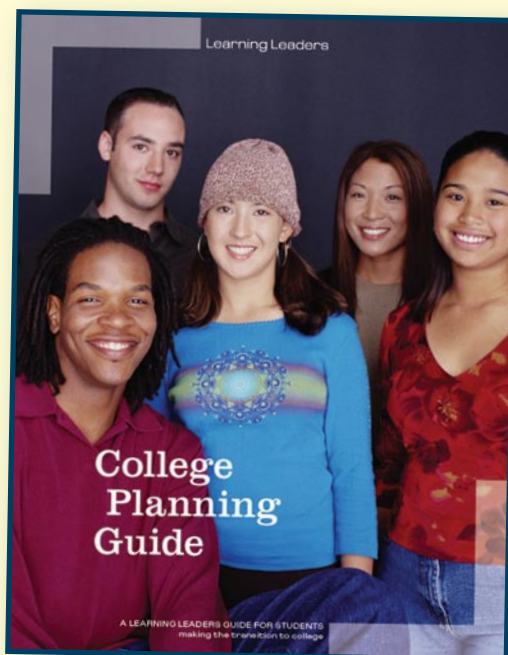
We have the time to sit down one-on-one and let students know what is available to them. I think that's where we are especially helpful.”

When Shere says “we,” she means the 72 College Planning volunteers, who together work with over 3,000 students at 64 sites throughout the five boroughs. She has trained and mentored all of her volunteers. “I love the volunteers,” Shere says, “They're all such sharp people. They have an innate sense and care about the students they work with.”

Chris Farmer, college advisor at the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, is equally effusive about the College Planning volunteer in his office. “When you're in an environment like this, it's really important to give attention to each student. You're genuinely guiding the students. Every detail is important, and there's an overwhelming amount of detail.”

That's where **Deborah Stewart**, a Learning Leaders trustee, comes in. Stewart works alongside Farmer in

the college advising office two days each week. “Her responsibilities are just like mine,” Farmer says, “college matchmaking, SAT review, helping students fill out applications.” But the biggest help, according to Farmer, is that Stewart is “great at working one-on-one with the kids: brainstorming, editing, and polishing their personal statements.”



The program has thrived under Shere's direction, quadrupling in its size and its impact.

And yet—true to form—Shere feels compelled rather than satisfied. “The biggest challenge now is getting volunteers to travel to the outer boroughs, where there is such a need for the work we do.”

Juan Figueroa and his Gamma Omega Delta fraternity brothers at Queens College, however, were more inspired than challenged. “We wanted to give back one way or another. Our motto is ‘Build our future by reclaiming our past,’ and it made

sense to us that students signify the future.” Online research led the group to Learning Leaders, which Figueroa saw as “the top of the line.” He attended Shere's training and the program grew from there.

Almost four years later, Figueroa is still an active College Planning volunteer with Learning Leaders. “The best part of being a volunteer,” he says, “is the partnership I feel with the school, and with the kids.” And, of course, feeling needed. Figueroa is aware that there are many complex reasons for it, “but the students aren't aware that college is available at such a low cost to them. They don't know about scholarships, financial aid.” That's why his work at Flushing High School is particularly fulfilling. When students begin to seriously consider college, Figueroa feels success. “You can see it,” he says, “When they do, they see new hope—a new opening.”

For more information or to become a College Planning volunteer, contact Carla Shere at 646-519-8362 or cshere@learningleaders.org



Professional Women Photographers



▲ Photos

FIRST ROW Volunteers from PricewaterhouseCoopers and students from P.S. 73 in the Bronx. Photos by Karen Smul.

SECOND ROW Students from P.S. 126 in the Bronx. Photos by Karen Smul.

THIRD ROW (1-2): Learning Leaders Program Coordinator Liu Yang, and volunteers being trained at P.S. 42 in Manhattan. Photos by Jane Hoffer.

THIRD ROW (2-4): Author Carol Friedman and students during an Authors Read Aloud at P.S. 241 in Brooklyn. Photos by Andy Mars.

Learning Leaders is thrilled to feature the work of members of **Professional Women Photographers (PWP)**. Each year, the community service committee of PWP partners with a nonprofit organization to provide photographic services to the nonprofit for use on websites, in brochures and posters (see left) or other materials, or simply to build its photography archives.

The community service committee selected Learning Leaders this year based on its commitment to the success of the City's public school students through a wide range of educational programs, as well as its strong need for diverse and exciting photography. **Karen Smul**, PWP's Director of Programs, knew about Learning Leaders through her mother, **Helen Judlowe**, a long-term Project Homestretch volunteer and former trustee.

In 1975, an exhibition of 400 photographs entitled "**Breadth of Vision: Portfolios of Women Photographers**" at the Fashion Institute of Technology galvanized a group of women to begin regular meetings to share information, swap stories and reveal works-in-progress. Initially informal, the benefit of

these meetings gave rise to the Professional Women Photographers as a non-profit professional association.

Today PWP counts as active members over 200 photographers, many of whom are full time working photographers, some of whom work part-time in fine art and commercial areas, and others who work in related fields as photo editors, photo researchers and curators. The list includes **Mary Heller**, an Honorary Trustee of Learning Leaders and accomplished photographer.

Smul says, "We value our community service work very much. Through volunteering, we have the privilege to photograph so many wonderful faces and interesting places that we would never discover on our own. When a nonprofit such as Learning Leaders uses our photography for its publications, we know that we have succeeded in capturing a special moment or feeling. That knowledge is as important to us as photographers as the images are to the organization we are helping."

For more information on the Professional Women Photographers, please visit pwponline.org.



Program Highlights

Ethel Price Retires



Learning Leaders staff

Ethel Price has been an institution at Learning Leaders since joining the staff in the 1960s. She served the City's public school students with passion and personality, most recently as the Program Coordinator

for Literary Leaders (now called **BookTalk@learningleaders**), a post she held since 1984.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Vassar College, Price earned an A.M. in Comparative Literature from Harvard University. She began her career in merchandising at Macy's but altered course and began teaching elementary school after the birth of her son.

Until 1984, Price supervised and trained volunteers to work with students from first grade through high school. When it comes to education, Price has said, experience is everything. "You learn more when you are on the firing line," she states, "than you do from theories and books."

The latest chapter of Price's career at Learning Leaders began when she assumed leadership of its Junior Great Books program, which functioned much like a book club. Originally called Jr. Book Talk, but ultimately renamed Literary Leaders, Price directed the program, trained all the volunteers and supervised all program sites until her retirement last June. According to Price, Literary Leaders "was a novelty for kids to know they didn't have to adhere to a prescribed answer. As long as their answer is based on the material read, original thinking and imagination, restrained only by logic, can take them in new directions."

To her volunteers, she was a legend and a force to be reckoned with. But above all, Price loved working directly with students. "Nobody can help others teach without keeping in constant

touch with the pupils themselves," she attests, adding that "the students are a fountainhead of energy and inspiration, and one must go to them, the source, for renewal."

When asked for words of wisdom for Learning Leaders volunteers, Price advises, "Continue on the road you have traveled. It gets better, easier, and more rewarding as time goes on." Price says that she has been witness to tremendous positive growth at Learning Leaders, and believes that the organization's impact is "broader now than ever, with so many interesting new facets and goals."

Learning Leaders honored Price at its **Year End Celebration** for Special Program Volunteers last spring. President Mindy Duitz commended Price for "so many years of committed, passionate service." In her honor, Learning Leaders

has renamed its primary training and conference room the **Ethel Price Training Room**.

Matthew Haiken joins Learning Leaders

Learning Leaders is pleased to welcome **Matthew Haiken** as Program Specialist for **BookTalk@learningleaders** (formerly Literary Leaders). Haiken, who began volunteering with the program last year, currently leads 4th and 5th grade book discussion groups at P.S. 72 and P.S. 171 in East Harlem and will focus on expanding the program in Upper Manhattan. Haiken worked previously at Friedman Kaplan Seiler & Adelman, and put a legal career aside to explore promoting literacy and reading in the New York City public schools.

Become a BookTalk volunteer!

Learning Leaders currently seeks individuals to volunteer in schools on the Lower East Side and Upper Manhattan. Please call (646) 519-8354, or email booktalk@learningleaders.org.

Share Fairs 2008

Last spring Learning Leaders continued its annual Share Fair series, which brings professionals from diverse backgrounds and vocations into schools to speak with students about the career and educational choices they have made. This year, volunteers and Learning Leaders friends visited 2nd through 6th grade classes at four schools—reaching more than 170 students.

The first Share Fair took place on May 16 at P.S. 327 in Brownsville. Volunteers and staff presented career information sessions, including a discussions of available

resources. **Sweeney Padilla**, an insurance agent at New York Life, for example, visited second and sixth grade classes to speak about his career in the insurance industry.

On May 20, at P.S. 221 in Crowns Heights, College Planning volunteer **Albert Tannis**, a retired financial analyst and elected member of the Community Educational Council for District 18; **Phillip Weis**, a senior corporate counsel at Pfizer; and **David Ginage**, a private investigator, spoke to fourth and fifth graders. On May 29, employees from **Pfizer**, the New York Organ Donor Network, and New York City's Economic Development Corporation visited P.S. 92 in Central Harlem, addressed over 60 students.

The final Share Fair, held at P.S. 75 in Hunts Point on June 11, featured journalist **Barbara Thau**, Criminal Defense Attorney **Seema Iyer**, and Director of the Flushing YMCA YouthBuild program, **Elizabeth Carmona Morgan**.

Learning Leaders Share Fairs educate students on the broad range of career paths, inspire them to set goals for themselves, and also convey the importance of giving back through community service and volunteerism.

If you are interested in participating in Learning Leaders' Share Fair Volunteer Corps, please contact Heather Whyte at 646-519-8337 or hwhyte@learningleaders.org.



Miriam Perez, Ezra Nanton, Elizabeth Carmona Morgan and Sweeney Padilla.

Learning Leaders staff

Volunteer Spotlight

Michael Aponte



Michael Aponte was chosen as Learning Leaders Volunteer of the Month for April 2008. A Project Homestretch volunteer at William Cullen Bryant High School in Long Island City, Queens since December 2007, Aponte was nominated

by staff member Gene Laughorne for his exemplary work in English tutoring and providing college planning guidance. Beyond the classroom, Aponte also conducts motivational workshops on topics with real-world relevance, like peer pressure, staying in school, and drug prevention.

Aponte, a Financial Advisor at Merrill Lynch, attended public school in the neighborhood where

he volunteers. He is the first to acknowledge that he was not the ideal student. "I hung out with the wrong crowd," he admits, "and did not have a love for school." After leaving high school, Aponte entered the work force and eventually joined the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC), which helped him earn a B.A. in Philosophy from Queens College. Yet just before Aponte was commissioned to become a cadet, he experienced two family hardships, including the death of a brother-in-law in Iraq. Despite these events Aponte considers this difficult time to be a turning point in his life, urging him to take inventory of his own path and reevaluate his ambition.

After much thought, Aponte decided to pursue a career in the financial sector and ultimately to share his experience—both his successes and his failures—with high school students. He knew that his experience in the public school system was far from singular, and he saw an opportunity for others to benefit from his experience.

According to Laughorne, the authenticity of Aponte's story is an inspiration. "He is an important presence in the school. He speaks with students about how to succeed in high school, including how to combat bad neighborhoods and negative peers." Indeed, Aponte's efforts were so helpful that the Vice Principal at William Cullen Bryant High School asked him to assist the English Department in their 'Listen & Share' club. In that capacity, Aponte assists teachers in motivating students to read and to participate in other extracurricular activities every other week.

Aponte often tells his students during his workshops, "There is no such thing as an unreachable goal. You have to follow your heart. No one should have regret in their life."

"There is no such thing as an unreachable goal. You have to follow your heart."

For profiles of all Learning Leaders of the Month for 2007-2008, please visit www.learningleaders.org.

Books for Brownsville

To celebrate **National Volunteer Week**, Learning Leaders welcomed **American Express** employees to **P.S. 327 in Brownsville, Brooklyn** on April 29. Volunteers paired up and visited two classrooms each, where they read books and supervised interactive art projects related to the shared reading. Kindergarteners read *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni and created colorful underwater murals with sponge paint; first graders read *Cherries and Cherry Pits* by Vera B. Williams and each planted their own fruit to take home; and second graders read *A Chair for My Mother*, also by Williams, and created piggybanks to instill the lesson of saving money. Learning Leaders and American Express gratefully acknowledge the in-kind donation of books from **Scholastic Inc.**

Suess-a-Thon

On May 6, **TIAA-CREF** celebrated its 90th birthday with read-aloud **Seuss-a-thon** events in three cities including New York, where the company sent 80 volunteers to **P.S. 38 and P.S. 57 in East Harlem in partnership with Learning Leaders**. Employees spent an hour reading classic works by Dr. Seuss to children in kindergarten through 2nd grade, and presented youngsters with books gathered at a TIAA-CREF book drive. The volunteers gathered in the sunny garden courtyard at P.S. 57 to celebrate and were welcomed by Learning Leaders and school staff.

"This is a great school," said sixteen-year veteran Learning Leaders Program Coordinator **Sally DuFore**. "I'm so glad that you all could come here, and see with your own eyes just one of many New York City public school success stories." **Principal Israel Soto** thanked the volunteers "for taking the time to do something for these children, this school, and this neighborhood."

Reading in Alphabet City

Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks volunteers participated in a successful visit to **P.S. 15 in Manhattan** on May 12. The twenty volunteers spent a full day at the school, and, guided by Learning Leaders staff, read and lead interactive projects with students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Volunteer **Daniel Mitchell** enjoyed the day, although he reported finding the activities a bit more challenging than he had anticipated. "The kids were a lot of fun; they have tons of energy! I definitely gained a greater appreciation for the hard work of elementary school teachers everywhere," he said.

Beth Wells, Learning Leaders Program Coordinator, felt the event was "a win/win." "The corporate folks had a chance to gain insight and a feel for New York City public schools, which can only be a good thing as they consider future community service."

Bookfest in the Bronx and Bushwick with PricewaterhouseCoopers

While the school year was in its final stages this June, Learning Leaders community outreach hit an all-time high, thanks in large part to the Charitable Contributions team at **PricewaterhouseCoopers**.

Joan Cloughley from PricewaterhouseCoopers was the driving force behind this outstanding partnership. Cloughley reached out to Learning Leaders after another successful season of **Book Buddies**, a program through which employees and 3rd graders exchange letters about shared reading throughout the year. She was eager to expand the partnership to include larger-scale events. Learning Leaders welcomed the opportunity to evaluate the impact of such events on the school environment, students and teachers. The result was **Bookfest in the Bronx and Bushwick with PwC**, a massive mobilization of over 150 volunteers over two days in four elementary schools.

The events were, by all accounts, enormously successful and brought together volunteers, students, teachers, parents, and school leaders. Many parent volunteers in the school served as liaisons and enjoyed the opportunity to speak about their school community to PricewaterhouseCoopers employees.

Yahaira Degro, Learning Leaders Program Coordinator for District 9 in the Bronx, captured the general sentiment among participants. "With the right group leader and help from Learning Leaders' staff and on-site volunteers at the school, it was amazing. Right after the event I was ready to go into another school and offer them this program."

The program was based on a Learning Leaders' time-honored Read Aloud model in which volunteers are trained in the best methods for captivating and holding the attention of young children. Learning Leaders program developers took it a step further, constructing a **Learn Out Loud**, in which children are guided through a group project immediately following the reading. The craft or activity is used to apply the themes and lessons of the book, and provides the students a chance to be both creative and cooperative. Each student received their own book, thanks to the generosity of PricewaterhouseCoopers. Not surprisingly, the children were delighted.

Parent Coordinator **Nancy Santiago** at **P.S. 126** in the Bronx summed up the spirit of goodwill that infused her Bookfest as she thanked the volunteers and Learning Leaders at the close of the day. "I can't tell you how much this means to us, and to the kids, to have you all come up here. We'll remember this for a long, long time."

Above: Bookfest in the Bronx with PricewaterhouseCoopers.
Photos: Karen Smul/Professional Women Photographers



Learning Leaders of the Month

Meet Our Outstanding "Learning Leaders Volunteers of the Month" for 2007-2008

September

Jackie Layne, P.S. 221, Brooklyn
Shawn Evans, P.S. 92, Manhattan

October

Mariana Colella-Chung, P.S. 81, Queens
Terry Lambert, P.S. 75, Bronx

November

Diana Liccese, P.S. 71, Bronx
Stacy Barrow, P.S. 221, Brooklyn

December

Carol Rein, P.S. 144, Queens
Ms. Perez, P.S. 112, Bronx

January

Nestora Diaz, P.S. 10, Brooklyn

February

Diana Santana, P.S. 107, Bronx
Averil Mason-Scantlebury, P.S. 221, Brooklyn

March

Roland Roberts, P.S. 102, Brooklyn
Sharnice McNeely-Dickey, P.S. 38, Manhattan

April

Michael Aponte, William C. Bryant H.S., Queens
Shantay Martin, P.S. 38, Manhattan

May

Gina Dokko, P.S. 20, Manhattan
Ruth Simring, Health Professions and Human Services H.S., Manhattan

June

Holly Barton, Millennium H.S. Manhattan
Bob Morris, P.S. 27 Manhattan (Authors Read Aloud)

To nominate a volunteer as Learning Leader of the Month, please contact Heather Whyte at hwhyte@learningleaders.org or (646)-519-8337. You may also download the nomination form at www.learningleaders.org.

Carol Kellermann Scholarship Applications Due April 4, 2009

The Carol Kellermann Scholarship Program provides tuition and related support to women who are currently active Learning Leaders volunteers. The awards are meant to help them start an undergraduate degree program or return to a previously interrupted college career. Applications are reviewed twice a year. **The next deadline is Friday, April 4, 2009 for students who intend to start September 2009 (fall semester).**

The program was established in 2003 by Learning Leaders' Board of Trustees to recognize the outstanding leadership of **Carol Kellermann**, who served as President and Executive Director of Learning Leaders from 1998 to 2002.

Applicants must have been accepted (or be in the process of applying) to a degree program in a fully accredited college in order to qualify. They must also have served as a Learning Leaders volunteer for a minimum of two years.

To request an application or more information, call **Carla Shere, Ed.D.** at 212-213-3370 x362 or visit www.learningleaders.org.

Book Corner

Books for Middle Schoolers

Maintaining a love of reading for the middle school student can be challenging. Through our work in middle schools we have learned from the students themselves which books they enjoy the most. Here are some fun books we know will catch the interest of your middle schooler!

Absolutely Normal Chaos

by Sharon Creech

Esperanza Rising

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

The Memory Keepers Daughter

by Kim Edwards

Glory Field

by Walter Dean Myers

Hush

by Jacqueline Woodson

Inkheart

by Cornelia Funke

Library Card

by Jerry Spinelli

Sahara Special

by Esme Raji Codell

Slam

by Walter Dean Myers

The Contender

by Robert Lipsyte

The Giver

by Lois Lowry

The Hobbit

by J.R.R. Tolkien

The Hoot

by Carl Hiaasen



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Save the Date

Learning Leaders **Great School Volunteer Week** April 20-24 2009

April 20-24, 2009

Get ready for the First Annual Learning Leaders Great School Volunteer Week to celebrate New York City's public school volunteers!

Learning Leaders will help New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds celebrate National Volunteer Week in the public schools, with 500 volunteer events. The event will highlight the many ways volunteers can serve in schools to help students succeed. Visit www.learningleaders.org for more information.

April 30, 2009

Mark your calendars! Learning Leaders, Scholastic, and Lectorum will present the second annual **Día: El día de los niños/el día de los libros**, a special event for New York City's Latino parents.

The free event is open to parents of New York City's 415,000 Latino school children and will include a wide offering of dual-language workshops.



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