



Teaching English as a Second Language
and Life Skills

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10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & DEDICATION

A Dream Come True

On Sunday, November 13, 2005, multi-colored balloons waved in the autumn air, welcoming visitors up the steps of Caroline House to the 10th Anniversary Celebration and Dedication. People from all walks of life came streaming through the door, arms laden with pocket breads, twists, puddings, fruit, cheeses, guava jelly, shrimp, crab, pork, quiches, candy, and dozens of other delicacies. Among the crowd of 200 people were members of the Board of Directors, School Sisters, volunteers, students, past and present, families, children, Stillman Street neighbors, and good friends. The diversity was a testimony to the history and legacy of Caroline House as a place of comfort and learning for all women and children. Our cup of joy was overflowing.



Sister Ann Moles, SSND, new Executive Director, remarked, "I never dreamed I would be standing here inside Caroline House...I remember when Alice Simon entrusted the house to the School Sisters. I think she is proud of our accomplishments." Aline Couture, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, awarded an honorary plaque for service to Caroline House and yellow rose corsages to S. Mary Lennon, S. Karen Kane, S. Maureen Fleming, and S. Brenda Lynch.



Sister Bernadine spoke eloquently of the simple beginnings of Caroline House -- the years of struggle to recruit the first ten students and to gain recognition as a learning center for English as a Second Language.

S. Bernadine recalled, "We spoke to teachers, school nurses, and social workers to let them know we existed, that our program was for women, and that we were School Sisters of Notre Dame." As the program grew from a mere 10 students to almost 100 today, she smiled warmly. "We saw the changes in the women, the increase in their self-confidence, the pride in their accomplishments...then we added the childcare program and classes in computer education, health, finance, and much more." The Caroline House graduates smiled proudly as S. Bernadine spoke about how their dreams came true.



On the third floor, guests stood close together to hear Monsignor Genuario dedicate the classroom in loving memory of Anita Hampel Hyland, a beloved volunteer who gave time and talent to Caroline House. Visitors continued to tour the many areas of Caroline House—computer labs, classrooms, and the colorful Children's Program areas, such as the new Language & Literacy room. Many remarked, "This is really a beautiful home! And much larger than one would think."

Thank you to everyone who came to celebrate and to those who sent their good wishes. Your blessings and support will carry us forward to meet the literacy challenges of the next decade. Caroline House is committed to the Greater Bridgeport community and to its mission outreach for women and their children "to reach the fullness of their potential through education."

Our blessings to all,

The staff, women and children, and the many wonderful volunteers of Caroline House.

"Never say I can't... You can do everything you want to do." – Student

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Deidre Signore, Assistant Children's Program
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Ellen Fitzsimmons, SSND, Teacher
Bernadine Gutacker, SSND, Counselor
Irene Hughes, SSND, Teacher
Michaela Durkin, SSND, Teacher
and
Carly, Resident Feline, Sargent-at-Arms

Our Landscape: FROM THE WINDOW OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SISTER ANN MOLES, SSND, M. ED.

As I look out my window onto the Stillman Street neighborhood of Caroline House, now carpeted in yellow and brown autumn leaves, I feel blessed to be here on the 10th Anniversary. As the new Executive Director, I am happy to return to Bridgeport after serving in Puerto Rico and Arizona. The beauty of this Victorian House is reflected in the beauty of the women, children, volunteers, School Sisters, members of the Board of Directors, neighbors, professionals, and friends who grace it. The positive, peaceful atmosphere is attributed to those who were here before us, those who remain, and those yet to come.

Welcome to our two new staff members, Barbara Benjamini, Director of Development, and Sister Irene Hughes; they join us in a spirit of community and hope.



With the helping hands of our talented staff and volunteers, we remain committed to our mission—to meet the need for all women and their children who seek to learn English as a Second Language and acquire life skills. Our ministry is truly a joyful place where dreams come true for all women who desire a better future for themselves and their families. We are open to all women from all cultures, religions, and beliefs, in a truly a humanitarian gesture of inclusion. One can “feel” the spirit of Caroline House.

My vision for the future begins with our front door, held open to the community. I extend an open invitation to all of you to experience personally Caroline's House special feeling of inclusiveness.

Please call to tour our facility and join me for a lunchtime visit! I promise you a delightful surprise at every turn -- women with little or no English swiftly tapping out responses on computers, others recording budgets in their notebooks, and children singing in English. We are a dynamic inner-city center filled with the music of learning and growth.

However, we cannot do this work alone. Going forward, please join our caring community to make a difference in the lives of women and their children, and to influence our world through literacy and education.

Blessings To You All,
Sister Ann Moles, SSND



Our Horizon:

FROM THE DESK OF THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR,
BARBARA BENJAMINI, M.A.

Honor the Past, Savor the Present, Preserve the Future

As a new lay staff person, I sit at my desk, surrounded by photos, grant applications, news articles, testimonials, reports, letters, books, and mementoes. *Caroline Bear*, perched on a bookshelf and dressed in Victorian brocade oversees it all with bearish amusement. Suddenly in the doorway, appears a three-year-old child from the Children's Program, smiling with curiosity at her discovery of my office. Satisfied with a brief glance, she tilts her head, and tosses her braids. She says, “Goodbye,” in English, takes her mother's hand, and waves. We are having a conversation, and we both feel very much at home.

Upon the 10th Anniversary, the tradition of Caroline House is clear: to honor the past, savor the present, and preserve the future -- for these women, their children, and our

continued on page three...

Wish List

You can help us continue to develop our quality programs for the women and children of Caroline House. Please donate an item or refer us to a source.

- Antique bookcase for parlor
- Wall clocks for classrooms and common areas
- Photo paper and copy paper
- 1 Crock pot and 1 Blender
- 1 Warming tray
- Paper goods & plastic utensils
- Grocery gift cards
- Soaps & Detergents
- Coats and jackets
- Boots and slippers
- Women's sanitary products
- Hand sanitizer

Call 203.334.0640 Ask for Sister Ilona

INSPIRATIONS

From women:



“Caroline House is my home.”
--student

“I feel so good at Caroline House”
– student

From families:



“I am happy to see my wife developing herself.” –husband

From teachers:

“I am delighted to be part of this great endeavor to educate women and children in the spirit of Mother Caroline.” – S. Irene Hughes

A Woman's Perspective

A DONDE VA EL DINERO? WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO? Any woman managing a household budget often asks, “Where does it go? How can I save? To help women learn about finance, The Life Skills Program at Caroline House offers a unique course in financial literacy. The facilitators are members of *Women's Advantage*, an international non-profit organization that educates women from all walks of life and economic strata to their personal economic power. This 4-part series helps women



to clarify economic concepts, such as interest, credit and debit. Each woman receives a binder in which to log her budget information and tips for managing household finances.

understand the role of finances in their lives and how to control their destiny. The weekly two-hour class is taught in English with Spanish translation, necessary

The responses have been enthusiastic and positive, “Now I know I can have my dream ... Now I believe I can save for a house... Now I will be able to send my children to college.” We look forward to a continued collaboration with *Women's Advantage* and the opportunity to teach women how to use money effectively.

Our Horizon: continued.

community. Our women call Caroline House their "second home," a home to their inner gifts. I am honored to be here among them.

On the Development horizon, I see an ever-widening circle of friends joining resources to collaborate, share services, and support our mutual growth. The Caroline House community is a unique body of staff, students, and volunteers who love what they do and care about one another -- a formula for success. Sister Ann and I are exploring new community collaborations to fulfill our mission and meet fundraising goals. To sustain this educational center, a thriving place of hope, we need many hands and resources to help us. I invite you to visit, tour --and stay for lunch! As you stop by my office, please watch out for the little curious girl standing in my doorway!

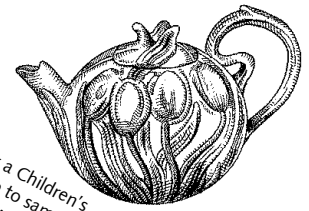
Graciously,
Barbara Benjamini

**Our Future:
From the Children's Corner**

JEAN FREDERICKS, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

New Learning & Literacy Center

Sacred Heart University student volunteers joined us on a steaming hot July day to remove the 1923 wallpaper from the former dining room of Caroline House. With soft, blue paint, a multi-colored activity rug, two computer stations, science center, new hardwood bookcases, and materials, they transformed the room into a pre-school learning and literacy center.



Call us for a Children's Lunch Date to sample our menu with our pre-schoolers! "What's cooking?"



One to One

Today one may see a child reading alone or learning through one-to-one play with a tutor. Puppets and dolls adorn the windows and an oil painting of a child jumping joyously hangs in approval of it all.

In September 2005, we began a program of individualized attention for our children. The Director selects one child to work with one university tutor volunteer. They spend special time in the new literacy area.

As one turns the corner, the smiling face of a child fills the room with sunshine.



Hot, Healthy Lunch

With our new expanded learning time from 9a.m to 1:30 p.m., we now provide healthy snacks and a hot, healthy lunch, heated in a microwave oven. (Caroline House has no stove or oven). We experiment with new tastes and textures, such as quiches, mini-hamburgers, green and yellow vegetables (no spinach, please!). Favorite desserts, given every other day to complement a menu, are cookies and ice cream. We are looking forward to crock pot soup in the winter and blender "slurpy".

**Donations Needed
for Kitchen Upgrade**

The Caroline House kitchen is having a Mini-Makeover Move That Mini-Bus! With the generous donation of a dishwasher to sanitize our dishes and free labor, we plan to add cabinets and countertop to our vintage sink area at the low cost of \$1,500.

Please donate today to help upgrade our kitchen!

HELPING HANDS



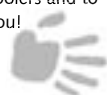
Day of Caring/ United Way

Thank you volunteers from Koskoff, Koskoff, and Bieder for spending a Day of Caring at Caroline House. Your helping hands cleaned our garage to make room for the children's equipment. We enjoyed your company. Please come back!



University Student Volunteers

These two Sacred Heart University volunteers, among others from Fairfield University and University of Bridgeport, are working with the Children's Program to give quality extra attention to our pre-schoolers and to gain valuable life experience. We salute you!



**Save The Date
SUNDAY, MARCH 5**

**JOIN US FOR OUR
2006 SPRING FUNDRAISING
CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH & AUCTION
AT THE GREENWICH HYATT
GREENWICH, CT
11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

- RESERVE YOUR TABLE
- PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT
- JOIN OUR BRUNCH COMMITTEE
- CONTRIBUTE AN AUCTION ITEM
- BRING A FRIEND!

**CALL / EMAIL BARBARA BENJAMINI
CHAIRPERSON
203 334 0640
barbara.benjamini@snet.net**

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE



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AND LIFE SKILLS

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Laugh & Learn

SUBMITTED BY S. ANN MOLES, SSND, WHO LOVES TO LAUGH

One day, while in my second floor office, Sister Ilona came to request my urgent help with Spanish translation. Although I have spent 20 years in Puerto Rico, I was surprised because Sister Ilona is very capable. Apparently, Jean Fredericks, the Director of the Children's Program, was trying to determine where two of the children were born.

Jean greeted me with consternation as she blurted out, "It seems they were born in jail." Having worked in a ministry at the Bridgeport jail, I found this news curious. Turning to the mother, who appeared confused, I inquired in Spanish, "So tell me, when were you in jail?"

As the words left my lips, the poor woman turned pale before me with shock and embarrassment. "Jail," she replied defensively, "My children were not born in jail. They were born in Yale, the hospital!" Immediately, we all laughed, repeating the words and laughing again each time. How good it is to laugh and learn.

Carly's Corner

notes from our white cat who lives on the porch

"I love autumn. The nuts, leaves, and berries

fall into my food dish. It makes Great Granola!"

ALUMNI NEWS

SUBMITTED BY
S. BERNADINE
GUTACKER

Success & Rewards

Many of our students graduate from Caroline House to attain employment using their bilingual skills, seek high school diplomas, go to college, and become homeowners.

- Congratulations to Zewditu Nigatu who graduated from Gateway Community College in New Haven in May 2005. She is continuing her studies in nursing. *We are proud of you, Zewditu*
- Luz Alicea is enrolled at Housatonic Community College to prepare for a career in early childhood education. She finds time to volunteer in the Children's Program at Caroline House to observe our Montessori-based program. *Thank you, Luz, for giving back as a volunteer.*

Excerpt from Letter from Luz :

"...I found Caroline House in the telephone guide. When I got there I felt a lot of peace....The school Sisters showed me everything....Jean took care of my kids, and I felt confident because my kids were near me....I wanted to go to college and make a career. They helped me to go the Housatonic college and make a career....I'm going to study for a Special Ed teacher. I finally have my own house and a car. I'm a successful woman."

- Sandra Ramirez and her husband, Gustav, have purchased their own home in Bridgeport. *May your home be filled with peace.*

