

CAAS NEWS

Volume 1 Issue 4

People achieving more
by working together

June 2006



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BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

CAAS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Chris Ford was down on the rug with his friend's little boy, building towers in the sky out of wooden blocks. "Chris, my buildings fall down. Why do yours go up so high?" the boy asked.

"I guess it's because first, you need to build a strong foundation," Ford answered. And then it occurred to him. His childhood at CAAS Head Start was the foundation on which he had built his whole adult life.

Ford was one of the guest speakers at CAAS' 25th Anniversary Celebration, Friday, May 12th, at the Somerville Holiday Inn. An appreciative audience of 220 people listened to his remarks and those of keynote speaker U.S. Rep. Michael Capuano. They also heard talks by other community members who had enjoyed services at CAAS.



U S Rep. Michael Capuano

Ford, a former student in CAAS Head Start, says teacher Lucia McAlpin was the first to encourage him to develop his artistic abilities. Ford went on to develop video games and other products based on *Star Wars*, working directly with legendary filmmaker George Lucas.

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"College is a Place I Want to Go"

What does it take to get to college? Many students from low-income families aren't sure, especially if they are the children of immigrants. The members of the CAAS youth group Jovenes Latinos (Latino Youth) know—and they want other Latino students to find out.

"Before I came to Jovenes Latinos I did not know a lot about college," says Emelyn Guevara, 15. "I did know that doing good in school might help me to my career in college. I knew college cost a lot of money and that scholarship is only for really smart people."

"I had heard about financial aid, but I really didn't know about it," adds Stephanie Yanes, also age 15.

That was before CAAS Director of Latino Programs Ismael Vasquez made exploring the path to college an important part of the group's activities this spring. Estefani Tejada, 14, explains, "At CAAS I have learned a lot more about

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Getting the Facts About Immigration

a message from
Executive Director
Jack Hamilton

Getting the Facts About Immigrants

As both the national and local debates on immigration heat up, the level of misinformation and stereotyping and the number of ignorant statements in the debate unfortunately rises. To rectify this in a small way, I would like to introduce the following pieces of information. I hope they will lead to more careful discussion.

1. There are a large number of immigrants in Somerville, beginning with our long-standing Italian and Portuguese immigrants and continuing through the more recent immigrants from Brazil, Central America, Haiti, Ireland, and parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Most of them are documented immigrants.
2. No one can tell an undocumented immigrant from a documented immigrant simply by observation. When people presume that anyone who speaks with some form of accent is undocumented, this leads to a lot of inappropriate activity.

“When people presume that anyone who speaks with some form of accent is undocumented, this leads to a lot of inappropriate activity.”

3. Children born of immigrants in this country are American citizens, whether their parents are documented or not. If their parents are deported, they may be, too, but they retain the right to return, as citizens, when they reach eighteen years of age.
4. Whether documented or not, immigrants pay taxes. They pay sales taxes, they indirectly pay property taxes through their rent, and in most cases, they are also paying a share of the water bill that is included in their rent. They also pay user fees: for example, entrance fees to state parks, and garbage decals. (Given the low-paying jobs that they are able to get, most undocumented immigrants would probably fall into the “no tax” category both for state and federal income taxes, the same as low-income people born in this country do.)
5. Undocumented immigrants, using falsified Social Security cards, pay an estimated seven billion dollars a year into the Social Security system. They have no way to claim this money. They never see a penny of it. Instead, they are helping to pay for the retirement benefits that everyone else collects.

We at CAAS will continue to stand up for the humane and fair treatment of all immigrants, regardless of their legal status. We hope that you will too.

Peace.

It Happened in . . .

1981

*People Achieving More
25 years
by Working Together*

CAAS begins serving the Somerville Community

Sandra Day O'Connor is the first woman nominated for the Supreme Court of the United States.

The 97th U.S. Congress convenes with the Senate and House controlled by different parties for the first time in 49 years.

Ronald Reagan takes the oath of office as the 40th President of the United States.

Air traffic controllers go on strike, disrupting flights all across the country.

Iran frees 52 U.S. hostages after 444 days in captivity.

IBM introduces its first Personal Computer (PC) running the Microsoft Disk Operating System (MS-DOS).

Building a Better Future . . . CAAS Celebrates 25 Years

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His mother, Sandra Ford, began to work at CAAS when Chris was young. She is now the Director of Family Services for CAAS Head Start. Over half of CAAS' dedicated staff, like Sandra Ford, once benefited from a CAAS program.

Rep. Capuano flew back from Washington to spend the entire evening celebrating CAAS' first twenty-five years. He spoke of the hostile climate in government toward the people CAAS serves. "All our problems have been solved," he joked, "tax cuts are on the way!" The former mayor of Somerville paid tribute to people at CAAS who work even when their funding goes down and their costs rise.

Other speakers pointed out how CAAS had helped the community over the years.

- ◆ Mary Louise Daly said, "CAAS is the reason I was able to keep my home." From 1987 to 1990, CAAS helped residents at Clarendon Hill Towers organize a tenants' association. The people who live at the Towers now own their apartment complex together. Daly herself is a member and former president of the CAAS Board.

- ◆ Eduardo Hurtado, a former member of Jovenes Latinos (Latino Youth), recalled how CAAS helped him develop self-confidence and ambitions. Hurtado currently serves in the U.S. Armed Forces.

CAAS was the foundation of his whole adult life, said speaker Chris Ford.

- ◆ A current Jovenes member, Karla Burgos, described—and displayed—the way the program teaches young people to speak for themselves. (Please see "College is a Place I Want to Go" on page 1)

- ◆ The father of another former member of Jovenes Latinos, Carlos Barillas, is a member of the Good Guys Project, the father involvement program at CAAS Head Start. He thanked Head Start Director Donna Cabral and Family Advocate Supervisor Alba Perez for helping him, his son and his whole family.

- ◆ Mary O'Gorman spoke eloquently about the way Parent Involvement Coordinator Ginger Sanders had brought her out of her shell. O'Gorman now leads the Head Start Policy Council. Her younger daughter, Ava, will begin attending CAAS Head Start this fall.

The 25th Anniversary Celebration raised over \$27,000 to put CAAS back on a sound footing after last year's federal funding cuts. Please see the list of sponsors enclosed. Thank you to everyone who made the evening a success. Onward to the next twenty-five years of people achieving more by working together!



Dorothy Kelly-Gay speaks with Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Sloane



Mary O'Gorman, President of Head Start Policy Council



U.S. Rep Michael Capuano and CAAS Executive Director Jack Hamilton reminisce about 25 years of work.



Mayor Curtatone and Jack Hamilton present award to Lucille Romano for her many years of volunteer service.

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*People Achieving More
By Working Together*

“College is a Place I Want to Go”

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college. I learned how financial aid works, and at how schools look at more than just your grades and courses, but also at your extracurriculars.”

This spring, Jovenes Latinos took a field trip to nearby Tufts University. They learned some basic facts that children of college-educated parents might take for granted. For instance: Boys and girls live in separate sections of buildings. The cafeteria is buffet style, “very different from home,” as Stephanie points out. “Now I am looking forward to college and I feel more comfortable. I think I know pretty much what I need to do, where I didn’t know before.”

The CAAS youth made a point of visiting the campus group Centro Latino. “On the tour, the thing that surprised me the most was the fact that the participants cared about Jovenes Latinos going to college and doing something with their lives,” Estefani marvels. “My perspective on college has really changed. Although I knew college was important to prosper in life, I realized a new importance: to give all Latinos a better education and set the footprints for younger generations to follow.”

Next school year, the Jovenes Latinos program wants to take more Latino students on campus trips and to hold workshops and college fairs for Latino and other immigrant high school students. “College is not for everyone,” cautions Karla Burgos, 15, “because some people just want to go straight to work, which is good. College is good for those who want a more professional career. College is a place I want to go.”

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