

People achieving more
by working together

March 2008



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Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream Lives on in CAAS Classrooms

By Margarita Ashton

On January 21, CAAS was proud to receive the annual City of Somerville's Martin Luther King award. CAAS Executive Director Jack Hamilton, receiving the award from the Somerville Human Rights Commission, remarked, "One thing that brings joy to my heart is going to any Head Start classroom, seeing children of any color that you want, any cultural background ... having a great time."

Monique Bonner and Veronica Mercado's classroom at Jefferson Park in Cambridge is a case in point. When I visited their classroom, the children were learning about the human body.

Displayed on the wall were cutouts of human faces in every possible shade of skin color. Kids had drawn and glued on facial features. Nearby, there was a big map of the world with strings connecting Boston to the children's origin of birth countries, or that of their parents. In a classroom of nineteen children, there were links between Boston and twelve countries!

Veronica was born in the Dominican Republic and speaks both English and Spanish fluently. At circle time, "We sing our 'hello' song in as many languages as possible." Monique, from Haiti, is also bi-lingual. She excitedly reminds Veronica about their multicultural play dough. "We mixed different batches of play dough with various shades of skin colored paints and food coloring." Some children created multiethnic play dough people: families, friends, and classmates. Both teachers emphasize that at the pre-school age, the simpler the activities, the better. To the tune of "Bingo," children spontaneously sing: "There was a man who had a dream and Martin was his name-o, Martin Luther King, Martin Luther King, Martin was his name-o."



Children at Head Start know faces come in every color.

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Making Poverty an Issue in 2008

**a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton**

The race for the Democratic nomination for President has narrowed down to two candidates. That's the way the process works. But in the process, we lost the two candidates—John Edwards and Dennis Kucinich—who most clearly spoke to the issues of poverty and the hardships of the lower middle class.

Our task now is to hold the feet of all the remaining candidates to the fire on these issues:

1. A comprehensive, single-payer, universal plan for health coverage for all Americans;
2. A progressive reform of the tax system; and
3. An increase in the minimum wage, and the indexing of it to inflation.

Of course, the whole fabric of human services and safety net has frayed in the past seven years. So many

programs need additional funding to be able to fulfill their missions! But these, to me, are the most important.

When Congress and President Nixon indexed Social Security to inflation, back in the 1970's, it had an immediate and continuing effect of the rate of poverty among the elderly. It lifted the majority of the elderly over the poverty line. It's time to get people of all ages out of poverty.

We need to remind the remaining candidates of the importance of these issues. Below are the email addresses of the three major candidates still in the running as this newsletter goes to press. Write to them now and tell them how important these issues are to you.

"It's time to get people of all ages out of poverty."

Senator Barack Obama—use the Contact form at <http://obama.senate.gov/contact/>

Senator John McCain—use the Contact form at <http://mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.ContactForm>

Senator Hillary Clinton—use the Contact form at <http://clinton.senate.gov/contact/webform.cfm>

CAAS in the Community



CAAS Executive Director Jack Hamilton accepts a Martin Luther King Award from Co-Chair of the Somerville Human Rights Commission, Cesar Urranaga. See article, page one.

CAAS Board congratulates Jack Hamilton on the naming of the Head Start Center. From left to right: Board members Ralph Hergert & Roberta Bauer; Board Chair Paul DiPasquale; Executive Director Jack Hamilton; & Board members Mary Louise Daly, Teresa Cardoso, Gale Doane, Ellie Blute, & Barbara Rubel.



CAAS thanks all the generous donors who supported our work in 2007.

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(Up to \$100 cont.)

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For more information
email: dfschman@caasomerville.org



*People Achieving More
By Working Together*

MLK's dream lives on in CAAS classrooms

(Continued from page 1)

Prominently displayed on a bookshelf, there are several colorful books emphasizing ethnic diversity. Veronica directs me to the most popular ones: *All Kinds of Children*, by Norma Simon; *Shades of Black*, by Sandra Pinckney; and, *Am I a Color, Too?* by Heidi Cole. Monique shows me one of her students'

**"A classroom of 19
children links Boston to
12 countries."**

latest group
creations. Written
with large print on
poster-board, there
is a hopeful
message: "WE
ARE ALL

TOGETHER. WE HAVE THE WHOLE
WORLD IN OUR HANDS." Children's
handprints in many colors form a
beautiful frame around it. I cannot think
of a simpler, more graphic way, to teach
children such concepts as social
responsibility, peace and justice.

CAAS in the community



*Parents
discover how
to fill in the
Free
Application
for Federal
Student Aid
during*

College Goal Sunday, January 24.

*Melissa McWhinney, Advocacy Director at CAAS,
introduces
the
program.*

