



The BRIDGE

east bay community action program

THE BRIDGE to SELF-RELIANCE

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Head Start – Reflections from a Retiring Director

By David Howard

As EBCAP's retiring Head Start Director, Barbara Schermack, reflects on almost a decade with the program, she shares what she considers to be her greatest accomplishments. Schermack was hired in 2002 as Head Start Director to guide the program through the merger between New Visions for Newport County, Inc. and Self Help, Inc. of East Providence, combining the staffs and facilities of both Head Start programs in order to serve all of the communities in the East Bay. This successful merger has allowed the program to greatly expand its offerings to children and families, and to become much more flexible in the placement of classrooms and staff.

Since its inception in the mid-1960's, political and economic stresses have placed additional pressure on federal spending, and Head Start seems to have to prove itself each year to those who control state and federal budgets. Schermack finds her job has increasing demands in promoting the value of the program. "Head Start's mission is as relevant today as it was 45 years ago, working with at-risk children and involving parents in the educational process." She cited a recent statement by Congressman Tim Ryan (D-Ohio) that "for every dollar we invest in Head Start, we get \$5 to \$7 back into our economy."

"Head Start's mission is as relevant today as it was 45 years ago, working with at-risk children and involving parents in the educational process."

Schermack noted that today's increased stresses on families have created more behavioral issues for young children, placing them at even higher risk than in the past.



HEAD START Director, Barbara Schermack, often uses the conference room at the Head Start center on Turner Avenue in East Providence to catch up on some paperwork. (Photo by David Howard)

Funding losses have ended transportation services for Head Start children, which has made it even harder for the families at greatest risk to avail themselves of the service, she added.

But, she said, EBCAP has been able to assist these families by providing additional and more centrally located classrooms. In Newport, their largest center on John H. Chafee Boulevard was opened in 2003 in the developing North End of the city, adjacent to new homes built by the Newport Housing Authority and to the new campus of Community College of Rhode Island, a long-time partner of the program. Schermack was successful in obtaining private funding which made possible two large state of the art play areas at the facility. Groundbreaking on a new \$3 million EBCAP health center will happen this year on land adjacent to the Chafee Head Start Center, adding to the services available to area families.

(Continued on page 2)



DENNIS ROY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As a busy summer at East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) ends, we are looking forward to the groundbreaking of our new health center in Newport on John Chafee Boulevard in the city's North End adjacent to EBCAP's Head Start Center during the September/October timeframe.

There is growing anticipation both among EBCAP staff and the greater Newport community of the benefits of this 11,000 square foot facility which will provide a state-of-the-art health care center for Newport area residents, both insured and uninsured.

The new health center will quadruple the examination and treatment space of the current facility located at 19 Broadway, where space is co-located with a dental clinic. Eight examination rooms will be included, along with expanded waiting and storage areas. Space for the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), behavioral health, and case management services provided through EBCAP will also be included in the new facility.

The health center was designed by Northeast Collaborative Architects (formerly Newport Collaborative Architects), with Health Administrator Stephanie McCaffrey, Medical Director Dr. Sarah Fessler and Director of Facilities Bill Ingram working along with me on the project. The construction of the center is financed through a \$3 million Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) grant, with additional government and private support being sought for equipment and furnishings.

New Visions for Newport County, Inc. first provided health care service to residents in 1972 in an office on Collins Street and later in the former

Newport Military YMCA building, eventually being located at 19 Broadway and named the Jean E. Hicks Health Center, in honor of its founder. New Visions and Self Help of East Providence merged into EBCAP in 2004, with health centers operating in Newport and East Providence and serving the entire East Bay.

A contract for construction of the new facility was awarded in August to Contractors Network, Inc. after a round of competitive bidding. The projected date for completion of the new facility is September 2012.

The location of the health center compliments other facilities in Newport's North End, including a campus of the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), where a number of programs have been partnered with EBCAP, new homes constructed by the Newport Housing Authority and the Chafee Boulevard Head Start Center, which is adjacent to where the new health facility will be built.

The opening of the new center will mark a new era in health care for Newport area residents, providing a spacious, well-equipped, professionally-staffed, conveniently-located facility with ample parking. In addition, in 2010, EBCAP health centers in Newport and East Providence completed a federally sponsored project to convert all medical records to electronic format. That, along with our work towards a patient-centered medical home model, will help to insure the very best health care for area residents. Affiliations with Newport Hospital, Rte Care of Rhode Island, the Newport County Community Mental Health Center, and the Rhode Island Health Center Association will continue at the new center.

This new project is a credit not only to the hard work of Rhode Island's Congressional delegation in supporting funding, but also to the administrative and medical staff at EBCAP, which has demonstrated commitment and care in providing professional health services to individuals and families of all income levels.

Head Start *(Continued from page 1)*

Other changes include establishing a new location in Tiverton that is owned by EBCAP. "In prior years, the Tiverton classroom had been moved to three different public school facilities," Schermack said, "and that is a costly, time consuming and destabilizing experience for our staff and families."

In 2009 in East Providence, when a former church convent on Turner Avenue was converted to service enriched apartments for individuals and families, two Head Start classrooms, complete with an outdoor playground, were included in the project.

As the new fall of 2011 Head Start term begins, Schermack has announced she will be leaving to spend more time with her family. She praised the hard work of the EBCAP Head Start staff that has faced the many challenges of serving at-risk children and preparing them successfully to enter public school. "Head Start has always been more than an educational program," she added. "There are social and emotional components and health and dental screenings for children, as well as other special services to help families understand and access

the Early Intervention process." Professional dental care is also provided for Head Start children through the Molar Express, a mobile dental unit EBCAP shares with two other organizations. In addition, Head Start is serving more and more children with special needs through the KidsConnect program. This Department of Human Services (DHS) funded program provides classroom supports for children with physical, developmental, or behavioral challenges, to allow them to be successful in a group setting.

She also cites the advantages EBCAP Head Start has provided parents. "Many of them have found employment opportunities in the program or have been guided toward development of their own goals," she noted, "and some have gone on to become Head Start teachers, managers and administrators."

In her tenure at EBCAP, Schermack has overseen a number of innovative partnerships that have benefited staff as well as children and families. An Early Reading First project, a Parent Involvement Research project through Bradley Hospital, three mentoring projects,

and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative have all helped us to maintain a high quality program despite flat Federal funding over a period of many years.

At the national level, Schermack sees new leadership in the Office of Head Start requiring more accountability at the local level, and the National Head Start Association's (NHTA) redefinition as a strong political force. "NHTA has been strengthened by the emergence of a young, politically savvy group of advocates who effectively communicate with our elected officials and the news media." She adds that the need for accountability has become increasingly important. "We need to repeatedly demonstrate that the children in our care are in a physically safe environment and that we are providing an age and educationally appropriate experience so that the children are prepared to enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed." Schermack is proud of the excellent reviews the EBCAP Head Start program has earned, and also recognizes that the feedback she and staff have gained from the annual reviews has been valuable to continuously monitor and improve program quality.

Fundraising Gala Was a Special Evening for All

(Photos by Amy Ritz, Ritzy Pics)



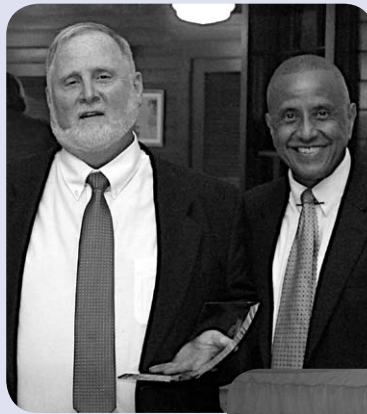
Over 190 guests enjoyed the special ambiance of Castle Hill Inn and Resort in Newport, and captured the magic of a trip on the historic Orient Express train as East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) presented its eighth annual Seaside Gala on June 9.

The Gala, EBCAP's major fundraising event of the year, featured music by Ed Massa Music, live and silent auctions, presentation of the 2011 Vision Awards to Roger Williams University, the youth groups of Trinity and St. Columba's Churches, We Share Hope and Dr. John Morton, and presentation of the 2011 Public Service Award to Lt. Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts.

The annual event brought together many friends and supporters of EBCAP to enjoy a special evening of good food in a beautiful setting that even a sudden thundershower didn't disrupt. The auctions provided spirited bidding for items ranging from Boston Red Sox tickets and weekend trips to Boston to a Holland American Cruise.

The awards presentations again proved a special part of the evening as organizations and individuals, who have made a real difference in peoples' lives, as well as EBCAP's own mission, were honored.

Photographic highlights of the Eighth Annual Seaside Gala are featured on this page.



Left: For his valuable contributions to EBCAP's East Providence food pantry Steve Martin (left), founder and Chief Executive Officer of We Share Hope, receives congratulations and a 2011 Vision Award from Jim Vincent, EBCAP Board President.

Below: Roger Williams University receives a 2011 Vision Award for its partnership in three initiatives with EBCAP. From left Suzanne Harrington-Steppen (RWU), Audrey Field (EBCAP), Jim Vincent (EBCAP), KC Ferrara (RWU), Dennis Roy (EBCAP), Seena Franklin (EBCAP) and Eliza Vorenberg (RWU).



Above: The Honorable Paul Gaines, former Mayor of Newport, and the Honorable Jo Eva Gaines, Newport School Committeewoman, served as Honorary Event Co-Chairpersons for East Bay Community Action Program's 8th Annual Seaside Gala held June 9th at Castle Hill Inn and Resort.



Right: Dr. John Morton was presented the 2011 Vision Award in recognition of his contributions to EBCAP's Maternal Child Health program.



Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts receives East Bay Community Action Program's 2011 Public Service Award. From left: Jim Vincent, EBCAP Board President, Lt. Gov. Roberts, and Dennis Roy, EBCAP Chief Executive Officer.



Members of the Trinity Church and St. Columba's Church Youth Groups received a 2011 Vision Award for their contributions of holiday gifts for EBCAP's Clinical Services for Youth clients.



Ruth Barge Thumbtzen (left) was the top bidder in the event's live auction. Thumbtzen won a Holland America Line cruise for two to Mexico. She is joined in the photo by her friends Attorney Susan Perkins and Toon Chody.



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Current Resident or:

New AmeriCorps Volunteers Learn All About EBCAP

By David Howard

There is no better example of how well East Bay Community Action Program's (EBCAP) grant with the federal AmeriCorps Program has worked than the fact that, starting its third year, there was a huge demand from EBCAP Program Directors for AmeriCorps volunteers.

"This tells us the program is really working," Audrey Field, Program Director for the AmeriCorps program at EBCAP, said recently, adding, "In the first year, we had to explain how the program worked to everyone. In the second year, the word spread about how great these volunteers were, and now, in our third year, we have more demand than we can provide volunteers."

EBCAP's latest 10-member AmeriCorps team covers an age spectrum from recent college graduates to adults embarking on a new career. They met at EBCAP's 100 Bullocks Point Ave. site in East Providence for the first day of a two week orientation program that will prepare them for a year of service to the organization. Leading the orientation were Field and Victoria White, EBCAP's RSVP Coordinator.

The group met with Sharon Smith, EBCAP Human Resources staff member, and learned about agency policies and procedures. Also, each volunteer introduced themselves and told a little about their personal background. AmeriCorps volunteers like Steve Polanco (in his second year at EBCAP) and Tim Roderick (third year) were able to talk a bit about their past EBCAP experiences.

Field spent a good part of the morning explaining the way EBCAP (one of the state's largest Community Action Programs, serving over 22,000 clients) functions, providing a variety of health and human services. "We are really an umbrella type of organization with many



ROAD TRIP: The 2011-2012 EBCAP AmeriCorps team toured various EBCAP sites during their 2-week orientation. Pictured in front of the Newport Headquarters are (front row) from left: Steve Polanco, Deborah Moye-Fuller, Charmane Dinardi, Kendalyn Thompson, Hannah Pfeiffer, Kaitlin Burke, Agnieszka Rosner, Joseph DePasquale; and (back row) from left: Alexa Henault and Timothy Roderick.

departments, serving various needs, and in partnership with many other organizations in the state," she said.

Susan Schenck, EBCAP's Chief Operating Officer, who also directs the Development and Public Relations Department, continued the orientation by highlighting some of the agency's publications and special features, including its Total Quality Management (TQM) program, where each department brainstorms a specific problem area and develops a solution that will result in better service to its customers.

Field and the volunteers reviewed their AmeriCorps commitment to their own program and to EBCAP. The federally-funded program which began in 1990 is administered in Rhode Island through an organization called Serve Rhode Island, and it has been successful in providing career training as well as educational assistance to members. EBCAP's volunteers will receive a regular stipend for their work and educational funding at the end of a year's service.

The orientation included visits from most of EBCAP's department heads to provide a glimpse at various services. In addition, the volunteers will also go on a "road trip" traveling to see each EBCAP facility from headquarters in East Providence to Newport.

It is a busy two weeks for the volunteers – what some call total immersion in EBCAP. But in an agency where the guiding principle that "every door is the right door" is followed, knowing all the available services is an important part of their volunteering.