

People achieving more
by working together

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Inside This Issue

**Finding a Cure for
Inequality**

a message from the
Executive Director

2

**CAAS Explores Parenting:
The Most Difficult Job**

2

**Bringing Play and Joy
into the Classroom**

3

Take the Mystery Out of Financial Aid on College Goal Sunday



The road out of poverty often leads through the corridors of college. But where does a low-income student get the money for a college education? CAAS has an answer.

Come to **College Goal Sunday**, January 27, 2008, 2:00 p.m. at Somerville High School. College Goal

Sunday is a free program that helps students fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Financial aid professionals from colleges and universities all over Massachusetts will lead a two-hour program. By the end, every student will complete FAFSA, which is the key to unlocking scholarships, grants, and loans for education.

In 2006, Heslin Santana knew her family couldn't afford to finance her entire education, and she didn't want to be buried under a stack of loans after graduation. But she was worried about the process of applying for financial aid, and specifically, about completing the FAFSA.

"I was really worried about completing the FAFSA correctly," said Heslin. "I had heard that if you mess up or if you don't provide the right information, then you don't qualify for financial aid. And if I didn't get financial aid, I didn't know how I would be able to afford to go to college."

Then Heslin's high school guidance counselor recommended that Heslin check out College Goal Sunday. Heslin attended the event in January 2006 with her mother and left the presentation with a correctly completed FAFSA form. Not only did the presenter walk Heslin and her mother



(Continued on page 3)



Finding a Cure for Inequality

**a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton**

The *Wall Street Journal* reported a few weeks ago that according to the IRS, the income of the top 1% of Americans had increased to 21.2%, from a previously embarrassing 19%. On the other hand, the income of the lowest 50% of us was a meager 12.8%, down from an equally meager 13.4% the year before. The last time the richest Americans had such a large share of national income was in the 1920's — just before the Great Depression.

So what's new? The distribution of income has been steadily worsening for the past fifteen years. The gap has grown faster in New England than in any other region of the country. This growing inequality means that low-income people struggling to improve their lot are having a harder and harder

"A deeply divided society is an unhealthy society."

time of it. Just getting food to the table is a struggle. Witness the rise in soup kitchens and food pantries.

It also means that those trying (as does CAAS and many other agencies in Somerville) to help people to better their lives are having a harder time of it. We do more, and the need grows faster. Couple this with the decreasing resources devoted to human service programs by the Federal Government, and you can see the bind that low-income people and those who try to help them live with every day.

The solution, of course, is better wages and benefits for the low-income population and a meaningful reform of our tax system. I am still waiting for the presidential candidates — of either party — to address these issues. A deeply divided society is an unhealthy society, even for those who have the giant share of our income and wealth.

In the mean time, we need to care for one another. **Please help CAAS help Somerville families this winter.** Use the envelope enclosed, or give online at the CAAS web site, www.caasomerville.org/donate. Thank you!

CAAS Explores Parenting — The Most Difficult Job

Children: what a shame they don't come with directions!

The difficulty of designing computer chips, building skyscrapers, or performing brain surgery pales in comparison to being a consistently good parent. There are few universally accepted truths about parenting. What works for one family may not work for another. As prime educators of their children, and as the major socializing force in our society, parents carry a heavy responsibility for their own continued development and for the ongoing development of their children.

CAAS Head Start can help. Beginning on December 7th, CAAS Parent Involvement/Resource Supervisor Ginger Sanders and Resource Specialist Lee Pedro will offer a training series, "Exploring Parenting." The series will take place at the new Parent Resource Center at 14 Roosevelt Towers in Cambridge.



Parents share the love in Exploring Parenting

(Continued on page 4)

Bringing Play and Joy into the Classroom

Children, let's make "Koko's Rainbow Soup." What's your favorite ingredient? Chicken? Imagine this white scarf is a delicious piece of chicken. Put it in the pot! Carrots? Put the orange scarf in. Now, stir up the soup. Use your hands, or your whole arms, or your legs, or your feet. What a delicious soup we've made! Should we make pizza next time?

On the weekend of October 15-16, in idyllic Eastham, MA, teachers at CAAS had the wonderful opportunity to attend an intensive training by Project Joy. The mission of Project Joy is "to ensure that nothing stands in the way of healthy play for all children. Nothing."

Gail Jones, who teaches at CAAS Head Start's Frisoli site, has been attending Project Joy trainings since



*And what color is **that** straw?*

1989, its founding year. In her classroom, she particularly likes games like involving silk scarves that Project Joy generously provides to teachers. "To me, scarves represent peace. They are soft, gentle and quiet, and flowing. The musical soundtrack that accompanies Koko's Rainbow Soup sets a calming tone for the kids."

"One through five" is another one of Gail's favorites. The teacher thinks of five actions and assigns a number to each one. Then, she randomly calls out numbers, and the children do the corresponding actions. Gail says, "I start with only two numbers.... It really helps the children sharpen their focusing skills."

Teacher Azaline Booth has been going to trainings with Gail since 1989. Her number one choice is "Up, Slide, Down." Children in a circle pass one of their shoes (everyone's!) using an up, a slide, and a down move while singing the words "Up, slide, down" in unison. Speed and direction can vary. When the song is done, each child ends with his or her own shoe. The activity is based on a traditional African game in which a rock is passed around.

My favorite game was a "smelling and blowing" exercise designed to elicit deep breathing in order to relax. With one hand, one holds an imaginary flower and smells it. Then, with the other, one holds an imaginary wand and blows imaginary bubbles. We had fun expanding this activity by smelling different

(Continued on page 4)

Financial Aid on College Goal Sunday

(Continued from page 1)

through the process of completing the FAFSA, but there were also translators on hand to clarify things for Heslin's mother, whose first language is Spanish.

Thanks to the help she received from Massachusetts College Goal Sunday, Heslin qualified for financial aid and is now in her freshman year at Middlesex Community College, studying hard in courses such as

Fundamentals of Math and Exploration in Science, which will prepare her to become a diagnostic medical sonographer.

Students should register for the January 27 event online, at www.masscollegegoalsunday.org. For more information, call 877-4-CGS-MAS (877-424-7627). ■

Community Action Agency
of Somerville, Inc.

66-70 Union Square
Somerville, MA 02143

For more information
email: dfischman@caasomerville.org



*People Achieving More
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Play and Joy into the Classroom

(Continued from page 3)

food items and blowing out candles and chimes.

Judging from the excited adult laughter at the training, these and many other simple, joyful games are destined to make the “preferred list” in many a classroom. In these days of demands for measurable results, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of resources and space for physical play, children are sadly being shortchanged. I sincerely hope that at CAAS Head Start, we are sharing the zest for life with more of our children. ■

CAAS Explores Parenting

(Continued from page 2)

Both Ginger and Lee are skilled trainers in this area, but as Ginger states, “We are not the experts. That’s why it’s called Exploring Parenting. We all learn together. If there is something we as a group want to know more about, we will research it or find experts and guest speakers to address it.” Although a combination of wonderful parenting curriculum resources are used in the workshops, Ginger said, “The parents are the ones who show us the way.”

The program is designed to help parents increase their knowledge and skills in several areas such as: responding to children's needs and dealing with problems; understanding the typical pattern of child development, individual differences, and the special needs of children with handicapping conditions; supporting and promoting children's development.

You can take part in Exploring Parenting if you speak either English or Spanish. To enroll, please call CAAS and speak to one of our Head Start Family Advocates. ■

Would you like to receive *CAAS News* on your personal computer? Save a tree! To get this newsletter by e-mail, please write to dfischman@caasomerville.org.
