

THE LINC LETTER

Spring 2008



LINC PARENT PROGRAM BUILDS LEADERSHIP

Parents who want to take a leadership role in creating reading opportunities for children in their communities now have an exciting new resource - the LINC Very Involved Parents (VIP) Academy.

The VIP Academy builds on LINC's work to provide parents of young children with ideas and activities to enhance reading skills at home and at school. The parents we work with are typically "less identifiably involved" parents who may not be in the school leadership mainstream. For parents whose first language is not English, or whose culture has not reinforced the benefits of becoming involved in their children's reading and education, LINC offers vital information and training with long-term positive effects.



Clockwise from left: Mimi Lieber, Ana Mejia-Burgos, Maribel Matos, Bienvenida Castillo, Yajaira Tejada, Virgenmina Pagan, Carmen Casa.

Introducing alphabet games, finger rhymes, listening games, and book sharing may seem like natural ways to build children's literacy, but unless they have been taught to parents, they are unknown. Every parent is also a teacher, and the immense potential contained in that statement is exactly what LINC works to unlock.

There are three components of LINC's VIP Academy. First, a Celebration Awards Brunch recognizes parents for their volunteer work in partnership with LINC, with citation awards presented by a public figure (New York City Councilman Robert Jackson, who chairs the Council's Education Committee, was our first presenter).

The second phase of the VIP Academy is a four-part workshop series to increase parents' self-confidence and leadership skills. Led by LINC Coordinators at the LINC

office, our pilot series for 20 parents enabled participants



Top Row: Tanya Ramos, Raquel Retif, Jacqueline Hernandez, Enrique Lora, Maria Class, Lisa Huggins, Albania Jimenez, Angela Castillo, Sheila Sussman. Middle Row: Virgenmina Pagan, Maria Acevedo, Carmen Casa, Raquel Gonzalez. Seated: Louise Tarver-Keys, Blanca Vasquez.

to learn about their role as their children's first teachers, reading opportunities in their communities, how to run literacy programs, and strategies for working with schools. The workshops are bilingual (simultaneous Spanish translation provided by LINC Coordinators).

LINC provides MetroCards, child care, lunch, and

Continued on page 2

LINC RECEIVES TWO HONORS THIS SPRING!

Literacy, Inc. (LINC) has been named one of ten semi-finalists in the 2008 New York Times Company Nonprofit Excellence Awards. LINC was judged on seven criteria: management focus on results; governance that moves the organization forward; strong, transparent financial management; inclusive organizational practices; enlightened use of resources; effective communications; and effective, ethical fundraising. Four winning organizations will be announced from among the semi-finalists. Also this spring, LINC received the 2007 James Patterson PageTurner Award for spreading the enjoyment of reading to so many children each year! This is the second year LINC has been honored with this award!

DEAR FRIENDS,

This year, LINC enters its second decade of giving children the opportunities they need to practice and to learn from more experienced readers at home and in their communities.

Last fall, an article in the New York Times attested to a cornerstone of LINC's work: "Study Links Drop in Test Scores to a Decline in Time Spent Reading." LINC has long cited research showing that a critical factor in reading achievement is the amount of reading children actually do. Last year alone, LINC programs created 70,000 additional hours of reading time for children—it was a banner year!

As you will read in this newsletter, to strengthen the continuity our mission, LINC is now working to develop a cadre of strong parent leaders to engage more parents in children's reading at home and in school. This initiative, taken together with our effective programs, have a powerful "ripple effect" in the neighborhoods where we work, connecting children, families, schools, and community partners who work toward the shared goal of literacy for all children. We invite your help and support in the year ahead!

Tanya A. Ramos

Mimi Levin Lieber

WHAT IS LINC?

Literacy, Inc. (LINC) works with local school, family, business, and community partners in low-income neighborhoods to create reading opportunities for children in everyday places—in restaurants, parks, laundromats, hair and nail salons, clinics and health centers, supermarkets, apartment building lobbies, homeless shelters, banks, stoops, senior citizen centers, libraries, faith-based institutions, stores, and more than 100 partner schools.

In the 2006-7 program year, LINC and its 21 Community Literacy Networks facilitated 178 reading partner programs and 118 literacy events, providing 70,000 hours of additional reading time for 4,000 young children and their families, working with over 200 different sites.

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Temple Emanuel
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... and Over 500 Generous Individuals

Special Thanks to R.R. Donnelley Financial for its Generous Support of the LINC Letter since 2004!



Tanya A. Ramos and Councilmember Robert Jackson at LINC's VIP kick-off brunch in November 2007

Continued from page 1
workshop materials for all participants, who receive a VIP Academy certificate on completion. A VIP Alumni Network will keep parents involved throughout the the school year and summer.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

LINC welcomes its newest Board Member, Debra Stern Marrone, who joined in December 2007. Ms. Marrone brings to LINC a creative edge and an extensive background in marketing. Previously, Ms. Marrone was the Creative Director for Young & Rubicam, responsible for a variety of print and television advertising. Ms. Marrone is the Founder and CEO of JAM, Inc. which provides worldwide advertising and creative strategies. We are delighted to have her join our cause!

LINC BRINGS FAMILIES TO BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

LINC has been active in Brooklyn since our beginnings, and we continue to coordinate local resources – organizations and individuals – to provide thousands of hours of extra reading time in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Red Hook, Sunset Park, Carroll Gardens, Boerum Hill, Borough Park, Park Slope, Bushwick/Williamsburg and Bedford Stuyvesant.

This year, LINC activated six branches of the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) to participate in our Family Literacy Project. By involving more parents and children in library programs, LINC helped strengthen each branch's connection to the communities it serves, leveraging local resources and relationships to increase outreach capacity. An important product of the project is the publication of a BPL/LINC Family Literacy Events Toolkit. LINC's role in this partnership was to 1) brainstorm and plan program ideas for LINC and the librarians to use; 2) provide training and technical assistance to implement events and help continue programs; and 3) assess and report on outcomes achieved.

All participating libraries set a schedule of family reading night programs last fall and early spring. LINC worked with branch librarians to conduct outreach to local schools and community organizations, and then to conduct the programs themselves. A favorite family event was Pajama Nights, in which young children and their parents came to the library for storytime with guest readers. LINC and the branch librarians will ensure that these exciting events become a regular occurrence for local families.

LINC PARENTS IN HUDSON

LINC continues to work with partners in Hudson, New York to build a consistent unit of home, school, and community united in valuing children's reading, and in sharing skills and activities that increase children's literacy. In the



With the support of the Mental Health Association of Columbia-Greene Counties, parents and children read together and play literacy games at Bliss Towers each week.

next year, LINC will be partnering with Hudson Middle School's Parents in Partnership leadership group to engage more parent volunteers in early literacy.

LINC READ-A-THON ROARS!

This spring, 2,400 second-graders at 20 public schools in the Bronx and Manhattan are participating in the 6th annual TIGER Collaboration (Together in Getting Everyone Reading), a LINC-created Read-a-Thon partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (Bronx Zoo), the New York Public Library (NYPL), and the NYC Department of Education (DOE). The subject of each year's TIGER Collaboration is set by the Zoo to highlight current exhibits—this year's is "Conservation and Preservation of Wildlife." NYPL provides teachers with an annotated list of age-appropriate, enjoyable books related to this year's topic. The DOE provides materials for teachers.

At each school, LINC Coordinators organize a team made up of the Parent Coordinator, other parents, and a community representative. Then, for the full month of March, second-graders at each school



Nelson Castro, Community Outreach Coordinator, WellCare

read as many books on the chosen topic. To keep excitement high, the school holds a "Tiger Day" Reading Celebration, with guest readers from the community, games (Tiger Bingo and Animal Word-Find), and craft projects (making animal face masks and animal puppets). A very special guest—Sasha the Tiger—comes to the schools to read stories and sing animal songs (the Sasha costume is provided by the Bronx Zoo, and a parent volunteer from the school inhabits the costume).

Last year, winners of the Read-A-Thon read 20 to 200 books each (a winner is selected from each school). Just among the winners, 2,000 books were read! In May, second-graders from all 20 schools visit the Bronx Zoo on free passes, going on a "safari hunt" with clues provided by the Zoo. A Winner's Ceremony will be held June 19th at the Zoo. The impact of the TIGER Collaboration on young readers is captured by the song students sing with Sasha the Tiger: "If you're happy and you know it, READ A BOOK!"

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2008 CHAMPION AWARD WINNERS

For the fourth year, LINC has awarded cash grants to community organizations to initiate or expand early literacy programs in their communities.

PS 836 The Early Childhood Center – Brooklyn
Mary Martinez, Educational Assistant

A program that will aid parents with books to read with their young children.

New York Public Library, Stapleton Branch - Staten Island

Jennifer Morris, Senior Children's Librarian

A program that will foster the love of reading in children by sharing new and interesting storybooks.

YM-YWHA of Washington Heights & Inwood - Manhattan

Abraham Palma, Teen and Literacy Director

A program that fosters parent-child bonding while helping with literacy and writing.

PS 5 Children's Aid Society – Manhattan

Nayady Cruz, Parent Coordinator

A program that will motivate parents to read with their children and improve learning.

The Family Welcome Center - Bronx

Nancy Fernandez, Assistant Principal

A program that will mentor parents with books.

Ralph's Educational & Recreational Computer Services - Queens

Ralph Greer Jr., Founder/CEO

A Saturday program that provides multiple skill activities

PS 189 - Manhattan

Silvia Suero, Parent Coordinator

A monthly program for children and parents to

participate in literacy activities.

PS 14 - Staten Island

Brenda Cofield, Literacy Coach

A program that supports early literacy with a reading model.

The Family Welcome Center - Bronx

Johnny Ortiz, Community Associate

A program that will encourage children to read and play games.

MS 293 – Manhattan

Manuela Ceballos, Parent Coordinator

L.I.O.N. Literacy In Our Neighborhood program.

Brooklyn Public Library, Eastern Parkway Branch - Brooklyn

Nicola McDonald, Office Associate

A program where books and literacy are promoted to parents and children.

PS 836 The Early Childhood Center – Brooklyn

Mary Martinez, Educational Associate

A program that will promote emergent reading and develop language.

Boy Scout Troop and Pack 904 - Bronx

Kenneth Simmons, Scoutmaster

A program that helps families read together.

ASAP-After School Activity Program - Brooklyn

Barry Weinbrom, Director

A program that teaches about water wasting and how to solve this problem.



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