

Mary Crane Gets Image Upgrade

Project Philanthropy volunteers create new logo, print materials for Center

As the Mary Crane Center approaches its 100th year, we look forward to new opportunities to expand our visibility in the community. Thanks to the volunteers of Project Philanthropy, we have a new look that reflects our growing mission for the new century.

Project Philanthropy is a community of creative professionals—graphic artists, copy writers, and web designers—who donate their time and talents to provide marketing materials to deserving nonprofits. Over the course of a one-day workshop, Project Philanthropy volunteers meet their client organization, brainstorm about

the organization's image, and fulfill the client's marketing "wish list."

On January 29, 2005, Project Philanthropy came together with members of the Mary Crane board and staff to create our new look. As inspiration, we chose the image of the crane. In addition to providing a visual representation of our name, the crane conveys our dedication to supplying a nurturing educational context for children and their families. We see the bird in flight as capturing our sense of hope for—and belief in—the future of our children. In the wild, cranes are protective and attentive parents, working as partners to ensure the health and welfare of their young. In the Japanese tradition of origami, the figure of the crane signifies peace and good fortune. In all of these ways, we see our new logo as symbolism of the promise of support we extend to the children and families of Chicago.

In addition to this newsletter, the Center also received letterhead, envelopes, business cards, mailing labels, a brochure, thank you cards, and a new website (www.marycrane.org). We'd like to express our gratitude to Project Philanthropy, its volunteers, and its donors—including gripdesign, Darwill Printing, and Mohawk Papers—for making it all possible.



Above, a Project Philanthropy volunteer creates the new Mary Crane logo.

WELCOME, ROGERS PARK

The Mary Crane Center is growing! We now serve even more families with the addition of a new location. In November of 2004, the Center took over the Head Start contract at the Rogers Park Learning Center. That center now bears the Mary Crane name and is a proud addition to our distinguished history. The Rogers Park location provides early childhood education to 68 children, ages 2-5 years, each day. The Center is located at 1545 W. Morse and is open Monday to Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

NAEYC Accreditation

The Mary Crane Center is seeking accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC is a voluntary system that sets

professional standards for early childhood education programs. Achieving accreditation status will be an important benchmark for Mary Crane, affirming our

commitment to ongoing quality and improvement. We have begun this process by filing our Notification of Intent. Stay tuned for updates!





NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mary Crane welcomes our new Executive Director, Lavetter A. Terry, who joined the Center in August 2005. Lavetter has been working in the early childhood education field for 25 years. She comes to Mary Crane after three years of providing consulting services to social services agencies. She has also worked at Chicago Commons as the Assistant Child Development Director, supervising seven sites that provided services to 1,100 children and their families.

Above, Lavetter (left) works with a Project Philanthropy volunteer to craft the Center's message.

MORE NEW FACES

Genevieve Scanlon, a lawyer with Jill Metz & Associates (and a former Mary Crane parent!), joined the board in June 2005.

The Center has also added many new staff members in the past year. We welcome the following individuals to our dedicated and talented staff: Yolanda Aguilar, Hilda Aquino, Rufina Batlle, Maria Cruz, Gracie Dortch, Guadalupe Herrera, Jennifer Jones, Pauline Long, Blanca Martinez, Maria Melendez, Omabola Oladejo, Luis Ortiz, Claudia Rivera, Sylvia Treadwell, and Tanya Watkins-Hall.

Local Foundation Funds Model Classrooms

The Gustafson Family Foundation became the first funder of a new Mary Crane Center initiative—Model Classrooms. This grant will create two state-of-the-art classrooms, one designed specifically for Toddler/Two-year-old learning, the other for Preschool.

When completed this fall, these classrooms will facilitate the learning process between children and teachers and will provide a model of best practices for the organization as a whole. Teachers can observe the Model Classroom and return to their own room motivated to put its practices to use. The Model Classrooms will be visually appealing, yet calming, enticing children to explore the world on their own terms. This involves utilizing natural materials such as wooden furniture and wicker baskets, as opposed to the plastic currently in the classrooms. These neutral tones will allow the children to bring their own color to the room—their personality, their diverse background, their artwork.

The educational materials in the classrooms will be selected to reflect the reality of the children's world. Dolls will represent the backgrounds and colors of the children themselves. Musical

instruments from diverse cultures will be utilized. The materials will not just be toys that fill time during a child's day, but challenging objects that help him or her explore the world around them.

The classrooms will also serve as a focal point for the Center's emphasis on a more developed approach to early childhood education. Young children are often seen as empty vessels that adults fill with information. In reality, children bring their own skills, strengths, and interests to the table. Rather than having "cookie cutter" lesson plans, the teachers at the Center are encouraged to tap into the children's own interests. The refurbished classrooms, with their inviting look and their state-of-the-art materials, will encourage this type of dynamic teaching. In addition, the emphasis on communication—child to child, child to teacher, teacher to child—and use of language will have a lasting effect on the children's early literacy skills.

The Center intends to eventually convert all its classrooms to Model Classrooms, and we thank the Gustafson Family Foundation for leading the way.

Donors Provide Car Seats for Center's Children

At Mary Crane, we strive to open up the world to our children as much as possible by taking them on culturally-diverse field trips to institutions such as Chicago Children's Museum, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, and more.

However, while we had the ability to take the Preschool-aged children on field trips, the Toddlers and Two-year-olds have always had to stay back at the Center. It is not safe for them to ride in buses without a car seat, and Mary Crane did not have the funds to purchase car

seats for every toddler in our care.

The generous donors of the Mary Crane Center came to the rescue. At a party hosted by board member Peg Griffiths in December 2005, donors raised \$1,950 for the purchase of 40 new car seats. The seats were ordered this spring, and were first put to use on May 27, when the Toddlers and Two-year-olds embarked on a field trip to the Chicago Children's Museum. Thank you to our donors for their continued dedication to the children at Mary Crane!