



Update



A New Way to Say "I Love You"

This summer, campers said "I love you" without saying a word. Like the three campers shown above, they used sign language instead. A \$25,000 grant from the Lisa Beth Gerstman Foundation helped make it possible for eight boys and girls—four with hearing impairments and four in wheelchairs—to participate in a camp session with able-bodied children at Wagon Road Camp in Chappaqua, NY.

While previous Wagon Road campers always made new friends and learned new skills, this session's campers learned about and embraced each other's differences. In the Cardinals group, campers learned to communicate with each other using sign language because the group included two boys with hearing impairments.

Campers also learned through interaction with peers who were active in camp though physically disabled.

"The first day it was odd, the second we explained and now these girls are their sisters," said Karen, an aide, when she described the reaction of able-bodied campers to the physically disabled students. Karen provides one-on-one assistance to Neealah, a wheelchair-bound camper with cerebral palsy. If her smile was any indication, Neealah enjoyed her experience as camper and as a teacher. Neealah was not shy about answering questions from her fellow campers about her experiences.

At this inclusive camp, participants established friendships despite limitations in mobility or hearing while learning how to embrace those differences—a camp lesson well learned. ■

From the CEO...

Keep Dreams Alive for Immigrant Youth

Fanny and Sally, sisters from West Africa, were brought to the United States illegally by their father when they were elementary school-aged. During high school, their father returned to Africa, leaving them alone and without support. Though living in a homeless shelter, they both graduated from high school with honors. In fact, Fanny won a private scholarship from Children's Aid for her academic achievement while overcoming obstacles, but instead of happily planning her transition to college, Fanny had to figure out how to support herself and Sally. Fanny now intermittently attends college while cleaning houses to pay for their apartment.*

The story of these sisters from West Africa should be an inspiring tale of self-determination and achievement, but instead it is a sad tale of foreign-born children abandoned by their parent and left to fend for themselves in the United States. Despite their accomplishments, the sisters face barriers to education, employment and health care because of their undocumented status.

However, now there is a ray of hope for them and for other undocumented young people who came to the U.S. with their parents at an early age. The DREAM Act, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, was reintroduced in Congress in July of this

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**Names have been changed.*

Kids Helping Kids: All-Star Givers

Fifth graders at P.S. 152, a Children's Aid community school in Washington Heights, raised \$1,150 from spare change, as part of Common Cents' Penny Harvest, the largest child philanthropy program in the United States.

This past fall, students at this elementary school collected and donated extra pennies, nickels and dimes. This spring, the fifth graders—pictured below—formed a roundtable to award grants to five organizations.

Lizette Valdes, P.S. 152's Family Worker/ Services Coordinator, has facilitated the Penny Harvest for the last two years. This year, Children's Aid was selected as a grantee because the organization has "helped a lot in our community," said one of the students.



The Penny Harvest gives the children a way to learn about and help those less fortunate than themselves, noted Principal Julia Pietri. Caring about others is a part of what these students are learning about everyday via the school's curriculum, which includes lessons in community service and global warming.

As one of the All-Star Givers remarked, "It's all about thinking about others," to which the group enthusiastically agreed. ■

P.S. 152's All-Star Giver Roundtable: Amber Lopez, Gianni Llano (not pictured), Jose-Ariell Romero, Orlene Morlina, Steven Garcia and Yamiles Estrella

P.S. 152 staff: Principal Julia Pietri, Community School Director Claudia C. Mitchell and Program Director Ada Tavares



Mignon Jones, NYEP Mentor; Velma Frezzell, NYEP Intern; Keith L.T. Wright, New York State Assemblyman

Learning on the Job, Gaining Confidence for Life

"You can't just take this job lying down," says Mignon Jones. "You have to think about what you are doing."

While that advice may also apply to Ms. Jones' day-to-day life as the Executive Assistant to New York Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright, she actually was talking about what Velma Frezzell needed to bring to her internship in the Assembly Office. Velma, 18, worked as an office assistant as part of her job training through The Children's Aid Society's Neighborhood Youth Employment Program (NYEP).

NYEP helps disconnected adolescents find stability and self-worth through a solid introduction to the world of work. NYEP Director Janice Jones and Job Developer Denise Browne place participants in four-month paid internships with mentors.

Not only did Velma gain valuable office work experience with Ms. Jones, but she also developed interpersonal skills and a friendship with Ms. Jones.

"I learned how to file, how to fax, how to present myself, how to work with constituents," says Velma. "I learned how to control anger. I don't really get mad easily, but I learned there are certain ways you should talk to people on the job."

"I used to talk to [Velma] like I talk to my children," says Ms. Jones. She encouraged Velma to speak up and be heard at home through respectful communication with her family.

Velma plans to begin classes at John Jay College in the fall and will study forensic psychology. She says she will take everything she learned at the Assemblyman's office with her in future opportunities; however, she'll always appreciate her mentor.

"I was really attached to working there and working with Ms. Jones," she says. ■

From the CEO...

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year. If passed, the DREAM Act will provide approximately 65,000 U.S.-raised students a path to citizenship through hard work and scholarship.

Undocumented youth like Fanny and Sally should be able to get on with their lives, finish their educations, get jobs and continue to contribute to their adopted country. Young people raised in the U.S. deserve access to resources granted to other promising young people who grow up in our communities.

To learn more about what you can do to help pass the DREAM Act, contact your representatives in Washington today by calling (202) 224-3121.

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