

The Mary Crane Center promotes the comprehensive early development of children through school-readiness programs, personal enrichment activities, and family support services.



mary crane CENTER newsletter

SPRING 2009

Mary Crane Center Welcomes Interest and Participation of City and State Officials

Several years ago, when Peg Griffiths joined the Mary Crane Center board of directors, she and other board members realized that Mary Crane Center was something of a well-kept secret that didn't need to be kept.

"We decided it was necessary to educate the community as to the Mary Crane mission," Dr. Griffiths says. "We asked First Ward Alderman Manuel 'Manny' Flores to help as the Near Northwest location of Mary Crane Center is in his ward."



Alderman Flores greets his young constituents

Alderman Flores sponsored an open house in October 2005 that started momentum for other state and city officials to learn about Mary Crane Center. "Alderman Flores headed us in the right direction," says Dr. Griffiths. "Since then he has continued to be our contact, a faithful supporter and has helped us develop a good relationship with the city."

At that 2005 open house, more than 30 people became familiar with Mary Crane Center. "A distinct plus was the attendance of State Senator Iris Martinez, who was very enthusiastic about MCC and in a brief speech stated she would help get us additional state funding," Dr. Griffiths says.

Thanks to the efforts of Senator Martinez, Mary Crane received \$100,000 in 2006, which was used to remodel five classrooms to state-of-the-art facilities.

From that initial open house, Mary Crane Center has developed and followed a strategy to involve and inform city and state elected officials about MCC's service to the community. "The mission of MCC depends on government support," says Dr. Griffiths.

Other officials who have visited MCC locations include Alderman Scott Waguespack of the 32nd Ward, Alderman Vi Daley of the 43rd Ward, Alderman Gene Schulner of the 37th Ward, Alderman Joseph Moore of the 49th Ward, and newly elected State Representative Deborah Mell. Now that MCC has expanded to four locations, visits to educate additional officials will continue.

"When public officials visit, they are given a tour of the facility to see the program in action," says Dr. Griffiths. "Meeting the children 'seals the deal' as our kids are enthusiastic about visitors and they are so adorable. Visitors also meet the staff and get information about our program and our history, which invariably impresses them."

Mary Crane Center serves the families in these officials' wards and districts by providing a trusted place where parents can leave their children so they can go to work. "Our Center both helps to keep families financially self-sufficient and provides the education that prepares children to enter kindergarten," Dr. Griffiths says. "These elected officials understand how important these goals are, so they can't help but care about Mary Crane!"

FROM THE DIRECTOR

With this issue of the newsletter, we explore Mary Crane Center's ever-growing connection to the community. For over a century we've been directly involved with our neighbors by providing some of the best early childhood development programs in the city of Chicago.

But over the past few years, we've been working to let everyone, not just our parents and funders, know about all the great things happening at Mary Crane. We have been reaching out to educate legislators and colleagues about the quality programs we provide.

We are grateful for our increasing number of supporters, be they elected officials advocating for more state funding, a group of volunteers who come plant flowers or YOU joining us at the June 12th fundraiser. Everyone has something to share. That is a lesson we teach our children every day at Mary Crane Center.

Lavetter A. Terry
Executive Director

DID YOU KNOW?

- Well-designed early childhood interventions, like Mary Crane Center's, have been found to generate a return to society ranging from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for each dollar invested in the program.
- MCC welcomes new staff members: Linda Baase, *Assistant Teacher*; Mary Coy, *Resource Development*; Roxane Davila, *Administrative Assistant*; Megan Fisher, *Site Director and Lead Teacher*; and Amparo Villareal, *Teacher's Aide*.
- The daily curriculum at Mary Crane Center encourages language development, problem-solving, critical thinking skills and emphasizes early literacy.
- You can become a Mary Crane Society member with an annual gift of \$1,000 or more. For more information or to make a donation, visit us on-line at www.marycrane.org.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR MARY CRANE

Please join us for:

DRINKS & HORS D'OUVRES
WINE SEMINAR
CHEF DEMONSTRATION
SILENT AUCTION

Friday, June 12
5:30 – 8:00 pm

The Chopping Block at
Merchandise Mart

TICKETS: \$100

To purchase send check to
address at right or visit
www.events.org

Mary Crane Applies Unique Teaching Approach

The teachers and staff at the Mary Crane Center are committed to learning about the best practices in education and adapting them to their programs. One of the many innovative approaches Mary Crane incorporates into its curriculum is the Reggio Emilia method of childhood education.

Guadalupe Herrera, who recently completed formal training at the Municipal Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools of Reggio Emilia in Italy where the approach was first developed, is the site director of Mary Crane's Morse Site in the Rogers Park area of Chicago. "It is a strong child-directed model. You are surprised how much they learn. They learn their letters, reading, science, and math, all by following the children's interest," says Herrera.

A teacher isn't going to follow every lead, of course, but he or she will adapt a portion of the day's learning to match the children's curiosity. "The teacher has to be open to new ideas and challenges from the children," Herrera says. "There might be three or four children interested in trees. The teacher will ask questions about trees. Where do they come from? How tall do they grow? Let's take a walk outside and see how the tree looks and ask questions about what they see."

Mary Crane Center encourages both teachers and parents to really get to know their children. "You have real conversations with them," Lavetter A. Terry, Mary Crane's executive director says, "That builds excitement and interest in learning. At Mary Crane, we want to create a community of learners, where students and adults learn together. For example, in October in most class rooms you are going to see orange construction paper and pumpkins. There is no way that all 20 bright kids are interested in pumpkins. What if I'm interested in rain drops or apples? How fair is that?"

In comparison, one of the volunteers at Mary Crane trains the teachers in different kinds of paper—not only color, but texture and weight. She also instructs them about clay. "The teachers and children love it," says Terry. "It's that kind of thinking that opens up so many possibilities for the children."

"More than anything it's about team work with the other teachers," Herrera says, "you sit down and meet with the children, and ask them what they are interested in today."



Children's innate curiosity prompts the curriculum at Mary Crane Center

Cooking for the Kids

The Mary Crane Center invites you to take part in an evening of fine food, a wine seminar, a cooking demonstration, and a silent auction on Friday, June 12, from 5:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Chopping Block Cooking School, located in Chicago's Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 107.

Watch, learn, and mingle as the Chopping Block's professional chef takes us step-by-step through a gourmet cooking demonstration. Enjoy a delicious tapas buffet and wine pairings while bidding on a variety of silent auction items offered in support of the Mary Crane Center.

Tickets are \$100 per person. Event and silent auction proceeds will be used to provide services to the children enrolled in the Mary Crane Center.

All tickets are advance purchase. For tickets please visit www.events.org or to make a donation to the silent auction, please contact Mary Coy at 312-492-7588 or email mcoy@marycrane.org. Visit www.thechoppingblock.net for directions and parking information


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