

The Learning Letter

Winter 2007

Commitment to Immigrant Parents

At the annual Opening Meeting in September, Learning Leaders' new president, Mindy Duitz, pledged to focus the resources of the largest volunteer educational support program in New York City on recruiting and training parent volunteers from growing immigrant communities.

Duitz (pronounced "deets") told the nearly 2,000 volunteers present that parents who are recent immigrants often require the help of an advocate to ensure that their children receive academic assistance necessary to succeed in school and in life.

"There is no better time than now for parent involvement in the schools," said Duitz, a former long-term director of both the Staten Island and Brooklyn Children's Museums as well as a management and planning consultant for museums, arts and educational organizations and foundations throughout the country. "Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein recognize the important role parents must play in their children's education, and have literally opened school doors to parents for the first time in many years. With nearly 15,000 volunteers already in the schools, Learning Leaders is taking a leadership role in advocating on behalf of all parents, but especially those whose voices are not often heard."



Learning Leaders supports immigrant parents through informational workshops in every borough that address immigrant parents' rights and how the Department of Education meets the needs of English Language Learners.

Family Literacy and Numeracy workshops, offered in English, Spanish and Chinese build parents' confidence reading to their children and prepare them to promote math and writing skills. In addition, special publications and training manuals are currently available in Spanish and Chinese, and Bengali.



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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 parents to support their own children's educational development. Nearly 15,000 volunteers help 235,000 public school students in 967 of our City's schools.

A Message from Our President

Since joining Learning Leaders in the fall, I have been getting to know the organization and the many people who enable our efforts to educate and encourage New York City's public school children.

Our volunteers are at the forefront of these efforts, and the positive impact they make throughout the City's schools is well-documented. I have been deeply impressed by the

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Learning Leaders, I have often considered how the organization's story reflects the history, growth and diversity of New York City in general and the public schools in particular.

Learning Leaders is at a pivotal point in its long and successful evolution. Its growth from the first cadre of 20 volunteers to a corps of 15,000 has required significant changes in its programs, operations, and budget. Looking ahead, in our collaborations with school and community-based organizations, Learning Leaders will be continually changing as we explore new program models and refine current ones. With the largest number of volunteers in its history, serving the most culturally diverse student population in the history of New York City, this is no small task.

Shaping a 21st century vision for Learning Leaders must honor the success and strength of the past, while responding to the current era of reform and parental involvement in the schools. I am confident that the wisdom and experience needed to articulate this vision and the creativity and flexibility to chart our new course for the future are present within the organization and among its constituents and partners in education.

I am grateful for the welcome I have received from the Board, staff, and volunteers, and am honored to lead the organization into its sixth decade of groundbreaking work.

Mindy Duitz
President

breadth and depth of their backgrounds as well as the extraordinary dedication and caring they bring to their students.

I have also been greatly impressed by the strong commitment, talent, and record of achievement of the Board and staff who work with and for Learning Leaders. And finally, on this 50th anniversary of

Flashback

"Among doctors, artists and specialists in other settings, it had been common practice to offer one's services in a volunteer capacity and the schools needed to avail themselves of this type of service. It was a rare teacher who was expert in all fields, and it was a wise teacher who called on volunteers who were trained specialists or who had particular skills to assist him in the classroom."

— Ms. T. Margaret Jamer,
first Director of
School Volunteer Program

Tutor Tips

Quick Tips for Online Safety for Teens



- Put everything behind a password protected wall, where only friends you allow can have access.
- Protect your password and make sure you really know who someone is before you allow them onto your friends list.
- If you put your photos online, blur and morph them so they will not be abused by cyber bullies or predators.
- What you post online stays online — FOREVER! So think b4uclick!
- Don't say anything online you wouldn't say offline.
- Protect your privacy and your friends' privacy as well...get their permission before posting their picture or something about them online.
- Check with your friends to see what they are posting or saying about you. Even if you are careful, what they do may be putting you at risk.
- Never give out your address or set up meetings with someone you met online. That cute 15-year-old boy, may not be cute, may not be 15 and may not be a boy!

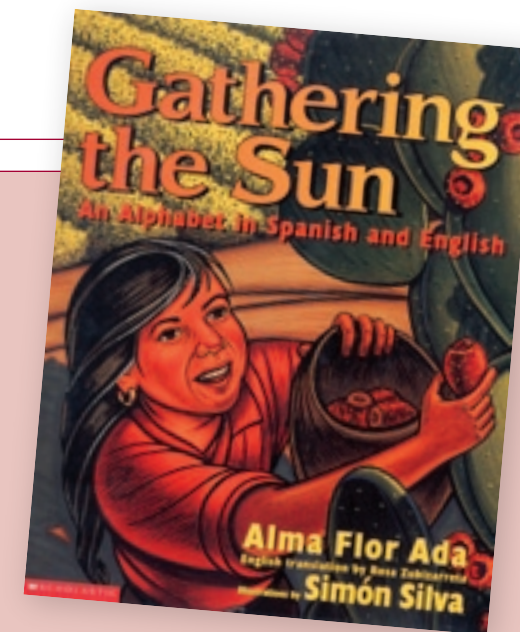
Ideas para Tutores

Consejos para la Seguridad de los Adolescentes en la Computadora

- Ponga todo detras de una pared protegida con una contraseña, donde solamente los amigos que usted asigna pueden tener acceso.
- Proteja su contraseña y asegurese de conocer bien quien es la persona antes de poner lo en su lista de amistades.
- Si usted pone sus photos en el internet empañelos o pongalos borrosos para que los abusadores que stan en el internet no los puedan utilizar.
- ¡Lo que usted pone en el internet permanece allí para siempre! Piense bien la información que va a poner en su computadora.
- ¡No diga nada por el internet que usted no diria en persona!
- Proteja su privacidad y la privacidad de sus amistades tambien...pidales su permiso antes de poner su photo o algo sobre ellos en el internet.
- Comuniquese con sus amistades para saber que ellos estan poniendo en el internet sobre ti. Aunque usted sea muy cuidadoso lo que ellos hagan lo puede poner a usted en riesgo.
- Nunca de su dirección o haga citas con alguien que usted conocio por internet. ¡Ese muchacho de 15 años, puede ser otra persona, puede que no tenga 15 años y puede que no sea un joven!

Thanks

Learning Leaders would like to thank Scholastic for its very generous gift of 25,000 books. These books will be used in our Family Literacy program and in Book Buddies, our literacy-focused pen-pal program, which matches teams of corporate employees with public school students. Through the Scholastic Book Grant Program, grade-appropriate books help our volunteers and parents put our reading tips into action.



Opening Meeting Celebrates Volunteers



Learning Leaders' Opening Meeting was a wonderful opportunity to pay tribute to our nearly 15,000 volunteers. Hosted by Dana Tyler, WCBS2 news anchor and herself a Learning Leaders volunteer, the kick-off event at the Marriott Marquis in Manhattan had roughly 2,000 volunteers in attendance, all displaying great energy and passion for their work.

In the words of Iris Weinshall Schumer, Chairman of the Learning Leaders' Board of Trustees, "This kickoff event is a celebration of the power of volunteerism in helping New York City public school children succeed in school and in life." In her first official appearance, Learning Leaders' new president, Mindy Duitz, praised the organization's direct involvement in the schools, service to parents, and outreach to immigrant populations.

The event featured remarks by Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott and a keynote address by Department of Education Chancellor Joel Klein. Walcott hailed Learning Leaders as "the true Peace Corps of New York City." And Klein stated, "New York City has many partnerships with public education. Learning Leaders is one of the best!"

UFT President Randi Weingarten and District 19 Councilman Tony Avella were also on the program. As Weingarten told the volunteers, "It takes a village to raise children...You're a helping hand – a hand on their shoulder."

In addition, Betty Gonzalez-Soto, Principal of P.S. 211 in the Bronx, shared her perspective as the head of a school on the important role that volunteers play in teachers' and students' lives. And entertainment was provided by the "Singing Sensations" chorus of PS 273 in Brooklyn, who saluted the volunteers with several songs, the finale being a rousing rendition of "You Are My Sunshine."

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Learning Leaders has a solid record of success in helping students in New York City public schools. Today our volunteers are helping *nearly a quarter million children* experience success and develop confidence in their own abilities.

Above, left to right: The Singing Sensations of PS 273 in Brooklyn; Ada-Nater Cortez, Parent Coordinator from PS 64 in the Bronx, shows her spirit; volunteers from PS 95 in Queens.

Reunión del Comienzo del Año Escolar Celebra los Voluntarios



La reunión del principio del año de Learning Leaders fue una oportunidad maravillosa para rendirle homenaje a nuestros 15,000 voluntarios. Presentado por Dana Tyler la reportera principal de WCBS2 también una voluntaria de Learning Leaders, el evento en el Marriott Marquis en Manhattan fue asistido por 2,000 voluntarios todos demostrando mucha energía y pasión por su trabajo como voluntarios.

En las palabras de Iris Weinshall Schumer, Presidente de la Junta de Learning Leaders, "Este evento es una celebración del poder del voluntarismo para ayudar a los niños de las escuelas públicas de Nueva York a tener éxito en la escuela y en la vida." En su primera aparición oficial, la nueva Presidenta de Learning Leaders, Mindy Duitz, alabó a la organización por su trabajo en las escuelas, sus servicios a los padres, y su trabajo con los inmigrantes.

El evento incluyó comentarios por el Comisionado al Alcalde Dennis Walcott y un discurso inaugural por el Canciller del Departamento de Educación Joel Klein. Walcott aclamó a Learning Leaders como "el verdadero Cuerpo de Paz en la ciudad de Nueva York." Klien dijo, "La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene muchas asociaciones con la educación pública. Learning Leaders es uno de los mejores!"

La Presidenta de la Federación Unida de Maestras Randi Weingarten y el Concejal del Distrito 19 Tony Avella también fueron parte del programa. Como Randi Weingarten les dijo a los voluntarios, "Se toma un pueblo para criar a los niños...Ustedes son una mano ayudante – una mano en sus hombros."

Betty Gonzalez-Soto, Principal de PS 211 en el Bronx, compartió su perspectiva sobre el papel importante que los voluntarios desempeñan en las vidas de las maestras, y los estudiantes. El entretenimiento fue proveído por el coro "Los Singing Sensations" de PS 273 en Brooklyn, quienes saludaron a los voluntarios con varias canciones incluyendo una excelente rendición de la canción "You are my Sunshine" (*Tu Eres Mi Sol*).

Celebrando su 50 aniversario este año Learning Leaders tiene una constancia sólida de éxito en ayudar a los estudiantes en las escuelas públicas de Nueva York. Hoy nuestros voluntarios ayudan a casi un cuarto de millón de niños sentir el éxito y a desarrollar confianza en sus habilidades.

Arriba, de izquierda a derecha: Los Singing Sensations de PS 273 en Brooklyn; Ada Nater-Cortez, Coordinadora de Padres de PS 64 en el Bronx, demuestra su espíritu; voluntarios de PS 95 en Queens.



Timeline

- 1956** Learning Leaders, formerly the New York City School Volunteer Program (SVP), is launched by the Public Education Association at PS 191 in Manhattan with 20 volunteers
- 1957** The Reading Help Program is started to help children improve reading skills, and initiates SVP's volunteer instructional model
- 1961** SVP begins the Conversational English Program (English as a second language)
- 1970** SVP is incorporated as an independent not-for-profit
- 1972** SVP is making a difference in all 5 boroughs with 2,000 volunteers, and serves as a model for similar volunteer programs around the country
- 1981** 25th Anniversary of SVP
- 1999** NYC School Volunteer Program changes name to Learning Leaders
- 2001** Learning Leaders hits the 10,000 volunteer mark
- 2006** Learning Leaders celebrates 50th Anniversary with 15,000 volunteers

Spotlight on Queens: these photos from a 1970 newsletter feature volunteers and children at PS 155Q, PS 179Q and PS 148Q (top to bottom).



Nina Untermeyer, former Learning Leaders Trustee and volunteer, reads to children at PS 96 in Manhattan, 1970.

Flashbacks

- An early volunteer wrote in her journal: "In a class of this number—32—and this age, first graders, there are an infinite variety of things a volunteer can do, none of them requiring pedagogical training. They are just practical, 'homey' things that anyone who has been around children at all would know to do."
- Another early volunteer wrote: "This is the sort of work I have always wanted to do. This teacher handles these children with much understanding and love. I always leave happy that I have been here."
- And still another wrote: "Worked on reading games with small group. Then worked with one child—Freddy, who has serious learning problem. Appeared to make great progress. Teacher was very pleased and discussed her class with me freely. Wants me back. So do children."
- A teacher said of one of our earliest volunteers: "Thank you for your help and love. It would take too long to tell all the things the children have learned from the volunteers but Mrs. Porter's work with songs and rhythms, her explanation of how the piano works, her description of a concert hall, and the seating arrangements of a symphony orchestra come to mind."

Carol Kellerman Scholarship Program

Applications for the Carol Kellerman Scholarship Program are now being accepted for the Fall 2007 semester. The scholarships are available to any female Learning Leaders volunteer (of 2 years or more) for undergraduate study at any university in New York City. Up to 4 scholarships will be awarded based on scholastic aptitude, a personal statement/essay, demonstrated financial need, any unusual family or personal circumstances, and service as a Learning Leader. The deadline is March 23, 2007.

For more information or to request an application, please call Carla Shere at (212) 213-3370 ext. 362.



Learning Leaders of the Month



Dana Tyler speaks to Robert Pilch at the Opening Meeting

September

Yamileth D. Martinez-Zaccaro
PS 8/District 10, Bronx

Robert Piltch PS 200/District 20, Brooklyn

Cynthia Perch PS/IS 156/District 29, Queens

Pam Brown PS 34/District 1, Manhattan

October

Selina Kayser PS 106/District 11, Bronx

Marie Gorman PS 309/District 16, Brooklyn

Ida-Mae Harrison PS 105/District 27, Queens

Belkis Poche PS 4/District 6, Manhattan

November

Angelina Aquino PS 18/District 7, Bronx

Bernice Woods PS 309/District 16, Brooklyn

Beverly Clark-Griggsby
PS 154/District 5, Manhattan

Valrita V. Sterling
PS 37 & PS 270/District 29, Queens

Original Volunteers of 1956

Helen Acker • Florence Beer • Dorothy Bildersee • Clara Blitzer
Marion Dryfoos (Heiskell) • Mary Fisk • Helen Gates • Susan Harlow
B. Elizabeth Kallman • Anna Kennedy • Elsbeth Kroeber
Mildred Meyer • Ernestine Meye • Kathleen Mortimer • Isabel Nichols
Mary Pease • Mildred Spero • Miriam Spotnitz
Julia Tashereau • Mary Whele • Emily Esten (Whalen)



Book Corner



Youth

*"We have tomorrow
Bright before us
Like a flame.
Yesterday
A night-gone thing,
A sun-down name.
And dawn-today
Broad arch above the road we came.
We march!"*
– Langston Hughes

Take a moment to share a poem with a young reader.

Danitra Brown Leaves Town
by Nikki Grimes

The Dream Keepers and Other Poems
by Langston Hughes

Grandparents Song
by Sheila Hamanaka

Harlem
by Walter Dean Myers

Moon, Have You Met My Mother?
by Karla Kuskin

Oh! the Places You'll Go!
Dr. Seuss

Plum
by Tony Mitton

Neighborhood Odes
by Gary Soto

Where the Sidewalk Ends
by Shel Silverstein

Yesterday I Had the Blues
by Jeron Ashford Frame



A Meeting of the Learning Leaders Board of Trustees, 1971.

Flashbacks

- During the first year of the School Volunteer Program, a small group of junior year students from the College of the City of New York, who planned to become teachers, contributed School Volunteer service in lieu of the service their college required in a social agency. Not only did students from the New York City colleges volunteer, but four Bennington College (Vermont) students served as School Volunteers during their non-Resident term and SVP's first year.
- A school lending library was established at PS 109 in April 1959 with 350 books, many contributed by School Volunteers. The books were processed by three volunteers who gave considerable care and thought to helping the children select books. Volunteers also assisted teachers in setting up a circulating library for the classrooms. One volunteer assembled and set up a library of 40 good, second-hand books at a total cost of \$6.60. The children were all encouraged to select books to read at home.
- Several volunteers helped Ms. Clara Blitzer with the School Volunteers News, the precursor to our current Learning Letter, which was first published in 1957. The newsletter came out three times a year and served to inform volunteers and teachers of practices and techniques in the use of volunteers, reports pertinent to the volunteers, and activities of the volunteers and of the schools in which they served. It also provided a record of the history of the program and served as a medium for publicity.



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