

# SCS Makes An Impact With Family Literacy Program

## ST. MARY'S

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Sunnyside Community Services is offering free enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) and computer skills training for adults with children aged 5 through 11 (kindergarten through fifth grade). The Family Literacy Program, operated by Sunnyside Community Services and funded by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), is scheduled to meet Monday through Thursday, 3 to 6 p.m. through June 15. The program meets at P.S. 199 in Long Island City.

This unique program is structured so that parents can attend ESL, computer skills classes, or receive parent resource counseling while the children participate in literacy-based after-school activities. Computer classes cover basic internet use, keyboarding/typing, word processing, building a resume, and programs that help the parents help their children with homework. Parent resource counseling provides an open group discussion where the parents get the opportunity to discuss parenting issues, education issues, financial issues, and other topics of daily life with a trained advisor in the program.

From 5 to 6 p.m., the parents and children spend an hour of PACT time. "PACT, or Parent and Child Together time, is the most essential and exciting component of this innovative program," said Berenice Rejalaga, program coordinator. "PACT time provides an opportunity for



SCS Family Literacy Program participants (L-R) Sonia Romero (seated), Martha Ruiz (seated), Pureza Vazquez, Stewart Morales (seated), Rosa Bernari, Jennifer Castillo (partially hidden) and Angelica Castillo enjoy working together on a multicultural project at P.S. 199.

parents and their children to work on literacy activities and projects as a group." She continued, "For example, everyone is currently working on a diversity quilt, involving each participant's ethnic and cultural background. The children created the flags of the parent's native countries and the parents stitched the flags to the fabric to create a multicultural quilt."

Program participants seem to really enjoy PACT time. "The children are happy because we get to spend good time together in the afternoon," said Martha Ruiz, a parent who has been participating in the program since October. "The children are happy to see the parents involved because it motivates them too." Concepcion Fuertes, another parent, agreed, adding, "This program is great because parents can get training and information they need while still spending time with their child." One of the children in attendance, Jennifer Castillo, said, "The program is very fun, and it's the first time we get to take classes together with our moms!"

While PACT increases communication and understanding and strengthens the family bond, integrating the participation of parents and children into the program is also designed to help the parents become full partners in their children's life and education. Elizabeth Wright, program director, says, "One of the most important aspects of the Family Literacy Program is that it positions the parents to be better advocates for their children throughout the educational process."

If you and your child would like to apply, refer someone, or get more information about Sunnyside Community Services' free Family Literacy Program at P.S. 199, please call Berenice Rejalaga, at (718) 786-6958, or email brejalaga@scsny.org. Sunnyside Community Services builds community and enriches



Pictured here on the St. Mary's C Amrhein, Shannon Gordon, Kendal are hoping their group will be sele

The Dance troupe at St. Mary's Winfield, under the direction of Carol Cappiello and choreographer Carole Stines, is gearing up for "The McDonald's@ Gospelfest" auditions that will be

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