

# The Centerpiece

Country Childrens Center | Fall/Winter 2019



Little Steps...Big Feats<sup>SM</sup>

# Country Childrens Center<sup>SM</sup>

Serving the Community Since 1967

The Country Childrens Center provides a caring, nurturing, and stimulating environment that meets the individual, social, emotional, physical, creative, aesthetic, and intellectual needs of each child, ages 6 weeks through middle school.

It is our goal to establish a strong self-awareness within each child, which includes a sense of belonging, competence, usefulness, and empowerment.

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## Director's Desk

Welcome back to our new "School Year".

For many years the CCC has had an intergenerational program as part of its offerings to school-age children. We are doing this again this year. Typically 4th and 5th graders sign up to be part of this "club". The "club" meets each Weds. from 3:30-4:30pm at the CCC White House in Katonah. Both the CCC children and the seniors participate on a voluntary basis.



Polly Peace, Executive Director

While at the meetings, the children meet with local senior citizens who are interested in spending time with and getting to know the children. The seniors are from a group called Sage-ing International which meets at the Katonah Library monthly. The motto of this group is "sage-ing not aging". The idea is to bring these 2 age groups together and learn from each other. It is a very meaningful and fulfilling experience for everyone.

Each week the children and "Sagers" engage in many art projects and activities. In the past the group has conducted oral and written histories, photography projects, visited local museums, written and performed puppet shows and recorded original songs. The projects depend on the interests and talents of the participants. Each week there is also a special snack which is enjoyed equally by all. This is one thing we all have in common for sure!

Our first meeting was on Weds. Sept. 18. So far this year we have played trivia, read poetry, created painted glass vases and taken a nature/scavenger hunt walk. We are all making connections with each other and are having a lot of fun at the same time. Our hope is to present one of our art projects at the Katonah Museum of Art in the spring. If anyone knows of a senior or child who might like to join our group, please contact me.

Polly Peace  
Executive Director

# Country Childrens Center<sup>SM</sup>

## CALENDER

September 2, 2019 – Monday  
CLOSED – Labor Day

October 14, 2019 – Monday  
CLOSED – Columbus Day/Staff Development Day

October 26 – Saturday  
Fall Festival

November 23 – Saturday  
CCC Art Auction & Wine Tasting  
Oak Ridge Building, South Salem

November 28 & 29, 2019 – Thurs. & Fri.  
CLOSED – Thanksgiving Break

December 4th & 5th – Wednesday & Thursday  
Polar Express – at the CCC Farm

December 24, 2019 – Tuesday  
3PM CLOSING – Christmas Eve

December 25, 2019 – Wednesday  
CLOSED – Christmas Day

December 31, 2019 – Tuesday  
3PM CLOSING – New Year's Eve

Reminder: Full monthly tuition is always due.  
An allowance has been made for all scheduled  
& unscheduled closings.

**All dates are subject to change.**

**Event details are available through CCC  
as the event date approaches.**

# Contents

*The Centerpiece Fall/Winter 2019*

Enrollment Information	1
Director's Desk	2
CCC Calendar	3
Education Director Spotlight	5
Site Update: Bedford Hills	7
Site Update: The Farm	9
Site Update: Kitchawan	11
CCC Polar Express Event	13
Site Update: Oak Ridge	16
Site Update: Watson	17
Site Update: The White House	19
Program Update: Before & After School	21
Art Auction & Wine Tasting Event	22
In the Spotlight: With Board President Ben Palancia	23
Field Goods: Fresh Foods From Small Farms	25
Giving Tree Donation Program	26



### MISSION STATEMENT

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The Country  
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# Education Director's Spotlight

## Staff Development



Carmelina Myers  
Education Director

### Research Comes Together

By Carmelina Myers

The Country Children's Center's commitment to providing quality professional development is keeping the highest quality of care and education in our classrooms. There is so much research going on uncovering the way children learn, it's important for caregivers to stay on top of these developments. We have made training and education opportunities for our staff a fundamental part of our program so teachers can not only learn new teaching styles, techniques and tips, but interact with other early childhood educators to improve their own teaching through more hands-on activities, interactions and discussions.

We have found that professional development opportunities that require interaction among and between teachers are most useful. Thanks to Richard Owen, a former Country Children's Center parent, current grandparent and owner of Richard C. Publishers, these experiences were all part of a very special project that centered around early literacy.

Last fall, a group of our preschool and pre-k teachers embarked on a year-long journey in partnership with Richard C. Publishers evaluating and reviewing children's books. We were given 100 children's books of various genres that included books written in Spanish by Richard's publishing company to evaluate and see how they can be used in early childhood settings. These books are typically used in the elementary school classrooms, and the goal of this project was to provide Richard with feedback on whether or not these books can also be useful in the early childhood classroom.

This experience turned into a unique professional development opportunity for our preschool and pre-k teachers. This group of teachers or better known as "the Children's Book Club" met on a monthly basis to swap out books and share how they used these books in their classrooms. This opportunity not only gave Richard C. Publishers the feedback they were looking for, but also the perfect space for teachers to engage in conversations that allowed them to reflect on their practice while learning from each other about how to bring the importance of early literacy to life in their classrooms.



With each meeting came bigger and better reasons for using books as the center of learning experiences for all young children. It was impressive to see how our teachers did that. One teacher used the Story Baron the Rescue Dog as a tool to help children explore and understand the meaning of the word rescue while another brought Spanish to life in her classroom by reading the books in Spanish to the children. Because this dynamic professional development opportunity was such a success, we look forward to another "Children's Book Club" this Fall with a new group of teachers.



CCC Site Update:

# Bedford Hills

## Shining Star at Bedford Hills

By Shanna Krizan

Bedford Hills CCC is filled with lots of special people....amazing kids, incredible superpower-like parents, and awesome staff, who are all doing incredible things, both here and outside of CCC. However, I am not sure that many people are aware of our very own, Marvelous Matthew!

Matthew came to our center 2.5 years ago, as an enthusiastic young man, eager to work in the childcare field. Matthew has a certificate in Early Childcare and Education, from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has also worked with children in camp settings and at a gym facility in the past. I remember Matthew confidentially walking in to the interview "dressed to the nines" discussing his background experience with gusto, as well as highlighting his talents as he spoke to us in various character voices. He talked about his love of movies and musical theater, as well as his enthusiasm for kids. Matthew was clear that he was able and willing to do many things, and wanted to put to use both his passions and his education!

Matthew is a marvelous addition to our Bedford Hills center, and is a real team "cheerleader!" Not only does he have an incredible work ethic; always making



Shanna Krizan  
Site Director

sure to be on time, and do his best at his job; but he is always happy to celebrate anyone's birthday, accomplishments and so on, and is a huge help to making our center run! On a daily basis, Matthew helps to supervise the children at rest time; cleans up the kitchen after lunch; delivers supplies to all the classrooms; sets up breakfast and so much more. Matthew has been our resident "character" performer- jumping at the opportunity to read to children each year as the Cat in the Hat during Dr. Seuss week, dressing up at our Fall Festival and Earth Day Festivals, and most recently this summer, dressing up as the Ring Master and reading to the children at all of our sites during Circus Week!!

A year ago, when the Bedford Community theater was putting on the "Seussical the Musical," Matthew organized a group of staff members to walk over to the production, and go out to dinner beforehand. While we were there, Matthew was encouraged to put his name down to audition for the next production. He was a bit hesitant at first, but Matthew has gone forth, and will soon be performing in the Addams Family musical in November!! It is wonderful to have such a

fun and eager employee at CCC. He brings this fervor to our Staff Development Day, to his every day at work, and seemingly to everything he does. I hope that the CCC community will come out to support both our Bedford Hills community and our shining star, the one and only "Marvelous Matthew," as he performs on stage at the Bedford Community Theater mid-November (dates to be announced soon).



*On the right: Students and activities at Bedford Hills.*

CCC Site Update:

# The Farm

Happy Fall, Y'all!

By Noreen Cotter

We know that stepping outside the classroom to go on a field trip is one of the best ways to provide children with real-world experiences, and this fall the Farm Pre-K did just that! As part of their Fall study, the Pre-K class took a fun and exciting trip to Outhouse Orchards in North Salem, NY. Of course, when going on an adventure such as a field trip, safety always comes first. Before their trip, each child made special matching shirts and learned how to be safe by using a buddy system that had a very important rule which was to make sure you always know where your buddy is at all times! After putting on their special shirts, the children and teachers boarded the bus for a fun ride over to the orchard.

Upon arrival, the first stop was the corn maze. Here the children used a map to figure out how to get to the checkpoints and learn about the farm! The teachers and children then hiked on down to the pumpkin patch filled with pumpkins of all sizes. It was a great experience for the children to explore and learn about the different sized pumpkins. They also got to pick-out their very own pumpkin to take home! The adventure



Noreen Cotter  
Site Director

continued with a visit to the Bee Keeper who taught everyone all about bees! The children not only learned how bees make honey, but how they help flowers, fruits and vegetables grow.

After the Bee Keeper visit, the class trekked on over to the tractor for a hayride! It was so much fun bumping along the farm on the ride. It was a great way to look at all the different kinds of apple trees, peach trees, pear trees, and other fruits grown on the farm. As the experience winded down, everyone went on over to the picnic area to enjoy a yummy picnic lunch along with great conversations about everyone's favorite part of the trip.

Inspired by this fun and exciting adventure, the Pre-K classroom became the children's very own version of the trip to the orchard. The dramatic play area became an apple orchard while a pumpkin investigation was had in the science area, and to keep the memories alive, the children created their very own memory book of the trip for the library to keep the fun and learning going!



CCC Site Update:

# Kitchawan

## Inclusion at It's Best

By Caroline Paterno

As many of you are already aware, The Country Childrens Center currently has three inclusion programs working with The Childrens School for Early Development. This is a relationship that has been maintained since 1997. Which started with one class room and worked up to sometimes as many as four depending on their needs. Within a Preschool/Pre-K setting, "inclusion" or "integrated" classrooms are located within community based settings and are attended by both "typically" developing children and those with special needs.

While observing the classrooms here at Kitchawan, I proudly see an "inclusion" setting in each classroom. Not necessarily labeled by an organization, but a classroom setting where all are accepted. The Country Childrens Center as a whole has always enrolled children who have been evaluated and receive individual services. This is part of the CCC philosophy that each child is unique and had his or her own learning style. The teachers at the CCC work very hard at serving the needs of every child as best as possible, and when necessary, they work with families on obtaining the intervention services the child may need.



Caroline Paterno  
Site Director

Our Pre-K class is the only official integrated classroom here at Kitchawan. The building as a whole was proud to recognize the month of October as Down Syndrome Awareness month. We asked all the children and staff to wear the colors of yellow and blue to celebrate Down Syndrome. We are lucky to have two amazing families trust us to care for their child with Down Syndrome. These families got together to help us raise awareness. These two amazing mothers came to Kitchawan and lead a project with the Preschool and Pre-K children. Each child was given a small pumpkin and paint to decorate it any way they like. At the end, when all the pumpkins were painted, they looked at them together. They discussed how they were different and how they were alike. The bottom line was no matter how a child chose to paint their pumpkin, it was still a pumpkin underneath. This analogy was used to help explain that even if a person looks and or acts differently, we are all people underneath. Even though this was done to raise awareness for Down Syndrome, it was a broader message that was sent. No matter a person's ability, race and looks we are all humans who deserve equal respect.



On the right: Students and pumpkin painting at Kitchawan.  
On the top right: It's time for some bubble fun!





# Reindeer and Train Sets and Snowmen Oh My!

It's time to visit the CCC Barn  
and the Polar Express Experience

December 4th & 5th, 2019  
at the CCC Barn

\$10/Per child, includes a photo, treats  
and visit to the "North Pole" with live reindeer





CCC Site Update:

# Oak Ridge

## New Growth at Our Center

By Jessica Sousa

Community involvement has always played a large role at the Country Childrens Center. Over the years, we have partnered with local Boy Scouts on nature projects at the centers to assist them in achieving their Eagle Scout recognition. At Oak Ridge, we were delighted to connect with Evan Kistner from Troop 154. Evan worked under the guidance of his troop master, Mike Surdej, to design natural planter boxes for the playgrounds on both the toddler and preschool play spaces. With the assistance of nine volunteers, doing over eighty hours of work, Evan and his team were able to construct natural planter boxes for the children to explore during all seasons.

After the planters were complete, they were filled with seasonal plants for the children to explore using all their senses. The items planted included cilantro, parsley, thyme, rosemary, pansies, red-leaf lettuce, fall cabbage, and mini pumpkins. The children have enjoyed using their senses and discovering what has been planted in the planters. They tasted the herbs and lettuce while discovering that pansies are edible flowers! The children are looking forward to future projects in the months to come.



Jessica Sousa  
Site Director

With this, another exciting program we started is our family literacy bags. Building a proficient reader begins well before a child enters elementary school. Literacy plays an essential role in the development of all ages and stages. As early childhood educators, we play an important role in putting children on the path to reading. However, our efforts at the center are only a piece of the puzzle for literacy development. Children need their families to support early literacy skills during times outside the center too. Families play a significant role when it comes to children's language skills, concepts of print and alphabet knowledge. Research has proven that the time families spend interacting with their children through singing with fingerplays, drawing, and playing games is critical to a child's vocabulary development.

The family literacy bags provide opportunities to support literacy outside of the center. Each literacy bag contains a book or books based on a theme and an activity for families and children to complete together at home. Activities range from playing a math games to creating a bag for a classroom book. This program has made for a remarkable home-school connection, and also a great way to assist families in meaningful learning experiences together. We look forward to adding more literacy bags to the existing rotation.



CCC Site Update:

# Watson

## Fire Prevention Month at Watson

By Kristen Pollock

Keeping children safe is a big part of being a preschool teacher, and this month, at Watson, the teachers of the preschool and pre-k classes planned wonderful experiences for the children to learn all about fire safety. Young children need our help to understanding the dangers of fire and how to respond, and we were able to do so with the help of Jeff Bergstrom.

Jeff is an Engineer & Fire Safety Officer for the IBM T.J. Watson Research Center, and a volunteer fire fighter for the Brewster Fire Department. He used his knowledge and expertise to help the children learn and understand the dangers of fires and how to stay safe in the event of a fire. During his special visit, Jeff not only pointed out the safety measures needed in our homes to keep us safe, but also the ones in that classrooms and throughout the entire building. These included smoke/heat detectors, the sprinkler heads, and the fire escapes. One of the most important take-aways for the children during this special visit was to make sure everyone knows and has a special meeting place outside of their home that would be far enough away from the fire and smoke, and to never be afraid of firefighter dressed in their



Kristen Pollock  
Site Director

safety gear because they are there to help. The visit ended with the opportunity for the children to share their thoughts and questions with Firefighter Jeff.

Special classroom visitors are always a great way to bring learning to life for young children, and at Watson, we are lucky to have the wonderful resources available from the IBM T.J. Watson facility and their staff.



*On the right: Some of the wonderful students from Watson during their Firefighter visit.*

CCC Site Update:

# The White House

A Beautiful Garden!

By Pam Belmonte

Welcome back to another school year here at the White House! The CCC Summer Adventure Camp had a very successful session, and I thank Tiffany Baffi-Munson along with her summer staff for holding down the fort and most importantly for tending to our fabulous vegetable garden. In the spring, the White House pre-k and preschool children helped me plant an array of veggies from cucumbers to kale and peppers to potatoes for the summer campers to tend and harvest during summer. It was a huge success and wonderful partnership! A few weeks ago the preschool/pre-k kids had a blast (and so did I!) helping me dig up the potatoes. We enjoyed a few batches of homemade french fries with a fresh kale salad. Our once gorgeous giant sunflowers are also now being used in our classroom science centers!

With a new school year here at the White House, our garden continues to expand! Taking root in the White House pre-k classroom once again is Evelyn Munoz-Moreno, a 10 year veteran of the Country Childrens Center, and her new assistant Teresa Stefankowski. They look forward to another successful year of PreK with the inclusion class from the Childrens School of Early Development. Miss Evelyn is embarking on her final steps towards her completion of the CDA program and Miss Teresa is very excited to step back into the early childhood field after raising her family. The PreK



Pam Belmonte  
Site Director

class is in full swing with an apple picking trip already under their belt and their monthly trips to the Katonah Library will soon begin. We are excited to introduce a new volunteer intern from John Jay High School in the classroom named Kacie Rooney. She visits the PreK every Thursday and thoroughly enjoys reading stories to the children. She will be with us until June!

The preschool classroom has sprouted a whole new group of children with two new teachers as well. Lead teacher Domenique Martell and her assistant Melissa Schuberg are eager to bring their vast knowledge of early childhood education to the forefront of the pre-school curriculum here at the White House. When you enter Miss Domenique's classroom it is evident that she is an expert in early childhood education as learning is happening in every well-thought out centers around the room. Miss Melissa compliments Miss Domenique's style nicely with the addition of her background in music. I love hearing all the morning circle songs that Miss Melissa teaches the children each week. Plus, we are so lucky to have her on board as our piano teacher this year too!

One of my favorite quotes is "Every child is a different kind of flower and all together, make this world a beautiful garden." Come watch our White House gardens bloom this year!

*On the right: Some of the students and staff from the White House.*



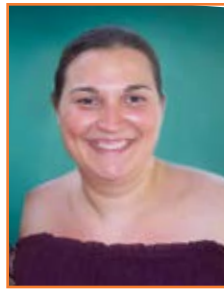
CCC Program Update:

# Before & After School

## A Peace Pole Shares a Message

By Tiffany Baffi-Munson

The Peace Pole Project symbolizes oneness of humanity and our common wish for world peace, and the school age children did just that through their very own Peace Pole project activity. During this project, the children learned that a Peace Pole bears the message May Peace Prevail on Earth in different languages on each of its four or six sides, and because Peace Poles remind us to think, speak and act in the spirit of harmony, the children created their own Peace Poles to show something they do to find or spread peace. They each created their own representation of what peace meant to them and placed them together to create their own symbol and monument of peace.



Tiffany Baffi-Munson  
School-Age Program Director

*What does PEACE mean to our very own  
Country Childrens Center School Age children?*

- Smile*
- Do good things*
- Be respectful*
- Be kind*
- Be in nature*
- Be quiet Listen to the rain*
- Be a friend*
- Love*
- Talk calmly and really listen*
- Sing*
- Play together*
- Feel happy*
- Walk away from arguments*
- Don't fight; Hug or high five*
- Listen to your heartbeat*
- Watch a sunset or sunrise*
- Sit by the sea and listen to the waves*
- Remember the good stuff let go of the other stuff*
- Share*

On this page: Students from the CCC After-School program.

# Art Auction & Wine Tasting

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| Brodinsky | Kun        | Rothenberg     | Zule               |
| Chagall   | Lena Liu   | Schluss        | Sports Memorabilia |
| Delacroix | Robert Lui | Shvaiko        | And Many More!     |





# In The Spotlight

## with Country Childrens Center Board President Ben Palancia

By Carmelina Myers

Ben Palancia came to the Country Childrens Center during his elementary school years. He attended the after-school program at Katonah Elementary School and Katonah Park and remains a committed member of the CCC community. Ben has three children Benjamin Jr, Nicholas and Julianna. Benjamin Jr, was a recent graduate of our Pre-K program. Nicholas currently attends the preschool program at the Farm, and we look forward to his daughter Julianna enrolling soon! Ben also continues his commitment to the CCC as the President of the Board of Directors, and it is an honor. "One of the greatest rewards of my job is to see children who were once enrolled in the CCC as children, as adults later in life," said Polly Peace, CCC's Executive Director. "To have Ben return to the CCC with his children as well as to serve on our Board is a wonderful gift of continuity to the program and validation of the family atmosphere that has made the CCC the success that it is today."

Ben is also an accomplished and devoted member of the community. He lives in Somers with his wife, Joanna, and his family. Ben is the owner and operator of Albert Palancia Insurance Agency, a family owned business started by his grandfather 3 generations ago. Locally, Ben coaches two American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) soccer teams

and one Somers Youth Sports Organization (SYSO) football team and serves on the Executive Board of Directors of the Boys' & Girls Club of Northern Westchester. Additionally, Ben was named as one of Westchester's "Forty under Forty" Rising Stars in 2013 by the Business Council of Westchester. He is a past President of the Mount Kisco Rotary Club and is a founding member of the Mount Kisco Rotary Foundation. In 2012, Ben received the honor of being named as Rotary Paul Harris Fellow.

As we talk, Ben shares his view of being part of such a great organization such as the Country Childrens Center.

**What is your favorite childhood memory of the Country Childrens Center?**

I have many memories from the CCC. I mostly recall all sports I played in the after-school program at Katonah Elementary School and at Katonah Park.

**What is the biggest change you can see at the Country Childrens Center from when you were here as a child until now as a parent?**

Wow, so much has changed. We went from one small center in the basement of a church to a robust non-profit of 6 separate locations. The best part about this is that we have maintained our same great close family feel.



**What motivated you to join the CCC Board?**

I joined the Board to give back to a great organization that provided me with a strong foundation during my childhood.

**As board president, what do you see as the biggest challenge for the CCC?**

Our biggest challenge is to let the community know who we are and the great things that we do. We are, truly, an amazing organization.

**What impact are you hoping to make as a parent and board president?**

I am hoping to bring greater awareness to who we are and the great things that we do at CCC. Many in the Westchester community at large do not realize that the Country Children's Center exists. We are a vibrant non-profit that deserves the attention and accolades of local politicians and benefactors. Owing a long-standing, third generation, family business, I hope to leverage my network to bring the CCC to the forefront as a leader in child care in Westchester County.



Above: Ben, 'back in the day' in the CCC After-school program.  
At Right: Ben and his son, Ben Jr.

**What is one thing about CCC that you saw as a child, still see for your children, and hope will continue?**

The love for the children. It is absolutely clear that CCC has one overall goal and that is to make sure that the children are safe and loved. Beyond this, CCC is outstanding at preparing children for their future education.



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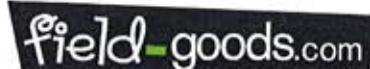


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# Country Childrens Center Tree Donation Program



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programs growing strong!**

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- For donations of \$500-\$1,000 a new branch will be added to our tree with your name inscribed on it.

Please use the donation form included below to make your donations towards our Center and special programs, or **donate Online** at [www.countrychildrenscenter.org](http://www.countrychildrenscenter.org)

Thank you from the Board of Directors,  
Staff, and children of the Country  
Childrens Center.

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\_\_\_ I want to volunteer my time

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