Barack Obama
A lot of unnecessary waste works its way through our school system on a daily basis, particularly at breakfast and lunchtime. A stunning 4 million Styrofoam trays get thrown away every week in NYC schools, and that’s not even considering all of the plastic and Styrofoam plates, cups, and cutlery. All that garbage will be carted out of the cafeteria, trucked through City streets, loaded onto barges, and shipped to distant landfills.

This model is extremely costly, damaging to the environment, and lacks the kind of long-term socially responsible vision we should be instilling in our children.

According to the Hamilton College Climate Change and Environmental Issues Youth Poll, over 80 percent of high school students believe we “must consider the impact that our actions will have for the welfare of future generations.” Despite the overwhelming concern they have for our environment, the poll also found that the vast majority are not learning what steps they can take in their own lives.

I have introduced a bill in the State Senate (with a “same-as” bill in the Assembly) that would ban the use of Styrofoam in the food service industry, including our schools. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that Styrofoam “can have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, and the aquatic environment. It is a minor component of all landfills, but it remains there for a long time. It is chemically inert, and is very hazardous when it leaches into groundwater systems.”

Styrofoam “can have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, and the aquatic environment.” The EPA has stated that that is expected as a carcinogen and neurotoxin. And did I mention that it takes hundreds of years to decompose?

But banning one product is not enough. Many options, the sheer size of our school system provides an unparalleled opportunity to decrease the use of environmentally damaging products while also decreasing our huge solid waste problems.

The NYC school system and the Department of Sanitation should work together to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of the costs and savings of switching to bioplastics, including decreased costs of handling and trucking that waste to garbage heaven (better known as Pennsylvania). This analysis should also incorporate examining new models of energy conservation, the use of non-toxic cleaning materials, and the implementation of a school system recycling program.

Earth Day this April is a great motivator, and we should take this as an excellent opportunity to develop a plan for our school system.

Our schools should lead by example so that our students do not miss out on a great opportunity to understand and internalize socially responsible actions—actions that will stick with them the rest of their lives. To get our arms around an unsustainable waste stream and a changing climate, we need vision from our School administrators, and for our children to do better than we have so far.

I challenge schools to take the lead, change the way we think, and capitalize on new opportunities available to them, including the growing environmentally preferable bioplastics industry. Bioplastics are made from renewable and sustainable sources like sugarcane, corn, and soybeans that are made into trays, plates, forks, knives, cups, straw… and even garbage bags. Think about that—every bit of waste a school cafeteria creates can be biodegradable and compostable. San Francisco’s public school system has switched entirely to bioplastics, and utilizes that City’s composting system to save money. Though NYC may not have the same composting options, the sheer size of our school system provides an unparalleled opportunity to decrease the use of environmentally damaging products while also decreasing our huge solid waste problems.

The NYC school system and the Department of Sanitation should work together to conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of the costs and savings of switching to bioplastics, including decreased costs of handling and trucking that waste to garbage heaven (better known as Pennsylvania). This analysis should also incorporate examining new models of energy conservation, the use of non-toxic cleaning materials, and the implementation of a school system recycling program.

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GUEST EDITORIAL:
School Meal Lines Shouldn’t Be Trash Lines

By STATE SENATOR LIZ KRUEGER

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Bell quotes several illustrative thinkers who echo her advocacy of visualization. In ancient times, Aristotle maintained, “Man cannot think without images.” In the 12th cen-
tury, Thomas Aquinas said, “Man’s mind cannot understand thoughts without images.” Our own century’s Albert Einstein quite quipped, “If I can’t picture it, I can’t understand it.” The Lighthouse-
Bell model has been implemented in hundreds of schools with positive results. In a low-income district in Pueblo, Colorado, where staff was given professional development workshops, the number of special education students dropped by 30 percent. The Pueblo model is now being implemented in hundreds of schools with positive results. In a low-income urban area, 70% of fourth graders cannot read. The popular phonics or word recog-
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Concordia Language Villages, a non-profit organization sponsored by Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., now offers 15 languages each summer to nearly 6000 youth between the ages of 7 and 18. Villagers and staff come from all 50 states and more than 40 countries for one-, two- or four-week sessions at sites located in Minnesota and Georgia, and, starting in 2008, New Jersey. In addition, the Language Villages offers programs in language and cultural immersion for an additional 5000 adults, teachers, school groups, and families in Village Weekends during the academic year.

The Language Villages provides a place where similarly motivated children interested in learning new languages and more about the world can enjoy intellectual challenges combined with fun, culturally authentic, and old-fashioned outdoor activities. Students can earn high school credit in 13 of the world languages offered at the Villages. The setting of the Villages provides for healthy outdoor play and immersion methodology. It is a chance for students to see, hear, and interact with each other.

During Summer Foundations participants complete a rigorous five-week training institute with coaching, support and leadership. During Summer Foundations participants complete a rigorous five-week training institute with coaching, support and leadership. New Leaders Community for the first two years as a principal. New Leaders actively participate in a national, lifelong network of peers who support one another and share tools and promising practices. New Leaders benefit from continual feedback, support, and exchange of best practices from the New Leaders network. As a national movement for educational excellence, New Leaders make a long-term commitment to transform urban public education.

All applicants must possess a minimum of 3 years of full-time K-12 classroom teaching experience. All applicants must also meet our rigorous Selection Criteria available for your review at www.nlns.org. All applications must be submitted online at www.nlns.org by the Final Deadline February 28, 2008. For more information, please visit our website, email us at newyorkinfo@nlns.org or call (646) 792-1067 #

Glimpse into Concordia’s New Master of Education in World Language Instruction

The first cohort of the Joint Concordia Language Villages—Concordia College Master of Education in World Language Instruction program is thriving in its second fully on-line course taught by Viann Pederson and Gay Rawson. Thanks to “Wimba Live Classroom,” regular virtual class meetings allow students and instructors to see, hear, and interact with each other.

These seven students from diverse geographic locations, backgrounds, and language education fields have developed exceptional classroom activities, implementing cutting-edge technology and immersion methodology. For registration or employment information, please visit www.CordianLanguageVillages.org. call 1-800-222-4750, or e-mail clv@cord.edu.

Lycée Français de New York Summer Camp

The Lycée Français de New York will host its annual Summer Camp from June 23rd to July 25th, 2008. The LFNY Summer Camp is a bilingual camp welcoming nursery through 5th grade students. It focuses on both physical activities and academics. It is a chance for students to gain skills in the French and English languages through school based activities, field trips and special events: arts, cooking, music, going to the pool, shows, nap, recess...and even more! Students will be also using the LFNY great facilities located on the Upper East Side: well-equipped classrooms, two big gymnasiums, gross motor room, computer lab, library, cafeteria, an outdoor playground, and the auditorium.

Parents can choose to sign-up for 1 to 5 weeks and prices range from $600 to $2600. Registration may be completed online at www.lfny.org. The registration fee and a deposit are due before March 15, 2008. For more information, please contact our Camp Director, Amy Zufich at (212) 439 3825.
A Force for British Style Band Music at King’s Point

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

Captain Kenneth R. Force, Director of Music and leader for 37 years of the Regimental Band of the United States Merchant Marine Academy is a force of human nature. Long before coming to the Academy he was a champion of bands, British Regimental bands in particular. A stand-up comic—when not sitting for an interview—Captain Force delivers one-liners, accents and all, and thoughtful, impassioned musings about music and his total love of British bands—“I can hear one a mile away.” He thinks bands can serve in significant ways to introduce youngsters to music, particularly those who come from less privileged homes, instill in all students music appreciation, and, by way of their studying a band instrument, help them acquire habits of focus and discipline. A band, by the way, as distinct from an orchestra, is a musical group usually comprising brass, percussion and woodwinds, designed for open-air and marching performances.

One of Captain Force’s fondest memories is of the excitement he generated at Port Chester High School, in Westchester County when he was Band Director there. His students wound up playing in the Rose Bowl Parade, a six-and-a-half mile route that no doubt proved challenging for those carrying 60-pound tubas. Never let it be said, however, that coincidence does not at times determine fate. Among the visitors to the Rose Bowl that year was a benefactor of the Merchant Marine Academy, and he invited Force to come aboard. He did, and the rest is history: Force took an existing band and made it into “a company”; he took the company and gave it cachet.

His lament these days is the diminished presence of instruments in the NYC public schools. It’s not enough to have professional groups drop in and let students touch their instruments. It’s a “tragedy,” he says, that watching and listening have replaced hands-on learning. “I don’t care if it’s underwater basket weaving,” kids need to be directly involved; coaches know that. “A country’s soul is told by its arts.” Music unifies classes, ethnicities, and nations. Who knew, he reminisces, that when he entered Sophie A.M. Smith’s PS. 115’s third-grade classroom a long time ago (“what did that A.M. stand for?”), and saw the only two pictures on the wall—Arturo Toscanini and Marian Anderson—that the moment would be a defining one for him, though only later, in the late ’50s, when he was soloing on cornet with the First U.S. Army Band on Governor’s Island in New York Harbor, did he have his “epiphany.” A British band had arrived to play with the Army band—pith helmets and all. That sound, that look! “That was my moment.” But it was a moment he was prepared for.

Captain Force had picked up the trumpet on his own as a kid and impressed a lot of pros, including Merle Evans (d.1987) bandmaster for 50 years for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Band—the “Toscaninni of the Big Top.” Force was offered numerous prestigious positions, among them being first trumpet with the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra. He received his professional musicians, King’s Point Merchant Marine Academy band members are all midshipmen. So what’s so special about British Regimental bands? Better instruments, Force says without a moment’s hesitation, better tone (“400 years of tradition, here”), and a distinctive way of playing. The Salvation Army, he points out, has always been a British band (maybe Jean Simmons, the film star of “Guys and Dolls” knew that).

In 2004 Kenneth Force was elected to honorary membership in the American Bandmasters Association, founded by John Philip Sousa and Edwin Franko Goldman. He serves as president of the Board of Directors for the Goldman Memorial Band at Danvers Park. And, of course, he continues teaching and composing (check out his CDs!). He’s already at work writing “The First Man March,” he notes, though he wonders, with typical Force humor, if he should call it “The Significant Other March.”

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Captain Kenneth R. Force, USMC, Director of Music

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February 2008 • For Parents, Educators & Students • Education Update
Summer Career Exploration Program For Students With Hearing Loss

The Explore Your Future (EYF) program at Rochester Institute of Technology’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf offers college-bound high school sophomores and juniors with hearing loss a unique opportunity to experience life on a college campus, explore their interests and sample various careers.

This six-day, summer career exploration program provides students with hands-on activities related to careers in engineering, art, business, computer science and more. Hundreds of students from around the country participate in EYF each year.

EYF sessions for summer 2008 are July 19 to 24 and July 26 to 31. On the final day of each session, parents attend a workshop that helps them prepare their student for life after high school.

RIT’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf offers educational programs and access and support services to 1,100 hard-of-hearing and deaf students who study, live and socialize with 14,700 hearing students on RIT’s Rochester, N.Y., campus. Students can apply online at www.rit.edu/NTID/EYFNR. For more information, call (585) 475-6700 (voice/TTY) or send e-mail to EYFinfo@rit.edu. The application deadline is May 31, 2008.

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
CHILD STUDY CENTER
www.AboutOurKids.org
A WARMING TREND DESPITE COLD ECONOMIC REALITY

By ERNEST LOGAN

It was cold in Albany last week as Gov. Eliot Spitzer delivered his State of the State address early last month, but I was warmed by his words as he outlined his efforts to temper the effects of an increasingly troubled economy on his commitment to education. Two weeks later, he proposed an increase in state aid of $1.46 billion, the largest increase in his administration.

So it was with shock that I received the news late in January that the Department of Education had unilaterally decided to cut all school budgets by 1.75 percent, pulling the money from Principals’ budgets and, leaving school leaders to sort out the chaos of this mid-year change. Did you see...to make it even more difficult...the new art program, but who’s going to watch those kids during Periods 2, 5 and 7 every day, and how will I pay them? Guess I’ll have to cut the after-school program instead.

I understand that the city is facing financial difficulties. I understand that budgets need to be balanced. I do not understand why the city forgot ahead with millions of dollars worth of testing initiatives and data-gathering initiatives as well as paying business consultants millions of dollars to evaluate for school system initiatives that have already been suddenly woke up and say, Gee, we’re out of money. Guess the Principals will have to make some cuts. Didn’t anyone look ahead to know what we are going to continue funding these initiatives in tough times? Did they really think the revenue balloon was going to flow upwards forever?

Let me be clear: We will not go quietly into the night about these cuts. We will be asked to make suggestions and we will. For starters, how about cutting back on some of the testing programs? How about frowning some of those business consultants, you know the ones who changed the bus routes midwinter last year to save money? How about saving $50,000? I can eliminate after-school programs now. I mean, just a commitment to get your lives and your childrens’ schedules organized—and we’ll give some of our educators back to work? How about providing less on foolish investigations and treating people with dignity and common sense?

A major highlight of Mr. Spitzer’s proposed budget is an increase in universal pre-kindergarten funding by $79 million. I hope the legislature sees eye-to-eye with the governor on this. Regardless of how much eventually flows from Albany, it is time for NYC, the Department of Education and the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to fully use the money the city receives to strengthen early childhood education. It is simply unacceptable for the city to return funds to the state when many more NYC students could be, and need to be, served.

Meanwhile, it’s been an “underutilized” community-based Day Care Centers while many of our public elementary schools can’t accommodate the increasing number of children. But we need to stop having meetings to solve the problems of individual Day Care Centers, crisis by crisis, and develop a bold strategic plan. We can’t keep waiting for the kids to return to the days when young children were kept in unregulated and rarely inspected neighbors’ homes.

Frankly, one reason we are finally turning the corner on student achievement is that our students are arriving in first grade ready to learn. Our city-funded Day Care Centers provide a critical foundation for young students. Many have the experience of early childhood education setting. The city needs more of these professionals, not fewer.

CSA has declared February Early Childhood Education Month. Our theme: “Invest in New York’s Future!” It’s time to place these schools on the city map. The city is facing a critical shortage of Day Care providers—such as early childhood educators. Many have the experience of early childhood education setting. The city needs more of these professionals, not fewer.

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An Interview with Dr. Tony Bryk, New President of Carnegie Foundation

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

It’s clear that Anthony S. Bryk is not only “privileged” and “honored” to have been selected as the next president of one of the nation’s eldest and most prestigious education institutions, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a post he officially takes up in September 1— he’s also delighted at the “challenge” to hasten urban school reform, particularly in regard to the integration of technology to foster and enhance teaching and learning.

Although all times are said to be critical for education, Dr. Bryk, whose doctorate is in measurement and statistics from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is particularly pleased to be appointed at a “transformative” time for schools. He sees parallels between the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Both were times of major cultural, economic, and therefore educational change. As the 19th century ended, the country was moving away from being an agricultural nation to being an industrial one. Now, of course, industry and manufacturing have given way to communications and technology. A shift that has meant that schools not only ensure the acquisition of basic skills but focus on “knowledge-based” education. Both periods also share the fact of mass immigration, “major demographic change” that dramatically affects teaching and learning systems.

What are the core problems of our time? Bryk asks on behalf of the Foundation. How can Carnegie be an even more “fertile hub” to support and enhance teaching and learning.

Although his previous work has largely focused through postdoctoral education, and of the relations between U.S. and international education.” Indeed, a particular trip to China in the mid ’90s has stayed with him, Bryk says, having proved formative for his growing interest in technology. What he saw in China then was a highly “sophisticated” education system in which technology served not only to promote the teaching of math but as a model for professional critique. The experience, “a haunting observation,” convinced him that America must use its technology resources efficiently and effectively to help improve the way teachers do their work. In this regard, he has become a strong advocate of “multimedia records,” a term he describes as the use of “common case materials” in teacher education. This means, for example, using video not just to show best practices, but also to show what students actually do in a classroom, how students respond to what the teachers have set out as their purpose. The idea is to analyze and evaluate the actual against a given ideal and to generate “conversations about practice.”

Dr. Bryk comes to Carnegie with an impressive background which includes several awards for distinguished contributions to education and scholarship. Since 2004 he has held the Spencer Chair in Organizational Studies in the School of Education and the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University. Before that he was Marshall Field IV Professor of Urban Education in the sociology department at the University of Chicago and the founder of the university’s Center for Urban School Improvement. His book, Catholic Schools and the Common Good (1993), has broad implications for all schools, he suggests, by showing the effectiveness of an academic organization centered on a core program that unites a diverse student body, and the benefits of a social organization that creates a powerful dynamic between students and adults.

The Carnegie Foundation dates to 1905, when it was established by Andrew Carnegie “to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education.” Contrary to some impressions, Bryk points out, The Foundation is not a grant-making but an “operating” organization, focusing on policy studies, research programs and programmatic initiatives. www.carnegiefoundation.org

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An Interview with Vice Admiral Joseph D. Stewart, Merchant Marine Academy

By JOAN BAUM, Ph.D.

Of the five United States service academies—the Army at West Point, the Navy at Annapolis, the Coast Guard in New London, CT, the Air Force in Colorado Springs—the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), located on 82 glorious acres in Kings Point, L.I., is perhaps the least understood, an irony, considering that it is so close to the city and that its authorization in 1936, its full accreditation as a degree-granting institution in 1949 and its designation in 1956 as a permanent federal academic institution signaled a deepening investment by the government in maritime education. Indeed, the Academy motto—Acta Non Veda—Deeds, Not Words—could not be more appropriate today, given the post 9/11 challenge to secure cargo and insure the swift delivery of vital military and commercial goods all over the world. Many people don’t even realize that its 950 maritime students, called midshipmen (USMMA was the first federal academy to admit women to its Regiment), enter civil, not military, service. The cadets wear uniforms, but the Academy operates under the aegis of the Federal Department of Transportation. (Quick Quiz: Who is the Secretary of the Department? [see below]*)

Vice Admiral Joseph D. Stewart, Superintendent of the Academy, explains how USMMA carries out its mission to provide future officers with rigorous training in the Regimen System, whether graduates look to careers as a commercial officer, in maritime commerce, or as commission officers in the reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.” Sixty-eight percent of last year’s class, for example, chose to sign up with a company or union and sail on merchant marine ships all over the world.

It is a glorious day outside the Admiral’s office. He sits at his desk in the large white administration building, Wylie Hall, once the home of fashion designer Henri Bendel and then owned by Walter D. Chrysler, whose heirs sold it to the Maritime Commission in 1942. A couple of ships sit quietly in Manhasset Bay, vessels owned by U.S. companies, registered and operating under the American flag, and part of USMMA’s fleet. Admiral Stewart is coming up on his tenth year. A graduate of the Naval Academy and retired from the Marine Corps as a much-decorated Major General who served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics in Washington, D.C. before coming to the Academy, Admiral Stewart had always been interested in education. He enjoys being around young people and loves math. In addition to his numerous executive duties at the Academy, he finds time every year to teach a course in pre-calculus, a subject vital to the education and training of midshipmen, whether they become deck or engineering officers. Deck officers are in charge of navigation, crew, passengers, cargo, customs and security; Engineering officers attend to a ship’s mechanical systems. There were six majors at USMMA when Admiral Stewart arrived in 1998, and there are six majors now—he likes the steady state—three in marine engineering and three in marine transportation, including nautical science and business. The Admiral is particularly pleased with new emphases on technology.

Last year 279 cadets were accepted from a pool of 7,000 applicants. Why do students want to go to USMMA? As “corny” as it sounds, the Admiral replies, the young people say they want to serve their country. They come from every state in the union and U.S. territories and possessions, after having been recommended by their state governments. Of course, there’s the free education, the lowest cost per student of all the service academies. Prospective applicants also know about USMMA’s reputation in varsity sports (28 now), for men and women, and are attracted to an institution that competes in Division III of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Where other service institutions typically offer four-years of on-campus work, USMMA has a (discontinuous) unique Sea Year curriculum. Cadets leave campus twice for extended tours of 100 days each, receiving $732 a month in pay. The experience culminates in a Sea Project, “a massive correspondence course,” that testifies to the practical expertise learned at sea. The opportunity to sail to foreign ports is exciting but not without attendant dangers in times of military conflict. Still, the Admiral takes great pride in what is said about the current crop of midshipmen—their intelligence, perseverance, and behavior.

* Mary E. Peters, #
Founded in 1958 by the Archdiocese of New York and later supported by a substantial grant from Rose and Joseph Kennedy (the Center is named after their late son, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.), KCSC was one of the first organizations in New York City to educate and advocate for children with mental retardation. “In those days, there was very little money and few services for the disabled,” reflects executive director Peter Gorham, a visionary leader with decades of experience in nonprofit management under his belt. “A lot of families kept their disabled kids at home, sometimes till adulthood. They didn’t go to school.” As public schools began to assume more responsibility for educating the disabled, KCSC refocused its efforts on serving youngsters from birth to five years of age. The Center is now a model for early intervention and treatment of disabilities, operating under the well-established assumption that, with early professional attention and sustained therapeutic resources, children are more likely to gain the skills necessary to become productive adults. Among the Center’s many success stories is Chris Burke, a 42-year-old man with Down’s Syndrome who started with KCSC as a child and has since thrived professionally and personally. “He’s our unofficial spokesman,” says Gorham proudly. (Burke’s mother, Marian, a longtime advocate for her son and other disabled youngsters, is a KCSC Board member.)

As KCSC looks ahead to its fiftieth anniversary this year, Gorham shares his wish list with Education Update. “Space is a problem,” he states emphatically, discussing plans for expansion at the Bronx center and, if all goes well, ultimately relocating the Manhattan center to a larger space in Harlem: “I’d create a state of the art building, where all therapies would have enough room in the classroom and in pull-out areas,” notes Gorham. With roomier quarters, Gorham is eager to expand enrollments to meet the burgeoning demand for KCSC’s services, perhaps even exploring a Universal Pre-K program where disabled youngsters would interact with their non-disabled peers. Gorham would also ramp up his preventive screening initiatives. KCSC has recently acquired a grant to screen youngsters in Head Start programs, and he’s convinced they could do more: “If we can verify developmental delays, we can intervene that much sooner,” he adds passionately.

With a recent grant from the Heckscher Foundation, KSCS plans to launch a rigorous outcomes evaluation: “That will lay a greater foundation internally to help us answer the question, ‘How are we doing?’” One suspects that KCSC is doing very well indeed for its vulnerable young population, and that many of the children fortunate enough to benefit from its multidisciplinary approach to preschool education and therapy are well on their way to assuming a productive role in society.

A Foundation of Knowledge: Building Student Success
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Hellen Keller

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

**GATEWAY SCHOOL TACKLES LEARNING DISABILITIES**

By SYVIL MAIMIN

Reflecting a growing need, the Gateway School, which serves children ages 5 to 12 who have learning disabilities, has grown from three students at its inception in 1964 to a current enrollment of sixty and looks forward to eventually having eighty students in a middle school to be created this fall. Gateway was established by a parent, Claire Flomm, who, when told her son Peter needed institutionalization, looked for other solutions. She turned to Elizabeth Freidus, an instructor at Columbia’s Teachers College, who had done research in the area of disabilities and created a special education school with Freidus as founding director. As a “funded” school, Gateway negotiates a contract with the State Department of Education for reimbursement for students with special needs that cannot be met in area public schools.

Headmaster Robert B. Cunningham explains that a key to success with learning disabled students is tapping on strengths as well as addressing challenges. He advises, “It doesn’t make sense to focus on what is most difficult and frustrating. That is not the way to create lifelong learners. What you create are frustrated and angry people.” Determined to keep special education “special,” he explains, “It is still a common perception that special education kids need things to be done slower. Not so—they need things to be done differently. The idea is to teach them on that line—that mid-ground between challenge and frustration. And you can see great results.” Students learn best by working interactively. At Gateway there is “little individuality but much individualized instruction.” The ungraded school works with intentionally heterogeneous groups.

“The hardest part of my job is admissions, confesses Cunningham. The number of applicants to the school far exceeds the available spaces and the admissions process is intensive. Gateway looks for indications of “real capability” as well as difficulties and challenges that might impair the strengths. It looks for youngsters who will bring something to the group but also take something away. Typically, a student remains at Gateway for three years before transitioning out, although some remain until age 12. Periodic assessments monitor progress. “Kids change,” explains the headmaster and even though it may be difficult to face relocation, students “must find the most appropriate program as they go along.” The school works with parents and professionals to find the best place, which might be a mainstream school or another special education institution. “New York City has 5 or 6 very good schools for children with learning disabilities.” A disturbing trend, according to the headmaster, is many schools are becoming less receptive to accepting children with learning problems and are less flexible.

Cunningham had an interesting path to Gateway. He taught in Japan and on the Texas-Mexican border where frustration at not being able to reach many students led him to Teachers College and a MA’s in special education and in administration. He was an assistant principal in a public school in Greenwich, Connecticut before coming to Gateway. At Gateway, he is emphasizing technical literacy and environmental conservation. The school’s new home on West 61st Street, which will open in the fall, will be the first LEED school in Manhattan. He looks forward to the “healthier learning environment.” Students are tracked after they leave and often return to speak about their post-Gateway experiences. Among them is Peter Flomm whose mother founded the school rather than institutionalize him. An inspiration for current students, today he holds a PhD in statistics.

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**QUICK TIPS**

The insight into the Gateway School through the lens of the headmaster may be a bit of a surprise, for it raises questions about the common perception that special education is “special.” The school’s approach to education is flexible. According to Cunningham, “We have little individuality but much individualized instruction.” The ungraded school works with heterogeneous groups, aiming for a mid-ground between challenge and frustration. Students learn best by working interactively, and the admissions process is intensive, looking for indications of “real capability” as well as difficulties and challenges that might impair strengths.

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By SYBILL MAIMIN

Education has not received much attention in the Presidential campaign so far. Each candidate has set forth views on the subject but viability of specific ideas has not been debated and strategies for enactment and implementation have not been detailed.

Senator Barack Obama has a broad program that relies on significantly greater federal funding and especially targets early education and teacher training. He believes the controversial No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law is good in intentions but poorly designed and vastly under-funded. He would improve NCLB assessments and accountability and, in support of a pointed criticism of the mandate, support rather than punish schools that under-perform. He proposes a “Zero to Five” plan that promises care and education starting in infancy to prepare children for kindergarten. Early Learning Challenge Grants would help states implement the idea. Obama would set up a Presidential Early Learning Council similar to the one treated in his home state of Illinois while he was a state senator. The Council would promote collaborations and coordinate the use of state and federal funds for a range of programs and services in the initiative. Head Start, early childhood special ed, and child welfare and child abuse prevention. He would involve private, corporate, and non-profit sectors in the initiative. He would encourage and support vouchers, saying, “I believe children in need would truly be left behind in a private market.” He does support charter schools, seeing them as a way to experiment and improve competition among public schools.

Obama believes teachers are the most important contributor to student success. He wants to transform the teaching profession with an aggressive program to recruit, prepare, retain, and reward educators. Teacher Service Scholarships would cover 4-year undergraduate and 2-year graduate quality training in exchange for working at least 4 years in a high-need location or field. All teacher preparatory programs would require professional accreditation, and school/university partnerships would create Professional Development Schools. Teacher Residency Programs that include living stipends during training would prepare knowledgeable instructors for needy districts. Because 30 percent of new teachers leave within 5 years, Obama would fund Career Ladder Initiatives that create strong mentoring programs and reward teachers and school districts that participate. He would give additional compensation to teachers who excel and would create incentives for sharing best practices. Believing the abilities of principals’ impact on student achievement and teacher retention, he would enhance State Leadership Academies to provide professional development opportunities for principals.

Noting that only 70 percent of students gradu- ate high school, with an even lower percentage in urban areas, Obama offers several programs to attack the dropout rate and the achieve- ment gap. He suggests longer school days and school year, substantive summer learning opportu- nities, college outreach assistance for lower- income students, and high-quality after-school programs. Middle School is a crucial period and the optimum time to address problems to prevent later drop out. In the Senate, he intro- duced the “Success in the Middle Act,” which would provide funds to assist at-risk students. Safety in schools is vital to learning, but Obama disputes typical “zero tolerance policies.” He advocates teaching proper conduct and demanding the same high standards in the classroom as in academic achievement. He has introduced the “Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act” with strategies to head off bad behavior before it starts. He promotes strong parental involve- ment and school-family contracts. The candidate believes English Language Learners must be provided transitional bilingual education and schools held accountable for their success.

College costs have soared. Two million quali- fied students will not pursue higher education between 2001 and 2010 because of finances. The candidate seeks creation of the American Opportunities Tax Credit that will be univer- sal, fully refundable, and greatly reduce the cost of college, especially at public institu- tions. Obama’s first bill in the Senate sought to increase the match of the Pell Grant. In addition, the application process for aid must be simpli- fied, he says.

Obama’s goals are ambitious and, at approxi- mately $200 billion, the package would be costly for the federal government. Claiming fiscal responsibility, he proposes paying through delaying the NASA Constellation Program for 5 years, more effectively using the negotiating power of the government to reduce procure- ment costs, auctioning surplus federal property, reducing incorrect payments discovered by the Government Accounting Office, and using sav- ings that result from ending the war in Iraq. He also advocates more educational research to facilitate “investing in what works.” #

By SYBILL MAIMIN

Harlem is experiencing a new Renaissance, and the 560 lucky middle and high school stu- dents who attend Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change (TMA) on West 135th Street are part of the alters of this Renaissance. Responding to a critical need (parents in Central Harlem routinely sent their children to other parts of the city for a decent education), in 1992, Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III, an influential can-do pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, answered a call from the New York City Board of Education and New Visions for Public Schools to collaborate on a new, quality public school. The Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC), an arm of the church, agreed to become spon- sor. Moving the school site from its original location, the school floundered in its first years and was on the verge of closing when a plan was approved to build a new, state-of-the-art facility on the site of the former “Small’s Paradise,” the legendary jazz club of the 1920’s Harlem Renaissance. Opened with great hope and antici- pation in 2004, the first public school in Central Harlem in fifty years, TMA is about history, pos- sibilities, community, and achievement. A sym- bol of success, hope for equality and opportunity, the school welcomes students and visitors to its lobby with a large mural featur- ing portraits and words from some iconic figures in the fight for freedom. A tribute to its namesake, Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American Supreme Court Justice, that reads, he “had the capacity to imagine a different world, the imaginative power to believe that such a world was possible.” Nearby, a wall hanging titled “Reflections on Leadership,” com- posed of handwritten thoughts such as “Believe in Yourself and Everyone Will Too,” the work of the class of 2007, inscribes and instructs. A list of student names with grade point averages and honor roll status is proudly and prominently displayed as is a closed circuit TV screen that flashes news of college acceptances.

Principal Dr. Sandyke Positer Johnson speaks of the great energy and dedication that go into creating the warm, inviting learning environment and sense of community that characterize the school. Teachers come to work early and stay late. Assistant Principal Bryant Harris says, “I’m here at 6:30 because I like being here.” The facul- ty union representative has never filed a griev- ance: “We work things out as peers.” Another instructor affectionately remarks, “Teachers really get their hands dirty. That’s what draws us.” Senior student Kendon Smith-Holder is eagerly awaiting college acceptances, yet admits, “I love the school and hate to leave...Everyone here knows you personally and cares about you.” The principal, seen by staff as a “visionary,” lives in the community (“My students are my neighbors”), and explains TMA is unique as an urban public institution of learning because of its holistic approach. She recalls early struggles “to get the trust of the kids, to let them know we would help them, that we would make sure they have a plan after graduation and have options.”

In choosing its students, the school looks for local applicants “who want to do well.” Active parental involvement is strongly encouraged and community ties fostered. Following the holistic model, students receive personal treatment from a full-service Wellness Clinic run by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital that includes medical, dental, and mental health professionals. Tests are performed, immunizations and shots admin- istered, and medicines dispensed. A guidance counselor, mediation office, and two college advisors serve student needs. SAT preparation and exploratory trips to colleges are offered. A full range of after-school activities is available.

The school building is spacious, bright, and airy with windowed classrooms on the perimeter surrounding large, open communal spaces, or hubs. Each floor is painted a different bright color with lockers to match. Smartboards and laptop computers are widely used. A comfort hub, laptop computers are widely used. A comfort hub, library and study rooms, computer labs, and a school store. Each floor is painted a different bright color with lockers to match. Smartboards and laptop computers are widely used. A comfort hub, library and study rooms, computer labs, and a school store. Each floor is painted a different bright color with lockers to match. Smartboards and laptop computers are widely used. A comfort hub, library and study rooms, computer labs, and a school store.

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By DARYL WILLIAMS

Barack Obama’s candi- dacy represents the cul- mination of an American Dream and is a glimpse of the America to come. His ethnic background rep- resents the diversity that has changed the face of the America. It is this diversity that must be used to propel the country forward and bring those to the table that have too long been seen as adversaries.

I am proud of what he represents, for African Americans and For All Americans. He stands for all that is good with VLPCA. This is an opportunity for America to embrace its future with the hope, energy, intellect, promise and compassion necessary to give those interested in improving the “human condition” here and abroad.

There is no other candidate for the Presidency that represents such a broad range of the American constituency and there is no other candidate that has been able to put their mind and heart on the pulse of the American people. In this place, there is no America in America for the sake of our future, there is a need for change!

Daryl Williams is the Director of Purchasing and Contracts at Hunter College, City University of New York.
High School Dropouts: A Problem For Girls And Boys

An alarmingly high number of girls are dropping out of high school and these female dropouts are at particular risk compared to their male counterparts, according to a report by the National Women’s Law Center. Recently released, “When Girls Don’t Graduate, Who Will Fail” highlights that each high school dropout costs society an estimated one in four female students will not graduate at significantly lower rates than males with similar educational backgrounds, males at every level of education make more money than females with similar education backgrounds, and females with high school diplomas earn an average of $15,000 for the year—a gender gap that is over $6,000 annually than women with a high school diploma and $3,100 on average less annually than male high school dropouts.

In 2006, adult women without a high school diploma earned 55 percent less than men with a bachelor’s degree, while women with high school diplomas earned an average salary of $32,936 versus $36,600. Experts suggest that families need incomes of approximately two times the federal poverty line measure to meet their basic needs. Despite this, Girls Don’t Graduate finds that higher unemployment and lowered earnings are the not only negative outcomes for female high school dropouts. Female dropouts struggle with worse physical and mental health and are more likely to rely on Medicaid assistance. More than 50 percent of Black women, approximately 35 percent of Hispanic women, and almost 30 percent of Asian women are covered under Medicaid. This compares with slightly more than 30 percent of Black men, 20 percent of Hispanic men, and fewer than 10 percent of Asian men.

The report also looks at some of the barriers leading to, and risk factors for, dropping out that are of particular importance for girls. Both males and females are more likely to drop out of school if they are under the age of 17, struggle with truancy, have a history of minor offenses, or are victims of sexual assault. The report finds that the economic costs are particularly steep for women, who face especially poor employment prospects, low earnings potential, poor health status, and the need to rely on public support programs. According to When Girls Don’t Graduate:

- Males at every level of education make more money than females with similar education backgrounds, but the wage gap between men and women is smaller than females with similar education backgrounds, and females with high school diplomas earn an average of $15,000 for the year—a gender gap that is over $6,000 annually than women with a high school diploma and $3,100 on average less annually than male high school dropouts.
- In 2006, adult women without a high school diploma earned 55 percent less than men with a bachelor’s degree, while women with high school diplomas earned an average salary of $32,936 versus $36,600. Experts suggest that families need incomes of approximately two times the federal poverty line measure to meet their basic needs. Despite this, Girls Don’t Graduate finds that higher unemployment and lowered earnings are the not only negative outcomes for female high school dropouts. Female dropouts struggle with worse physical and mental health and are more likely to rely on Medicaid assistance. More than 50 percent of Black women, approximately 35 percent of Hispanic women, and almost 30 percent of Asian women are covered under Medicaid. This compares with slightly more than 30 percent of Black men, 20 percent of Hispanic men, and fewer than 10 percent of Asian men.

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Susan Patrick, President & CEO of the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL), and John Watson, founder of Evergreen Consulting and author of the annual Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning Report, will give the closing keynote address titled, “Current and Future Trends in Online Education.” Patrick led the first Virtual University’s Online Learning Symposium in February. Michigan is the first state in the nation to launch true learning resources in high school graduation. Patrick and Watson will discuss national and global trends for the future of education.

“Online learning is increasing access to rigorous, high quality courses across the nation that can help improve high school graduation rates and after altering research to meet the requirements,” says Patrick. “Other countries are centering education reform strategies on e-learning to expand access to courses, improve teaching, and prepare students to be ready for college and work demands.” One in five college students takes an online course and more than 30 percent of workforce training is done online. “Michigan is among the leading states in implementing online learning solutions in response to the issues faced to read to 64 percent of the rural public online learning, and preparing students to be ready for college and work demands.” One in five college students takes an online course and more than 30 percent of workforce training is done online.

Michigan First State to Have Online Requirement for HS Grad

Says the report of educational testing service: Family Factors Critical to Closing Achievement Gap

When parents, teachers and schools work together to support learning, students do better in school and stay in school longer,” says Barton. “Our analysis shows that factors like single-parent families, reading to children, hours spent watching television and school absences, when combined, account for about two-thirds of the large differences among states in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores.”

Findings in the report show that: Thirty-two percent of U.S. children live in single-parent homes, up from twenty-three percent in 1980; Thirty-three percent of children live in families in which no parent has a full-time, year-round job; By age 4, children of professional families hear 35 million more words than children of parents on welfare; Half the nation’s two-year-olds are in their kind regular day-care center in day-care rated fair or medium-low-quality; A comparison of eighth graders in 45 countries found that U.S. students spend less time reading books for enjoyment—and more time watching television and videos—than students in many other countries.

“Michigan is the leading state in implementing online learning solutions in response to the issues faced to read to 61 percent of the rural public online learning, and preparing students to be ready for college and work demands.” One in five college students takes an online course and more than 30 percent of workforce training is done online. “Michigan is among the leading states in implementing online learning solutions in response to the issues faced to read to 64 percent of the rural public online learning, and preparing students to be ready for college and work demands.” One in five college students takes an online course and more than 30 percent of workforce training is done online.
PTA LEADS IN CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAP

In an effort to close the achievement gap for urban and underserved students, three major parents, teacher and education organizations are joining to create pilot programs, community-based projects, and resources.

WHEN & WHERE: Friday, February 15 (Note: All of this day’s events at Spelman College.)
5 p.m. – Press Conference
5:20 p.m. – VIP reception (open to media)
5 p.m. – Press Conference
6 p.m. – Town Hall Meeting: National experts will discuss closing the achievement gap. (open to the public)
Saturday, February 16
10 a.m. – Special ceremony at Selena Sloan Butler (founder of PTA and Spelman alumna) grave sight at Oakland Cemetery (open to the public)
10:30 a.m. – Rededication Rally of Selena Sloan Butler Park, Atlanta (open to the public)
PTA comprises more than 5.5 million parents and other concerned adults devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA flourishes in more than 25,000 school communities nationwide by harnessing the energy and talents of millions of volunteers to be: voices for all children; relevant resources for families and communities; and champions for the education and well-being of every child. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who is concerned about the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.

Spelman College—Founded in 1881, Spelman College is the only historically Black college in the nation to be included on the U.S. News and World Report’s list of top 75 “Best Liberal Arts Colleges — Undergraduate,” 2005. Located in Atlanta, Ga., this private, historically Black college boasts outstanding alumni, including Children’s Defense Fund Founder Marian Wright Edelman; U.S. Foreign Service Director General Ruth Davis; authors Tina McElroy Ansa and Pearl Cleage and actress LaTanya Richardson. More than 83 percent of the students number more than 2,186 and represent 43 states and 34 foreign countries. For more information regarding Spelman College, visit: www.spelman.edu.

About Atlanta Public Schools—The Atlanta Public Schools System has an enrollment of 50,000 students who attend 96 traditional schools; 75 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced meals. The district employs 6,631 full-time personnel, including 3,643 teachers. The mission of Atlanta Public Schools is to focus talents and resources to ensure that APS students are successful in school and in life. Dr. Beverly L. Hall has served as Superintendent since July 1999.

About Georgia PTA—The Georgia PTA serves as a link between the national organization and membership within the state. A person who joins a local Parent Teacher Association automatically becomes a member of the National PTA and the Georgia PTA. The Georgia PTA represents over 330,000 members at the state legislature, state board of education and other education and child-focused organizations; provides support and training for local PTAs through workshops and publications; coordinates special projects to promote the welfare of Georgia’s children and youth, and much more. Georgia PTA is also the proud state to be home of two of three founders for National PTA.

10th Annual Virtual Enterprise Competition at Deloitte Touche

Virtual Enterprise International (VE) recently held its annual Citywide Business Plan Competition at the Deloitte & Touche Offices at the World Financial Center in Lower Manhattan. The competition is a part of the Virtual Enterprise Program which was implemented in New York City Public high schools in 1996 so that students could learn about business and the corporate world through task oriented and hands on workshops.

The program modeled its concept from the practice firm program in Europe in which students learn how to run a business and it’s also a part of the apprenticeship models from Germany where students get hands on experience by running their own company.

Initially only seven New York City public high schools participated in the Virtual Enterprise Program when it started out. Today the Virtual Enterprise program consists of fifty-three business oriented enterprises within New York City public high schools and sixty-five different virtual business firms.

The mission of the program according Iris Blanc, Director of Virtual Enterprises, is “To give students exposure to economics, career education, business education and the expectations of the workplace. Students learn how to run their own virtual business firms by learning different aspects and intricacies of the corporate world with the guidance of a staff of dedicated teachers and business mentors. Students must develop their own business program. The teachers are there to guide them. The business is ongoing so the numbers that they have come from year after year.” She adds, “There’s an online banking system that is connected throughout the world so they really buy and sell products and services. The only thing about the business is that there’s no real money exchanged and there are no real products delivered but everything else is real.”

Joseph Delaney of Deloitte Touche, the Coordinator and Director for the Virtual Enterprise program explains, “What we hope for these students to get out of this program is the love for learning a business and then making a contribution to society. Perhaps one day they may volunteer for a program like VE in New York City.”

The top three firms will have the opportunity to contend for $25,000 in cash and prizes. The citywide competition consists of two rounds where the students from each firm are asked to present their power point business plans, give an oral presentation and take questions from a panel of five to six judges of industry experts representing prestigious corporate firms. After the first two rounds of presentations the eight virtual business firms with the highest scores move onto the next round of the competition.

The final round of the Citywide Business Plan Competition takes place in a large presentation room before an audience of several dozen people, the press and a panel of eight judges. It was amazing to watch how well these students were able to present their business plans despite the pressure of performing before a large audience and trying to impress the judges.

This year’s winners were the Printing Depot from Ft. Hamilton High School who finished in first place and VE Management from New Dorp High School and Universal Promotions from Edward R. Murrow High School who finished in second and third place respectively.

The reality for all these students who had the privilege to participate in this event is that they were all winners. It was phenomenal to see these young men and women all still in high school develop and implement these highly sophisticated business plans all of which was accomplished through their hard work and perseverance.

Caroline Johnson from Edward R. Murrow High School’s Universal Promotions expressed this sentiment when she explained “We put so much time and effort into our presentation. We worked really hard and put a lot of hours into each question.” She added, “I’m happy that we placed, we tried our hardest, there’s nothing we could have really done differently and there’s nothing I would have done differently. I’m really proud of my teammates.

Although everybody couldn’t come out a winner, everyone of these amazing individuals who competed will receive internships at several highly prestigious corporate firms such as Merrill Lynch and the experience of being a part of the Virtual Enterprise program is simply priceless.

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NYU & Baruch Professors Present “Stereotype Threat”

In a field study in the latest issue of the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, women at the high end of math ability outperform their male counterparts on tests when the test is described as free of gender differences.

The women performed as well as their male counterparts under normal testing conditions. The study, funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, was conducted by Catherine Good, assistant professor of psychology, Baruch College, CUNY, and Joshua Aronson, professor of psychology, New York University.

Considerable research over the past decade has shown that women’s performances on math tests are compromised by stereotypes. In over 200 published experiments, females as young as first graders and as old as 22 have been found to perform worse on math tests whenever the testing environment cues them to think about their gender, a phenomenon named “stereotype threat” by the psychologists Claude Steele and Aronson in the mid 1990s.

“This research has always carried the positive message that stereotype threat could be overcome—and women’s test performance boosted—by small changes in the way tests were presented,” says Aronson, a professor of psychology at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. “But critics of this research frequently tried to trivialize these findings by claiming that they were merely laboratory studies that said little about performance in the ‘real world,’ or that the participants were talking about highly proficient mathematicians, who were immune to stereotypes. These findings should make the critics think again.”

The researchers asked male and female students enrolled in a fast-paced calculus course at a large public university to take a practice calculus test the next day in preparation for an upcoming exam. The course was the most rigorous calculus class offered by the university and satisfied requirements for degrees in mathematics, engineering, and many of the natural sciences.

One group of students in the study received the test under normal testing conditions; that is, they were informed of the test and sure their math abilities and knowledge. Among these students, the women performed just as well as the men, reflecting the fact that these were high-performing women. The surprise came from the second group of students in the class, who took the test under the same instructions but who were additionally informed that the test was free of gender bias. The researchers found that the women in the no-gender-differences group outperformed all the other test-takers in this high-level math class, even the men.

“We now have really compelling evidence,” says, Aronson, “that women at the very highest levels of math ability are held back by cultural images that portray their math abilities as inferior to men’s. But it’s also clear that small changes by wise teachers and professors can help a lot. Furthermore, we know that stereotype threat is not some artificial laboratory phenomenon. It has real consequences for women who have extremely high abilities and who aspire to be scientists. While this study doesn’t prove that sex differences in math ability are not the root cause of the lack of women in math and science, it does prove that biology is far from the whole story.”

The researchers hope that their findings will encourage educators to be aware of the degree to which negative stereotypes contribute to the lack of women who succeed in high-level mathematrics and to encourage gender-fair testing.

Dean Anthony Polemeni, Touro Graduate School of Ed Honored as “Educator of the Year”

The Columbia University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, the Professional Association in Education honored Anthony Polemeni, Ph.D., with the prestigious “Educator of the Year” Award at its annual Winter Awards Banquet at Columbia’s Faculty House.

At the dinner over 250 well-wishers crowded the President’s Room at Faculty House joining Dr. Bernard Lander, Founder of Touro in raising a toast to the Dean. Dr. Lander noted Dr. Polemeni is a “very special person” at Touro, and one for whom the president has the utmost admiration and respect.

Touro College has experienced phenomenal growth since its founding in 1971, and is currently educating more than 27,500 students at locations in New York, California, Florida, Nevada, Jerusalem, Moscow and Berlin and Rome. Touro College continues to have a profound impact on the lives of its students and on the Jewish and underserved communities.

Dr. Polemeni has over 40 years of combined experience in education and industry. Under his direction, he has provided affordable quality graduate education, growing the enrollment of the School of Education from several hundred to over 7000 students, including over 1300 student teachers.

As Dean of Education, Dr. Polemeni instituted Masters Programs in Birth through 2, 1-6, 5-9, Special Education, Literacy, TESOL, Instructional Technology, School Psychology and Mental Health Counseling and has promoted educational access through online distance learning. Dr. Polemeni developed and maintained the following philosophy of education, increased the number of approved degree offerings and instituted successful marketing strategies, which dramatically increased enrollment. Dr. Polemeni’s multiple mini-site strategy, throughout NYC and Long Island, the implementation of aggressive marketing strategies, has increased the availability of a Touro education. Additionally, Dr. Polemeni has also been instrumental in attempting to secure a recognized doctoral degree program, which will commence later this year.

Born in Brooklyn, he received a baccalaureate degree (Summa Cum Laude) from St. Francis College. He received his Master’s in Romance Philology from Columbia University and the Doctoral degree from St. John’s University. We are most pleased that for many years Dr. Polemeni has been a member of Phi Delta Kappa.

Dr. Polemeni began as a teacher of French and very quickly rose to become Director of Foreign Languages. In 1971 he was hired by the New York State Division of Education to oversee the New York City Schools and thereafter became Director of Research and Evaluation for the New York City Schools and thereafter became Director of Research and Evaluation for the New York City Central Board of Education. Under his leadership, New York City developed the first secure standardized test and the Language Assessment Battery.

In 1978, because of family obligations, Dr. Polemeni left the New York City Board of Education and joined the international business world as a Director of Creusot Loire Corporation, a French importing company of specialty steel. In 1981, he became Vice President and eventually President of an international export company that dealt with Africa, Asia, Caribbean, and Latin America. In 1997, he returned to education as Director of Mercy College’s Bronx Graduate School of Education. In 2007, due to his outstanding performance as Dean, Dr. Polemeni, was appointed as a Vice-President of Touro College. The class of 2007; spring graduation was so large it had to be held at NYC’s Madison Square Garden.

Explore our programs for teachers and leaders. Learn how to bring out the best in all children.
The School of Education hosted a professional development program for 37 teachers and 3 supervisors from Gyeonggi Province, the Republic of Korea (South). The main goal of the program was to expose Korean teachers to various instructional strategies for nurturing creativity of the gifted and differentiating curriculum based on their individual differences.

Dr. Seokhee Cho, the Coordinator, structured the program into 3 phases: 3 days of lecture and workshop, 5 days of school visits and 4 days of cultural experiences.

A video conference with crew at NASA had the teachers experience a simulation program on how to define and solve problems caused by an eruption of a volcano. They also analyzed data transferred from the planet Mars to the earth. In addition, more than 10 leading scholars on gifted education including Dr. Rita Dunn on Learning Styles at St. John’s U. and Dr. Joseph Renzulli, the Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented were invited as speakers.

The teachers visited 13 schools in New York City for 5 full days. Exposure to programs for the gifted contributed to the Korean teachers’ realization of various alternatives for serving gifted children. The educational institutes included private and public schools, self-contained gifted classes and special schools for the gifted, and magnet programs for the gifted from elementary, middle and high school levels. Teachers also kept journals on school visits every day. Finally, they submitted reports comparing the programs between NY and Korea and drew implications for improvement of Korean gifted education programs.

The Korean teachers were impressed most by the NY teachers’ passion and efforts to differentiate instruction for each individual child, whether the child is gifted or learning disabled. Korean teachers envied NY Teachers since the NY teachers can concentrate on instructional activities only, while Korean teachers are responsible for many administrative tasks in addition to their instructional duties.

The leader of the teachers, Mr. Park Doo Hee, expressed his satisfaction with the Professional Development Program as being 150 percent. Based on the request of the Superintendent of Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education, Mr. Jin Choon Kim, Dr. Jerrold Ross, the Dean of the School of Education, presented a proposal for future collaboration via Mr. Park.

The Korea Times, The Korea Daily, and the Times Ledger published reports on the success of the Professional Development Program for Korean Teachers at St. John’s University. #
The Long Island University Blackbirds had some questions to answer. They carried a three game losing streak into the New Year. Had lost two Conference games in a row, and had lost their intensity and ball sharing that led to a five game winning streak in December. Now the team faced an undefeated Wagner College squad that staked its claim to be a serious conference contender.

What to do? On January 17th, on a cold and rainy evening, the Blackbirds (10-6, 2-3) found some answers. LIU came out, played with a high level of intensity, and inner fire, that didn’t let up the entire game, and ran Wagner out of the gym, winning convincingly, 85-65. Senior Forward Eugene Kotorobai played a stellar game, leading the team in scoring (24) and rebounds (11). Freshman guard Kyle Johnson came off the bench and scored 20 points. Frosh Guard David Hicks chipped in with 11 points, and Jaytornah Wisseh, a talented sophomore guard, added 11.

The Blackbirds shot 10-20 from 3-point land, and 44.2% for the game. LIU took a 40 to 30 half-time lead and extended it on hot shooting. LIU shot for 54.2% from the floor in the second half. LIU came out fired up for the game and played team basketball. It looked for the open man, passed the ball, and the open man made his shot. Senior Kellen Allen, who scored all of his nine points in the second half, aply summed up his team’s performance. “Tonight was a wonderful win,” Allen said. “We all played unselfishly. Everybody was looking for one another. The scoring was balanced and everybody got a look.”

LIU also out-rebounded Wagner, 40-39, and that helped out in the win. Last season, the Seahawks defeated LIU twice. And, LIU wanted this game badly them,” Allen said LIU was focused on out-rebounding Wagner (12-5, 5-1). “That’s a big part of their game. So we out-rebounded them,” said Allen.

Kotorobai, along with Allen, provides senior leadership. Kotorobai set the tone early when he hit his first two three-point shots to give the Blackbirds an early 6-0 cushion. David Hicks hit another trey to push the lead to 11-4 and the Blackbirds were off and flying. Wagner then tied the game, at 20-20, when Mark Porter, who is 15th on Wagner’s all-time scoring list, made a key trey mid-way through the first half. Wagner took a short lead at 22-20, when Durell Vinson scored on a tip-in. But the Blackbirds were hot from beyond the arc and when David Hicks made a nice three-point shot, LIU jumped ahead 25-22. Eugene Kotorobai, who connected on 4 or 7 three-point shots, hit another one to give his team a 37-30 lead.

LIU coach Jim Ferry, who has turned the LIU men’s basketball program around in just 5 years, acknowledged the strong presence of Kotorobai. “Eugene is having a great year,” said Ferry, “He plays with such passion. He is not just a 3 point shooter...he really tries to defend and rebound the basketball and gives the spark that we need.”

In the second half, LIU got on an offensive roll, and it the shots kept falling in. A top ten half-time lead grew to 17 when Kellen Allen got into the scoring mix on a made free throw. Allen also passed out as Wagner’s all-time scoring list, made 20 points at 56-36. Wagner coach Mike Deane, who had several testy exchanges with referees, acknowledged the strong presence of Kotorobai.

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Common Cents is pleased to announce that Judith Shapiro, President of Barnard College, has accepted the position of chair of the Board of Trustees of Common Cents, effective immediately.

“I welcome the opportunity to play an integral role in helping Common Cents elevate the prominence of the Penny Harvest and also attract enthusiastic and committed new supporters,” said Shapiro. “The Penny Harvest is an especially effective means for helping children build their moral and civic character, and is an opportunity I think all children should be afforded. It also underlines the central role of philanthropy in a democracy, something we should all keep in mind.”

“Judith is a tireless advocate for education,” said Teddy Gross, co-founder and executive director of Common Cents. “We are thrilled to have such a passionate voice in the educational community join our cause.”

Shapiro will be stepping down as the 10th president of Barnard College at the end of the 2007-08 academic year, a position she has held since 1994. She is a widely respected cultural anthropologist who has done pioneering research on gender differences. A prominent voice on anthropology since 1994. She is a widely respected cultural anthropologist who has done pioneering research on gender differences. A prominent voice on American education, Shapiro has led Barnard to become the most sought-after private liberal arts college for women in the United States.

Shapiro is a graduate alumna of Columbia University, where she received her Ph.D. in anthropology in 1972. She received her undergraduate degree from Brandeis University and attended PS. 26, J.H.S. 216 and Jamaica High School in Queens, NYC.

Shapiro also serves on the Board of the Fund for the City of New York, a partner in the New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, and serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of the New York Building Congress. She is chair of the Board of the Consortium for Financing Higher Education, and is a member of the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Common Cents is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to build informed, capable, and caring communities by igniting the civic spirit of a new generation. The Penny Harvest currently operates in NYC/Metro NY, the Capital Region of NY, Colorado, Nashville, TN, Florida and Seattle, WA as well as select individual schools across the country. Common Cents provides program tools, curriculum, professional development, as well as ongoing logistical and programmatic support to each participating school to ensure the Penny Harvest is a rich experience in service-learning and civic education for all students. For more information about Common Cents and the Penny Harvest, to make a donation, or enroll your school, please visit www.CommonCents.org.

Graduate School: The Application Process in a Nutshell
By Judith Aquino

There are good news and bad news for those applying to graduate school. The good news is that although a greater number of students are seeking master’s degrees—the NY Times recently reported that the number of students earning degrees in higher education has nearly doubled since 1980—it is not at the same frenzied level as the number of students seeking a bachelor’s degree. The bad news is that getting into graduate school continues to be increasingly competitive and in some ways, applicants must work even harder than they did as high school students to produce outstanding applications.

“The process of applying to graduate school is typically more focused because the individual has chosen to delve more deeply into one subject area. Therefore, while that narrows the playing field, one is also assessed alongside many others (in some cases hundreds) with targeted interests and qualifications. Also, whereas undergraduate programs normally accept a larger number of applicants, some graduate programs, especially Ph.Ds, admit only a handful of people,” noted Joseph Simmons, a Career Coach at New York University’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

Over the past few years, more students have been rising to the challenge of meeting—and sometimes surpassing schools’ admission criteria for their graduate programs, making it exceedingly difficult to determine which applicants deserve an acceptance letter. “Due to various reasons, more schools are getting more applicants, some graduate programs, especially Ph.Ds, admit only a handful of people,” noted Joseph Simmons, a Career Coach at New York University’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies. "Graduate schools have definitely raised the bar,” said Ms. Isiadinso. “Therefore students must be more aggressive about how they pursue their goals as well.”

So what are graduate schools looking for? Matthew Ulmer, Corporate Communications Manager at GradSchools.com offers the following advice: “Find out what you’re passionate about and tell a story about it. Schools are more interested in what you’ve learned and what you’ve given back than in how many activities you’ve involved yourself so as to stand out among other applicants. According to Ms. Isiadinso, the majority (70%) of Expartus’ clients are enrolled in the brand name graduate schools, specifically MBA programs, and she expects the demand for these and other seminars to grow as schools continue to hold high expectations for their students. “Graduate schools have definitely raised the bar,” said Ms. Isiadinso. “Therefore students must be more aggressive about how they pursue their goals as well.”

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Applicants will do well to remember the old adage, “quality, not quantity.”

Judith Aquino, a staff reporter, has just applied to several graduate schools of journalism.

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— Gigi Dibello, Alumna

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Join Us on the Road to Success!
The chunky shape ahead might be a rock. But staring through binoculars out the windows of our tundra buggy—a vehicle that resembles an oversized school bus on five-foot-high wheels—we see movement. “It’s a polar bear,” says Glenn Hopfner, the driver. “Polar bears can fool you by blending with the landscape.”

The 12 passengers from Europe, Australia, and the U.S. are on a package tour arranged by Frontiers North Adventures in Winnipeg to see the famous bears of Churchill, Canada, an outpost of 1,100 inhabitants in the Canadian Sub-Arctic, known as “the polar bear capitol of the world.” Polar bears gather here annually and wait for the ice to form so they can walk out on it for several months of feasting on ringed seals they hunt below its crust.

There’s a new passion for polar bear tours because of the dire predictions that climate change could diminish their population worldwide by two-thirds in the next 50 years. Scientists change facts as the tundra buggy grinds along over a mesmerizing landscape of lakes, boulders and the muted colors of the tundra. “Female bears are slimmer due to less hunting time on the ice,” advises Tour leader, Angèle Watrin Proudaub, an honors biologist, engages participants with climate change facts as the tundra buggy grinds along over a mesmerizing landscape of lakes, boulders and the muted colors of the tundra. “Female bears are slimmer due to less hunting time on the ice,” she says. She adds, “It means they may be able to nourish only one cub rather than the usual two.”

There are frequent stops for photo-ops like cubs snarling, bears snoozing in the sun, and a bear trying to peek into the Tundra Buggy Lodge. Toward the end of the tour, driver Glen points out a bearded seal. “They’re rare here,” he says, and that word—“rare” also describes the entire polar bear experience. For tour info, go to www.polarbearsinternational.org.

Holly (Thuy Nguyen) tries to escape from a local officer she has paid a bribe to let her and her impoverished family smuggle across the border to work as a prostitute in the feature film HOLLY, a captivating, touching and emotional experience, that highlights the growing international issue of human trafficking.

By GILLIAN GRANOFF

Recently, several notable celebrities, UN representatives, policy makers, and film industry insiders gathered together to view the screening of Holly, the highly acclaimed film starring Ron Livingston, Chris Penn, Udo Kier and Virginie Ledoyen. The screening, co-sponsored by the Somaly Mam Foundation, was held to bring awareness to child trafficking and child prostitution in Cambodia. The Foundation’s goal is to rescue, rehabilitate and restore self-esteem to the lives of young girls who have survived sexual exploitation.

Following the screening of the film, a panel discussion, which included the film’s producers and a representative from the Office of Migration (OMI), addressed the critical need to target this vital issue. The President and CEO of the foundation, Somaly Mam, survivor of child prostitution, has dedicated her life to rescuing girls from sexual slavery and restoring their self esteem.

Somaly’s opening remarks at the event and her soft spoken and timid words belies the courage of a survivor whose strength and heroism have provided inspiration and comfort to the lives of many young children. Her mission is to rescue other young girls from brothels and to fight on behalf of the lives of the countless young girls who continue to endure the psychological trauma of having been abducted into the silence of unspeakable crimes.

The film is loosely based on Guy Jacobson’s own shocking exposure to the world of child’s prostitution. In 2001, as a businessman and attorney, he took time off to travel through Asia. While hiking in Cambodia, Jacobson faced a life changing moment; he was aggressively solicited for sex by a 7-year-old child, who grabbed him provocatively. From that moment Jacobson decided that he could not turn his back on the epidemic of the crimes he witnessed, and began a two-year mission to investigate, and uncover the dark and dangerous world of child prostitution.

Jacobson and the film’s co-producer and partner, Adi, began a passionate crusade to write a film that would depict the frightening reality of lives of the victimized children. The efforts to research and write a film that depicted the grave reality of the lives of these children led to the successful closure of several brothels in Cambodia and to the exposure and prosecution of clients.

The result of their tireless research is Holly, a powerful narrative that traces the story of an 11-year-old Vietnamese girl who was sold into prostitution to a Cambodian woman by her family. Holly’s story profiles the tragic descent into hidden shadows from an innocent naive young girl into a tragic and provocative young adolescent whose innocence and childhood was stolen behind the dark and hidden world of Cambodian brothels. In an interesting juxtaposition, the film depicts her unlikely meeting with the protagonist, a foreign export import worker with a compulsive gambling problem and self-destructive behavior. Patrick meets Holly when he chooses a temporary room in the same brothel. An unlikely friendship develops between them and the progression of a moving story of two people’s attempts to rescue one another.

The film’s uncertain ending strengthens its impact on its audience. The director’s reluctance to neatly tie up the ending of the film forces the viewer to wrestle with feelings of discomfort and helplessness. This technique challenges the audience to take responsibility for ending. This deliberate artistic choice has a powerful impact. It forces the viewer to wrestle with uncomfortable emotions, and to consider the countless other children still caught in the vicious web.

The film has become a powerful instrument of social and political advocacy. Since the film’s limited release, it has played an essential role in the curriculums of several classrooms. Teachers and professors at SUNY, Manhattanville and other schools in the New York area have attended the screening with their classes.

The film’s producers regularly lecture on the issue of child exploitation and slavery.

Thuy Nguyen stars as Holly, a 12-year-old Vietnamese girl sold by her impoverished family and smuggled across the border to work as a prostitute in the feature film HOLLY, a captivating, touching and emotional experience, that highlights the growing international issue of human trafficking.
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“Arts in our schools are essential,” Davis says. “I did not start as cabin boy, climb the ranks to be shunned by the family with small posy, slavery and the end of Camelot, a sense of horror and gloom pervades. It’s time to stop justifying the arts because they can help our children do better on their SATs or other standardized tests, urges Jessica Hoffman Davis in this impassioned, if slender, volume.

As a long-time arts educator and advocate, Davis—a cognitive developmental psychologist and founder of the Arts in Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education—argues that “when schools are defending the role of the arts in education, we should resist the temptation to package the arts as in-service to non-arts programs.”

Amen to that. As the parent of two academically strong students, I know that the lessons they learned are as valuable as the academic. They are not a frill—an argument that is made with disturbing regularity during school budget season here in the suburbs—but an essential component in education. “Arts in school are essential,” Davis writes. “They shed light on and give direction to the foundations that science provides.” She explains that arts’ use of metaphor, willingness to consider uncertainty and ambiguity, or break boundaries, suggest other ways of interpreting the world that can employed just as successfully in science. The arts enable us to make sense of our experiences in ways that transcend conventional disciplines.

Davis also contends that schools need to treat the arts with as much respect as they do core subjects as math or reading (and explores why arts got relegated to “extra” status in the first place). Too many schools, she says, offer arts only as an extracurricular activity. Instead, Davis writes, “The statement that schools make by including arts in the curriculum is clear”—that they matter.

And they matter because they aren’t like social studies, or biology. For many students, the arts are the only place where they feel they truly belong—that is as much a teachable moment as any success can be.

I still remember my misery in art class, relegated to the back of the room where my pitiful efforts at copying the still life at the front were ignored or dismissed by our private school art teacher. Never mind that success came easily (perhaps too easily) in other areas; my failure as an art student helped me learn compassion for others’ struggles in other areas, and taught me how to work hard for an uncertain outcome.

This book needs to be read by school leaders and administrators, as well as its obvious audience of arts teachers. With any luck, Davis’s message will change the paradigm through which the arts have been seen in our education system, and a new conversation can take place.

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Scientists Identify Brain Abnormalities Underlying Key Element of Borderline Personality Disorder

Using new approaches, an interdisciplinary team of scientists at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York City has gained a view of activity in key brain areas associated with a core difficulty in patients with borderline personality disorder—sheding new light on this serious psychiatric condition.

"It's early days yet, but the work is pinpointing functional differences in the neurobiology of healthy people versus individuals with the disorder as they attempt to control their behavior in a negative emotional context. Such initial insights can help provide a foundation for better, more targeted therapies down the line," explains lead researcher Dr. David A. Silbersweig, the Stephen F. Tobin and Dr. Arnold M. Cooper Professor of Psychiatry and Professor of Neurology at Weill Cornell Medical College, and attending psychiatrist and neurologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. These findings are featured in the American Journal of Psychiatry.

Borderline personality disorder is a devastating mental illness that affects between 1 to 2 percent of Americans, causing untold disruption of patients’ lives and relationships. Nevertheless, its underlying biology is not very well understood. Hallmarks of the illness include impulsivity, emotional instability, interpersonal difficulties, and a preponderance of negative emotions such as fear, and some of the brain’s other limbic regions, heightened levels of activation during the tests in other areas of the patients’ brains, including the amygdala, anterior cingulate cortex and the medial orbitofrontal cortex areas—were relatively less active in patients versus controls," Dr. Silbersweig says. "These areas are thought to be key to facilitating behavioral inhibition under emotional circumstances, so if they are underperforming that could contribute to the disinhibition one so often sees with borderline personality disorder."

At the same time, the research team observed heightened levels of activation during the tests in other areas of the patients’ brains, including the amygdala, anterior cingulate cortex and the medial orbitofrontal cortex areas—were relatively less active in patients versus controls," Dr. Silbersweig says. "These areas are thought to be key to facilitating behavioral inhibition under emotional circumstances, so if they are underperforming that could contribute to the disinhibition one so often sees with borderline personality disorder."

With borderline personality disorder had clinical difficulty controlling their behavior, or had difficulty with negative emotion, respectively," Dr. Silbersweig notes.

The study sheds light not only on borderline personality disorder, but on the mechanisms healthy individuals rely on to curb their tempers in the face of strong emotion. Still, patients struggling with borderline personality disorder stand to benefit most from this groundbreaking research. An accompanying journal commentary labels the study “rigorous” and “systematic,” and one of the first to validate with neuroimaging what scientists had only been able to guess at before:

“The more that this type of work gets done, the more people will understand that mental illness is not the patient’s fault—that there are circuits in the brain that control these functions in humans and that these disorders are tied to fundamental disruptions in these circuits,” Dr. Silbersweig says. "Our hope is that such insights will help erode the stigma surrounding psychiatric illness." The research could even help lead to better treatments.

As pointed out in the commentary, the research may help explain how specific biological or psychological therapies could ease symptoms of borderline personality disorder for some patients, by addressing the underlying biology of impulsivity in the context of overwhelming negative emotion. The more scientists understand the neurological aberrations that give rise to the disorder, the greater the hope for new, highly targeted drugs or other therapeutic interventions.

"Going forward, we plan to test hypotheses about changes in these brain regions associated with various types of treatment," Dr. Silbersweig says. "Such work by ourselves and others could help confirm these initial findings and point the way to better therapies.”

This work was funded by the Borderline Personality Disorder Research Foundation and the DeWitt Wallace Fund of the New York Community Trust.

Co-researchers include senior author Dr. Emily Stern, as well as Dr. John F. Clarkin, Dr. Martin Goldstein, Dr. Otto F. Kernberg, Dr. Oliver Tuchser, Dr. Kenneth N. Levy, Dr. Gary Brendel, Dr. Hong Pan, Dr. Manfred Beutel, Dr. Jane Epstein, Dr. Mark F. Lenzenweger, Dr. Kathleen M. Thomas, Dr. Michael I. Posner, and Michelle T. Pavony—all of New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. #
The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum invites you to participate in a five-day fellowship at the museum in Oklahoma City, June 22-27, 2008. The Educator Fellowship Program at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum provides educators from across the United States an opportunity to study the events of April 19, 1995, and the impact of violence, the senselessness of using violence as a means to effect change and the importance of personal responsibility. Using what they learn, participants will create and use in their subject or program area lesson plans that promote nonviolent problem solving and conflict resolution as well as respect for others.

The Memorial Fellows will participate in a variety of activities geared toward helping them incorporate lessons learned in Oklahoma City about the impact of terrorism into their own lesson plans. Applications for the program must be postmarked by December 21, 2007, and participants will be notified by February 1, 2008. The Memorial Fellows will participate in workshops, tours and other sessions during the fellowship, which will be held at the memorial and museum. Last year, the program brought in teachers from California, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Utah participated in the program. Their subject areas included American history, American Constitution and citizenship, world history, European history, African American, from with Frederick Douglass, the Harlem Renaissance, the 369th Infantry, Brown v. Board of Education, the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The Memorial and Museum are dedicated to educating visitors about the impact of violence, informing and inspiring the全国 community about the events of April 19, 1995, and promoting healing and hope through lessons learned by those affected.

For more information on the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, call (888) 542-HOPE or visit www.oklahomanationalmemorial.org.

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By Kirk Winters

*Free African American Month*

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