



EPISCOPAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Transforming the Lives and Communities of New Yorkers in Need Summer 2009

AN END, OR A BEGINNING?

Everything almost ended when the visitor pulled a knife on her father in their kitchen.

Tamara* still remembers the scene vividly: it was late on a Saturday night, when the “business transaction” her father Eric had planned turned into a drug deal gone wrong. For several terrifying minutes, Tamara, her younger sister and brother, and their mother Roshan watched as Eric desperately bargained and pleaded with the buyer until he left without further violence. Roshan remembered trembling after he was gone, thinking first how she almost lost her husband – and then thinking how they might now lose their children.

Removing children from dangerous living situations is the responsibility of the city’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). And taking children away from a household where drugs are sold sounds like the right thing to do. But taking children out of their birth home imposes severe trauma of its own, regardless of whatever else the child has been exposed to.

For this reason, ACS contracts with ESS and other agencies to provide “family preservation” services helping troubled families correct unhealthy conditions so the children can remain safely in the home. ESS works with 105 families each year, and Program Director Deanne Channer is proud of her department’s consistent success in keeping about 97% of these families together.

“For the most part, these are families that want to stay together; faced with the choice of the hard work that requires, or losing custody of their kids, they pick the hard work, and they make it,” Channer said. “You’d be surprised at how much people can change for the sake of their kids.”



That night in the kitchen was Eric’s wake-up call. Unemployed for months when the economy forced the small business he worked for to cut back, Eric’s frustration led to heavy drinking, a factor in his “really stupid decision” to help a friend sell drugs. He didn’t consider the danger to his children.

Nonetheless, ACS felt this was a family that could be saved, and assigned the case to ESS. Working with the family for over a year, ESS referred Eric to programs for substance abuse and job training. Eric and Roshan received psychological counseling as well as a 16-week parenting skills class, and the children were given counseling to help them process all they had been through. Their ESS

*Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality

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WHERE THE ECONOMY HITS THE HARDEST

The defining aspect of the current recession will be the pervasiveness of its reach; the fact that many “comfortable” individuals and families are now finding themselves hit has been quite shocking and deeply disturbing across the board.

As noteworthy as that is, however, it glosses over the much more serious problem of the poor, those living in impoverished neighborhoods with little opportunity and even fewer resources for help. Much of ESS’ outreach takes place in the South Bronx, which is part of one of the poorest Congressional districts in the nation. These residents are in the vanguard of economic change; having little to begin with (and no savings or other safety nets), they are least able to cope with bad times – and the heavier their woes, the greater the drag on the whole economy.

ESS staff members see this every day in their client interactions. Parents in the Family Preservation Program are suddenly asking for referrals to food banks. Toddlers come to Early

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A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT H. GUTHEIL



FEAR AND DETERMINATION

It's certainly not news to anyone that these are tough economic times; surveys suggest Americans expect a long, slow recovery, making them worried about their long-term well-being. Many more individuals, and those higher up the economic ladder, are adversely affected this time, compared to a "normal" recession. More

are asking (with ever-more urgency), will I lose my job? How long could our savings last? Will we be able to keep paying the mortgage?

In such an uncertain climate, people draw inward; more cautious and frugal, they take fewer risks, and focus their concern closer to home. But what is reasonable for an individual is devastating when multiplied across society – most of all, for the poor. Every day at ESS we work in impoverished neighborhoods where people were hit earliest and hardest by the economic meltdown. These people have no jobs at all, no savings to fall back on; they pay rent, not mortgages; and their economic opportunities are extremely limited. The stress of daily life can be overwhelming, causing ripple effects through families and communities.

More worrisome is that the recession is hurting many individuals of means whom we normally solicit to help our client population. Might fear for their own prospects dampen the generosity of these donors, and cut off a source of help for those in need? If all of ESS' financial supporters scaled back or stopped their gifts, we could no longer transform the lives and communities of New Yorkers in need.

But happily, that is not the case; ESS' many friends have so far responded, not in fear, but in confidence and determination. As a result, you will read, even during this time of economic hardship ESS' programs still work: troubled families become healthy and whole, and toddlers enter their school years with a solid foundation of curiosity and wonder. Government and private funders continue to recognize our effectiveness, and endorse our efforts with their financial support. And many of those who have themselves benefited from ESS' outreach are coming back to pay forward to others what they themselves received.

We are gratified and humbled by all of these encouraging developments, proud that our partners in ESS' extended family value confidence and hope over fear. As we face a program year that may be even rockier than the last, my hope is that we can all remember that together we can change a life, a neighborhood, a community – and who knows? maybe even an economy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert H. Gutheil".

Robert H. Gutheil
Executive Director

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Council Member Mealy brings a big check to PS 135

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY GIVES \$18,000 TO ESS AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

New York City Council Member Darlene Mealy (District 41, Brooklyn) visited ESS' After-School Program at PS 135 in East Flatbush in February with a twofold purpose: first, to observe how the Program is helping increase attendance and improve performance levels through music and art classes, a robotics program, and an Internet-based newscast production project; and second, to present ESS with a grant of \$18,000 to support the Program's ongoing operations at the school.

The After-School Program serves 1,400 students each year in 13 public elementary, middle, and high schools across the city. Government contracts cover a minimal base of operations, but activities like those at PS 135 depend on private gifts and targeted public grants. Thank you, Council Member Mealy!



A student at PS 135 explains his solution to a robotics problem

ECONOMY

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Head Start classes in the same diapers they wore home the day before, because the family can't afford more and still pay the rent. Rough winter weather used to mean low attendance at Day Care and other early childhood sites, as families stayed home; now attendance is up, as families need their children to get the free meal that is served in class. Adults are affected too: foster parents feel increased stress both from having to work more and longer hours, while worrying about job security and downsizing; and economic anxiety exacerbates other existing family problems, leading to more emotional outbursts and confrontations, often in the presence of the children. All these factors lead to lower productivity and less incentive to achieve, and communicates those standards to future generations.

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WHY I SUPPORT ESS

Deborah Snyder, ESS Board Member



I first learned about ESS through an organization that helps non-profit organizations find board members. I'd been looking for a social services agency in New York City where I could lend my help and support – and I specifically

wanted to find a well-run organization that was really making a difference. I was struck by the vitality of ESS, the breadth of the population it serves, and the professionalism of its people. The mission statement says it all: "Transforming the lives and communities of New Yorkers in need." And those words are backed up by the ability to deliver on its promise.

There is such a wide range of need in our city, and I'm happy to see ESS addressing a variety of concerns. From educative day care and early childhood services to helping the formerly-incarcerated start over again after release, ESS is engaged in all stages of people's lives. Of course, in this period of economic downturn, a lot of what's needed is simply helping individuals and families keep going day to day with direct services. For example, I was so impressed that the Early Head Start facility has a full commercial-quality kitchen and a laundry – because the parents of these children are often working multiple jobs and still having to choose sometimes between rent and food; yet they know that when their kids come to class, they will get a good meal and their clothes will be clean. It sounds like such a little thing, but it makes an enormous difference to a struggling household. But it isn't just short-term, band-aid help that ESS offers. Its programs also give clients the skills and support they need to move their own lives forward.

I've supported ESS by volunteering my time and expertise as a board member and as an enthusiastic advocate for the organization among my friends and colleagues. And of course, financially – I'm happy to help maintain the operations of an agency that is so well-run and flexible in its response to need. I would urge anyone who wants to know more about ESS to simply volunteer in some way and see them in action for themselves. There are a lot of ways to lend a hand without a long-term commitment, and believe me, when you see what happens here, it's no hard sell at all.

SAVE THE DATE!

ESS' FALL BENEFIT

Thursday, October 15, 2009
The River Club, Manhattan

Join us for cocktails, conversation, and news about how ESS is helping transform the lives and communities of New Yorkers in need

For information, call Mary Connolly at
212-886-5604

ESS SHINES DURING SITE VISIT INSPECTION

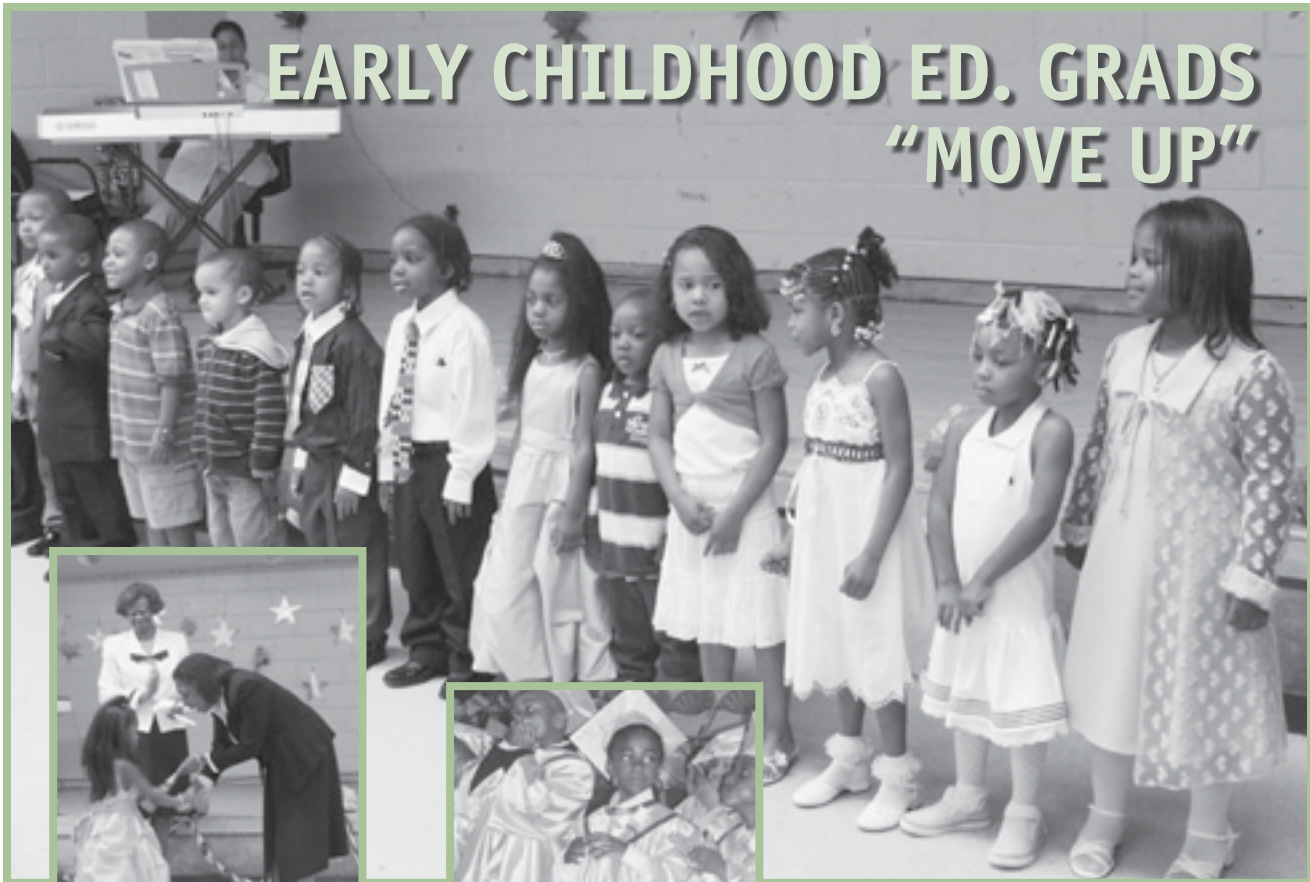
Today's society is one which is increasingly results-driven. Especially for organizations providing direct services to clients, the loftiest mission statement or the best of intentions means little unless there are hard, cold, data backing up the fact that an organization has accomplished what it said it would. ESS has chosen to undertake the arduous but valuable process of seeking accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA) – which, if granted, will testify that the organization adheres to industry best practices, stays abreast of developments in its areas of outreach, and demonstrates diligence about clients' rights, privacy, and confidentiality.

Formed in 1977 by the Child Welfare League of America and Family Service America (now the Alliance for Children and Families), COA has for over 30 years been a respected measure of service quality and best practice. ESS' application process began in the fall of 2008 with a detailed self-study, examining every aspect of how the agency conducts its business, keeps its records, deals with client issues and complaints, and maintains the confidentiality of its records. This exhaustive study not only served to document what the agency was doing right already, but provided a template against which policies and procedures were compared to best practice, so that any changes could be designed and implemented in a timely fashion in advance of the next major phase: the site visit.

After reviewing the results of ESS' self-study, a team of COA field inspectors comprising experienced practitioners in a wide variety of social services spent one week on-site at ESS' offices, program facilities,

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EARLY CHILDHOOD ED. GRADS "MOVE UP"



Satin academic gowns, mortarboards with tassels, marching to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" – oh, to be almost five years old again!

With all the solemnity of a college commencement, dozens of students at each of ESS' six Day Care and Early Childhood Education Centers "moved up" in June, marking the end of their first academic endeavors as they turned their sights toward the new challenges and discoveries that await them in Kindergarten. Proud parents beamed as the soon-to-be graduates performed recitations, sang songs, and demonstrated their readiness to tackle the world before them.

The ceremony at Cooper Park Day Care Center in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, was also attended by New York City Council Member Diana Reyna (District 34, Brooklyn) and by a representative of New York State Assemblyman Vito Lopez. Both congratulated the children on achieving this milestone, and urged their parents to continue being good teachers and role models themselves.

In each of these celebrations, one happy reality was clear: during their earliest, most important formative years these children had received loving attention and mental stimulation, and been given the socialization skills that prepared them for success in school. That future success will be very much due to the efforts of the dedicated teachers and staff of ESS Day Care Centers, and to the parents for their invaluable support and encouragement. Congratulations to the Class of 2009!



Program **UPDATES**

PARENTING SKILLS GRADUATES HONORED.



Receiving her certificate of Parenting Skills training is an emotional moment for one mother

One of the ways ESS' Family Preservation Program helps stabilize troubled families is by offering a 16-week class in Parenting Skills. For many of the men and women who participate, the course helps them learn how to relate to their children and be better guides and teachers as they grow up. These new skills open many doors of opportunity, and form the foundation for a new, healthy, and stable family life. On May 26th, six parents who successfully completed this course were honored at a graduation ceremony in ESS' Annex in the Bronx. They heard inspirational readings by some of the student volunteers who had

worked with their children during the classes (see below), original poetry by family members, and each graduate was presented with a single red rose by her children as a token of their pride in the accomplishment. A moving ceremony to mark a new beginning in these families' lives.

VOLUNTEERS LEND A HELPING HAND.

ESS is grateful for the many volunteers who give their time and talents to help extend the reach off the agency's programs and staff. Two such examples include the Learning Leaders Program, a group of students from the Bronx Academy of Letters, who spend one evening a week this winter providing activities and supervision of children whose parents were participating in the Family Preservation Program's Parenting Skills Class. Over the course of 16 weeks these students developed deep ties with their young charges as they led them through a variety of educational and recreational activities. Employees from Morgan Stanley visited PS 197 in Harlem, one of ESS/ After-School sites, to offer tutoring and homework help to the students there; afterward, they joined students in a variety of activities including sports, arts and crafts, and more. Many thanks to Morgan Stanley Community Affairs for helping to arrange their participation.

DAY HAB PROGRAM TO EXPAND.

ESS' Community Residences for Developmentally Disabled Adults is expanding its successful Day Habilitation Program, called "Day Hab Without Walls" for the mentally retarded adults living in ESS' care. The current program has operated at ESS' facilities in Manhattan since 2007 and focuses on services tailored to each participating resident that foster the principles of individuality, inclusion, independence and productivity. A second Day Hab Program is slated to open in the Bronx in the summer of 2009, and ESS also recently received an award letter from the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities for yet another Day Hab Program in Brooklyn.

The Day Hab Program offers daily opportunities for community inclusion and recreation, and our clients are able to take advantage of all that New York City has to offer. Some recent recreation activities have included trips to public libraries, several city parks, historic Coney Island and Rye Playland, the Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens, the Staten Island Ferry, Orchard Beach, Queens County Farm Museum and the Museum of Natural History. With a trained staff providing 1:1 coverage for all the clients, a great deal of programming flexibility is possible.

SITE INSPECTION

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and field sites to carefully examine all aspects of the organization's daily operations. Program Directors and staff were interviewed regarding their understanding of agency policies and procedures, and a selection of clients were asked for feedback on their experiences with ESS caseworkers and staff. Program files were open for review to determine whether case records were complete and conforming to regulatory standards. Staff had prepared for the visit by meeting with managers to ensure a clear understanding of the agency's goal and ethical standards, and learning the correct answer to the question, "Who is responsible for quality at ESS?" That answer? "I am."

So how did ESS fare under this close examination? Very well, indeed, it appears. At an exit interview meeting with the Executive Director and senior staff, the COA inspectors spoke highly of the quality and expertise they had seen, and complemented ESS on the openness and hospitality, and eagerness to help that they had encountered. Program after program was cited for competence; one reviewer called ESS' Early Head Start Program one of the best she had seen in the country, and there was similar praise for the Foster Youth Group Homes as well. Many other programs were cited for exceptional quality, and the overall commitment of the staff to their work, their clients, and one another, was noted. As Executive Director Robert Gutheil said afterward, "we all left smiling very broadly."

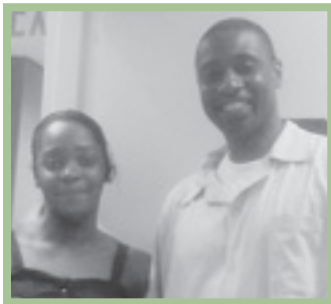
There is still work to be done, of course; needed improvements in some areas were noted, and there is the need to be ever-diligent that standards remain consistently high. But ESS is proud to have fared so well this far into the accreditation process, and looks forward to the final determination by COA, expected by year's-end. Stay tuned for more!

OUT OF PRISON, GIVING BACK

Network in the Community, ESS' program of therapeutic and support services for men and women recently released from New York State prisons, boasts a proud accomplishment: compared with all of New York State, where 39% of those released or paroled return to prison within three years, only 7% of Network's participants are re-incarcerated within that time. In other words, 93% of those who attended Network sessions remain free after three years, with a statistical near-certainty that they will never be behind bars again.

Grateful for the help in starting over, many of these men and women feel moved to give something back by helping those that come after them. As staff members and volunteers with Network in the Community, these individuals bring a unique perspective to their Network efforts, and act as role models to those working to make good on their second chance in life.

One such individual is Andre "Imani" Ward, who received a felony conviction in 1992. Determined to change the course of his life, Ward joined Network in the Prisons, eventually becoming a group leader while undertaking his own educational and spiritual development. Now enrolled in college, Ward's is described by others as "a gentleman;" his professional demeanor and courteous nature serve him well as an Intake Specialist, a reassuring and welcoming "first point of contact" for those entering the program.



Abdulla Rashid with a Network in the Community participant

Abdulla Rashid served nearly 20 years for his felony conviction, but put the time to good use: he holds an A.A. from Bard College and a Certificate of Ministry and Human Services from New York Theological Seminary, both obtained in prison. Currently working as a Health Educator and Case Manager for a community organization in Brooklyn, and puts his experience and knowledge to use as a part-time Network Therapeutic Facilitator and Anger Management

Trainer, helping parolees adjust to mainstream life. Rashid will continue his studies in the fall, seeking an undergraduate degree in Human Services, and plans to earn a Masters degree in Public Administration.

Anthony Ellison also took advantage of Network in the Prisons while serving time at the Fishkill Correctional Facility to re-evaluate his life and goals, with great success; he became Program Coordinator of the Network Program at Fishkill, and since his release has been working as a community organizer in Queens, specializing in youth work. He continues to contribute to Network's mission as a Facilitator and Trainer, helping returnees directly and passing on to others the skills needed to lead effectively.

These are but three examples of how Network has helped individuals transform and redeem their lives. But inspiring as their stories of personal success may be, even more significant is their desire to share their success, and help others achieve all that they are capable of; this truly makes them excellent role models, not only to the formerly-incarcerated, but to all.

AN END, OR A BEGINNING?

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caseworker helped the family apply for subsidized housing, and they now live in a new apartment far away from the old neighborhood and its bad influences. Follow-up visits have shown the home to be clean, orderly, and well stocked with food; the children appear happy and are doing very well at school. Even more important, Eric and Roshan are actively working together to build a healthy family and a prosperous life. ESS has asked ACS for permission to close the case."

What could have been a tragic end to so much in that kitchen on that long-ago Saturday night, instead became a new beginning for Eric, Roshan, and their children. Noted Channer, "When you can take a family on the verge of catastrophe and not only lead them away from the brink, but help them move into a better and healthier place, that's a really happy ending."

ECONOMY

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While the response from private donors to the increased need is encouraging so far, longer-term doubts remain whether their generosity will be sustained at the levels needed if times do not improve soon. Help will be needed from a broader range of donors than before, and every gift, regardless of size, will have a real impact on the outcome of this effort. The recovery of the whole society is helped or hindered by the fate of its poorest members; if potential donors can be persuaded that helping others in worse need than they makes sense economically as well as morally, the result could be a shift in philanthropic behavior that outlasts the crisis that created it.

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HOW CAN I HELP EPISCOPAL SOCIAL SERVICES?

So glad you asked! There are several ways you can help:

PERSONAL DONATION: Every dollar given will help sustain our programs that transform the lives and communities of 5000 of New York's neediest each year. By making a multi-year pledge, you help plan for not only this year but the future as well.

MEMORIAL OR HONORARIUM GIFT: Give in memory of a loved one or if you have a friend "who has everything" recognize their special occasion by making a gift to ESS in their honor.

EVENT SUPPORT:
Purchase a ticket to our upcoming Fall Benefit at the River Club on October 15th, donate a toy or personal care item to Winter Wonders holiday gift program or ask to be added to our mailing list to be kept up-to-date on other events throughout the year.

CORPORATE GIFT, MATCH OR SPONSORSHIP: Corporate support plays a big role in the success of our fundraising efforts. Corporations may give year round, or sponsorship of one of our program or fundraising events may be good for business! If you make a personal gift, don't forget to ask for your company's matching gift form to double the impact of your donation.

DESIGNATE YOUR UNITED WAY DONATION:
United Way offers the opportunity to designate your gift to ESS. If you would like more information on how to designate through United Way, please contact them at 212-251-2500.

PLANNED GIVING: Consider including ESS in your estate plan. A bequest to ESS is an ideal way to ensure we can continue to transform the lives and communities of every New Yorker in need.

THIRD-PARTY EVENT: Be creative! Organize your own fundraiser with proceeds coming to ESS. Please call us to discuss your ideas and the guidelines.



FRIEND-RAISERS AND SPEAKERS BUREAU:

Host a friend-raiser in your home – or at one of our locations. You provide the guests and refreshments; we provide information about ESS to help build our community of life-long donors committed to the ESS mission. Members of the ESS Speakers Bureau (program staff and clients) can also come to present to your civic, school, or

religious organization providing valuable information about their personal experience and how our programs make a difference.

VOLUNTEER: See our web site for a listing of current volunteer needs or call us to discuss your ideas of how you'd like to help.

For more information on how you can help Episcopal Social Services, please contact Mary G. Connolly, Director of Development and Communications, at 212-886-5604 or connollym@e-s-s.org.