

2017 Community Impact Stories

AVI

We had a consumer celebrate her 100th birthday at the support group. Claire is a legally blind widow who lives in New City with her family. A few years ago she noticed her vision was changing and her family contacted the Association for the visually Impaired asking for some guidance. A social worker from AVI went to their house and meet with the consumer. Her needs were assessed and she received services. She was invited to join the AVI support group. Claire was delighted at the idea of coming to a group to make new friends. She had been very lonely and isolated sitting at home everyday with nothing to do. Since it was Claire's 100th birthday the group had a special party for her. A beautiful birthday cake was purchased for the party. George Hoehmann, Clarkstown's Supervisor, came and presented Claire with a special certificate. Claire broke down in tears and stated that she never expected such a wonderful party and thanked AVI and the group for making this such a special birthday.

CANDLE

The Too Good Program was successfully implemented in three schools for two years. The faculty of the schools consistently asked for more sessions and to expand to younger grades because they felt it really made a difference. CANDLE plans to expand the program to 2nd and 3rd grade students in East Ramapo Central School District for the next two years. CANDLE will continue to provide the Too Good Program in 4th and 6th grades with funding from the Youth Bureau and the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Students in the northern end of the district will now receive seven years of continuous evidence-based prevention education.

One to One Learning

Angela is one of our students who recently passed the citizenship interview. She has been a student at One to One Learning for several years studying English and advancing from beginner to intermediate Side by Side books. She would bring her children with her to participate in the children's program while she was in class. Periodically she would introduce new students to the program.

Her life was not easy and at one point she needed surgery on her shoulder. She survived that and participated in therapy. Angela was energetic and always thinking of ways to improve herself and her children, attending as many extra programs as she could. During last summer, she attended a program to study to be a home health aide. Classes continued into October, so Angela made sure that I knew that she would be returning as soon as that program ended.

When she returned she asked to begin our citizenship class. Because her English was good, she was able to handle the sentence dictation part; she focused on the history of the United States and the interview questions. She seemed ready to take the test and went ahead with everyone cheering her on. However, Angela failed the interview questions but passed the history and dictation. So she was given another date to come for the interview piece. She was so disappointed but was encouraged by the support and extra review of fellow students and her teacher. She passed and was so delighted.

Child Care Resources

I am a mother of 3, I have a 6 year old and twins boys that are one. As you all may know childcare is very expensive for one kid let alone 3. I was able to go to work knowing my kids were under the care of a licensed provider and that everything was good. I think this program is very beneficial to both the parents and the kids, makes life easier for everyone.

By awarding me the United Way Tuition Scholarship, you have helped lighten my financial burden and have made it possible for my son to attend a quality daycare.

The additional funds allow us to get necessary clothing, educational games and books, diapers and other necessities that I would have struggled to obtain otherwise. I would like to personally thank Child Care Resources of Rockland for helping me find a childcare provider and also, the funders who contribute towards the tuition.

Rockland 21C

Miriam Lachenauer, a veteran home visitor for the East Ramapo Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP), has worked with an abundance of families over the last six years and has been part of numerous success stories. One such success story revolves around the Ruiz family of Spring Valley. Miriam has had the privilege of witnessing George Ruiz transition from a quiet, hesitant, non-verbal toddler into a creative, engaged, and highly verbal preschooler. Miriam understands the power of PCHP and how the weekly home visits and the trusted relationship she builds with families, can unlock a child's potential and empower a parent with the confidence and skills to support that child.

George's mother, Rosa, is a protective, determined, spirited parent, dedicated to accessing opportunities for all her children so they can succeed. She and her husband, David, are aware of the importance of education and how it can help their children obtain a more secure future. They are also keenly aware of the importance of family, and worked for over a year to bring their older sons to the United States from the Dominican Republic so the family could be reunited. They are hardworking parents, who on a tight budget, managed to obtain a bigger apartment to accommodate all four of their children, 4 year old George, 19 year old Kevin, 15 year old James and 8 year old Maria. They struggle with poverty and the peripheral challenges that brings, yet they remain positive and determined as they continue to pursue opportunities for their children. Rosa and David managed to get James enrolled in a GED program as well as ESL classes, and they are currently trying to save enough money so Kevin can enroll at Rockland Community College. And of course, they participated in PCHP with George.

Rosa was initially skeptical of PCHP, predominantly because of the lengthy 2 year commitment. However, seeing is truly believing, and over time she has embraced PCHP and actively participated with George and Miriam during home visits. Over the last two years George has learned to put together a puzzle by completing the picture. He now engages with a book for the full half hour home visit, listening to it and talking about the pictures. He responds to questions like "What do you think will happen?" and is no longer passive or impatient. George loves to play with his favorite toy trains, discussing their names, colors and sizes. He has grown comfortable and confident exploring, speaking, and questioning which has led to an increased vocabulary, important pre-literacy skills and expanded social and emotional

competencies. Miriam has seen how PCHP and her home visits have brought George out of his shell and fostered his creativity and love of learning.

Rosa has benefitted from the PCHP as well, learning how to let George figure things out for himself and providing him the time to do that. She has become more patient and less likely to jump in and show George how to do something, clearly responding to Miriam's gentle reminders that letting George figure things out for himself will have tremendous benefits moving forward. Rosa is also extremely affectionate with George, showering him with hugs and kisses, and usually having him sit on her lap during home visits.

Rosa and David still have the goal of securing a larger apartment in a better school district with a yard for their children to play. However, they have achieved their goal of preparing George for preschool, Kindergarten and beyond. Rosa pursued the Universal Pre-K lottery process for George and he was fortunate to be placed in a full day UPK program in September 2017, ensuring that his PCHP experiences will be built upon and expanded. Rosa is no longer skeptical but a true believer in the impact the Parent-Child Home Program can have on families – children and parents. She is very grateful that PCHP was available in her community and feels confident that George has the tools to succeed. George's PCHP experience was extremely successful due to a combination of ingredients which included the Parent-Child Home Program funded by United Way; Miriam Lachenauer, a dedicated, veteran Home Visitor; and Rosa Ruiz, a committed, determined parent willing to make her child's education and preparedness a priority.

Rockland ARC

One of our participants, who due to his disability; can have trouble with his balance. He has learned to cope by using his stronger muscles. He has learned to modify some of the strokes in order to swim better and stay safe.

During the water exercise class one of the individuals has developed an increase in his confidence in the water. He is able to move around more freely in the pool and venture into deeper water. To note: also a few of the exercise class members have become more comfortable entering and exiting the pool, which has added to their water safety.

Rockland Jewish family Services

One of the lay participants from the first year has used the information that she got from the training to encourage two of her friends to seek help. She expressed that she would not have had the confidence to do this had she not had the training and the handouts that she received in the training.

Rockland YMCA

All of our adult students in the ESOL classes (English for speakers of other languages) struggle with extreme financial hardships, food insecurity, housing issues and a host of other challenges on a daily basis. Yet they persevere and attend ESOL classes six hours per week. They do this because they are eager to become literate in English, want to have the ability to communicate with their English-speaking neighbors, interact with their children's teachers and improve their prospects for better employment opportunities. But they could not attend ESOL classes offered

by the Haverstraw Literacy Zone without the childcare services provided by the Rockland County YMCA.

Each night they attend the Haverstraw Elementary School to attend ESOL classes knowing their children will be well cared for by the staff of the Y's childcare services. These services are truly the difference between our students attending ESOL classes two evenings per week or remaining unable to communicate in English. They do not have the financial resources to pay for childcare but can attend classes because of the generous support of the Rockland County YMCA.

Tim Sanders, Counselor/Rec Aide at the Haverstraw Center, reported that a 17 year old student participated in the Life Skills Class on a more regular basis and has shown remarkable growth including improved attendance in school and improved academic performance. He also became motivated to find a new job which he has able to maintain over the past three months. Overall the atmosphere during the lunch periods at the NRHS Extension has improved and the number of fights has been reduced to only 3 in the past three months . The Counselors Tim Sanders and Frank Vasquez and Teen Director Joefrey Gardner have been working with the students at the school and after school to improve their communications , to encourage them to treat each other with mutual respect and to participate in sports fairly.

VCS

John was a fourth grader who started counseling with me over the winter. John was referred for counseling because he had hit a boy who was bullying him in class. John reported that no one was teasing him presently and we talked about ways to deal with bullies without getting physical. I asked the assistant principal if she knew of other issues that John had. She introduced me to John's teacher who stated that John had a quick temper, was disorganized, and inattentive. She appeared very frustrated and impatient with him. I found John to be quiet and agreeable and observed no indication that he had anger issues. However, he lacked confidence in his abilities and was very self-critical. I wondered if his teacher's attitude towards him contributed to his low self-esteem.

One day, John's teacher showed me a drawing of his that concerned her. She appeared very upset as she showed me a drawing of what she thought was a knife. I calmly explained to her that it was a sword, not a knife, and that John had drawn a similar one during one of our sessions. He had expressed to me that he enjoyed learning about Greek mythology and playing the video Minecraft in which many of the characters carry a sword. His teacher calmed down and proceeded to tell me that John had answered a question correctly during her math lesson and how she praised him. She admitted that John appeared happy when she complimented him and was more attentive for the rest of the lesson. I asked her if she could try focusing on positive reinforcement with John to see if his behavior and attitude improved. She agreed to try. At the same time, I worked with John to resist the urge to draw when he was either bored or confused. John's mom felt he drew when he didn't understand the lesson as a way to escape. John and I discussed strategies for paying attention and how this would benefit him, i.e. being able to ask for help. I checked in with John and his mom over the next few weeks and both reported that John was resisting the urge to draw when confused by a math lesson and his grades improved. John admitted to me that he did draw a bit one time but stopped when he realized he couldn't pay attention. He said that his teacher didn't scold him or appear to notice.

A few weeks after my conversation with his teacher, John came in for our session with a big smile on his face. His teacher had left a surprise for him in his desk. He happily reported that she gave him a book on how to draw. John was so proud that his hard work was rewarded by his teacher! I spoke to his mom who confirmed that John's self-esteem improved and he was much more confident about starting in his new school. She was very pleased at the change in attitude John's teacher had towards him and also thanked her for his gift. She expressed her gratitude that John ended the year on a high note and I am pleased to report that both John and his teacher benefited from his counseling sessions.

One of our students, I will call her Jackie, had been having difficulty controlling her anger prior to participating in the FINS program. She would typically lash out physically if another student teased her. After working with her counselor, she has learned how to control her anger and not hit other students. During the parent intake, Jackie's father expressed his concern about Jackie not having empathy. He reported that she would not seem to have any remorse after she did mean things to other kids. She never apologized for anything she ever did. Recently, Jackie wrote an apology letter to a student after she teased him in retaliation for him teasing her. Jackie has been using her coping strategies learned in counseling to better control her temper and she has developed a sense of empathy for others.