

CAAS NEWS

Volume 4 Issue 2

People achieving more
by working together

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Today's Readers, Tomorrow's Leaders

By Margarita Ashton

Little hands clutch sturdy, bright red bags filled with carefully selected, high-quality books. Each week, a child takes home a bag with a different book selection. CAAS Head Start is a proud participant in Raising a Reader, a Massachusetts-based literacy program.

Paul Zimmerman is building manager and a former teacher at the Jack Hamilton Center in Somerville. He says the effort he puts into making this program happen is richly rewarded. "Each child who participates in this...



A Tufts student helps a Head Start child learn to love books.

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Save the Date!



Jack Hamilton Retirement Party, January 23

Come celebrate Jack's 25 years of leadership at CAAS. Jack's retirement party will take place **Friday, January 23, 2009**, between 3:30 and 8:00 p.m, at the Dante Club, Craigie Street, Somerville. Refreshments, music, and good times. \$15 admission. Please contact Ellie Blute at 617-666-5747.

Make checks payable to CAAS. Must receive by January 16.



You Must Remember This

a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton

This will be my last column for the CAAS newsletter. By this time in January, CAAS should have a new Executive Director. I hope you will welcome the new Executive Director with the same spirit of cooperation that you have shown me over the past 25 years.

At this point, my feelings go back and forth between joyful anticipation of my retirement and sadness at leaving the past, and all it means, behind. I will miss my interactions with all of you, but it is time to move on.

In this last column I would like to repeat what I have often said in the past. If we are really to

eliminate poverty – a real national scandal – we will need some fundamental changes in our country. We must first raise and index the minimum wage; we must have universal health care and a radical change in our tax laws. And finally, we must use government policies and resources to create really meaningful and well-paying jobs for all who want to work. Without these fundamental changes, those in anti-poverty work can help individual families out of poverty only to see them replaced by more.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your help and kindness. That is what made this job so enjoyable and worthwhile.

“Please remember, CAAS depends on your financial help.”

Finally, please remember that CAAS depends on your financial help. We always need resources to assist the needy families we serve. All contributions are used to help families. Please consider us in your giving.

Thank you again and see you around town.
Peace!!! ♦

Today’s Readers, Tomorrow’s Leaders

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Children begin reading at Head Start, then take books home.

program gets to take a total of 105 book home per year. Parents and children really enjoy the program.” The Raising a Reader program has two main purposes. Parents and children share the excitement of stories, and parents who read expose children to a loving adult’s voice every day. Reading “stimulates a child’s imagination” and “connects children with the larger world.” Reading also sets the stage for school success, which is likely to lead to a successful life. As the well-known saying puts it, “Today’s readers, tomorrow’s leaders.”

Teacher Norma Melendez likes the challenge inherent in teaching the children to be responsible for these books. “Surprisingly, often four-year-old youngsters are the ones reminding their hard-working, busy parents, ‘We need to bring back the book bag!’ They learn to be gentle and caring with books. They also feel part of a larger reading community, their classroom peers.” The parental involvement piece has multiple benefits. Melanie Melendez who works with Norma, points out how Raising a Reader motivates parents to work with their kids to learn and read more.” Louise Martin, who has been teaching at...

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Helping a Neighbor to Find a Home

by Melissa McWhirney, CAAS Advocacy Program Director

A 59-year-old woman, “Lucy,” lived around the corner from me in a West Somerville apartment for 30 years. Last fall, she became extremely depressed. She was unable to work any longer.

Lucy went through her small savings and fell behind in her \$800/month rent, with no money for food and no idea what to do. A mutual friend suggested that Lucy call me at CAAS, and I asked Advocate Sylvia Cardim to work with her.

Sylvia helped Lucy apply for food stamps, which she received. Sylvia also helped her apply for subsidized housing. She took her to visit various subsidized buildings, so she could get a sense of what they were like. In the meantime, Lucy was truly disabled by depression, and Sylvia helped Lucy apply for Social Security Disability Insurance.

Lucy was granted SSDI, but her rent in Somerville still cost more than her total monthly income.

Finally, in August, Lucy received a letter informing her that she had received an apartment in elderly housing in Arlington. There she would only have to pay 1/3 of her total monthly income in rent. Sylvia worked with our partner agency Solutions at Work to arrange for movers to help Lucy move into her new apartment, free. Lucy moved, and is thrilled with her affordable new home.

“Lucy... is thrilled with her affordable new home.”

CAAS helps hundreds of people like Lucy each year to stay in their homes or find new, better places to live. Your support makes it all possible. From me, from Sylvia...and especially from Lucy,

thank you!

Join Jack Hamilton's Friends of CAAS

Carry on the vision of longtime **Executive Director Jack Hamilton** by becoming a **charter member** of **Jack Hamilton's Friends of CAAS**. Money from this fund will be used where CAAS and the people it serves need it the most. Give us a hand to do what it takes to end poverty where we live. Please contact Paul DiPasquale at 617-625 -5136.

All donations accepted. Make checks payable to CAAS.

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*People Achieving More
By Working Together*

Today's Readers, Tomorrow's Leaders

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A little girl at CAAS Head Start enjoying reading time.

CAAS Head Start for over sixteen years, likes how the program “enhances the home-school connection... Often parents will ask teachers for advice in the best ways to read to their children. They will also share stories about the impact certain books have had on them as a family. It opens up the channels of communication between us.”

Franny O'Brien, another long-time teacher, loves the fact that the children often read award-winning books. Also, “a high percentage of them have a multicultural content... some are even written in two languages.”



Gurjas Singh takes home a bag of books from CAAS Head Start

For more information on this ever-expanding program which started in Chelsea in 2006 and is designed to target low-income families, please log on to www.raisingareaderma.org. ♦

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