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The best friend a kid can have

|| PAL News

Summer/Fall 2023 ||

PAL Head Start / Early Head Start - Social & Emotional Learning

PAL was one of the first agencies asked to provide free Head Start services for New York families when we launched our program in 1964 in response to Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty." Our Early Learning program has grown to provide a safe, secure, developmentally appropriate environment across seven Head Start/Early Head Start programs in Brooklyn and Queens for 735 children aged 2-5 years old. We serve pregnant mothers and children from birth to 2 in a Home Based setting. PAL employs 168 staff across our seven sites to ensure low-income families have year-round,

free quality childcare in their neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, fewer than half of low-income children are academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for kindergarten. Not at PAL. In 2022, the vast majority of PAL Head Start kids were ready for school. We incorporate best-in-class tools and resources, so our staff and programs deliver learning environments that promote security, engagement, interaction, and play while providing opportunities for *all* children to learn and grow.



There are a number of research-based screenings we employ to help us to understand the individual developmental and behavioral stage of each child upon entry to the program. Coupled with teacher observations, we individualize instruction to meet each child where they are as well as support their growth to align with their peers. *The Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD* is research-based curricula and assessment. It contains objectives for development and learning that promotes children being able to manage their emotions, express their feelings, acquire social skills, make friends, establish positive relationships with their peers and adults, and display mutual respect.

When our kids reach the age of four and are preparing for kindergarten, our staff utilize the *Second Step SEL* curriculum, (to support Social and Emotional Learning) which

provides 28 weeks of 5-minute lessons to teach our four-year-olds the skills needed in the kindergarten community such as welcoming others, managing feelings, and understanding empathy and anger. PAL also provides a summer Saturday program to 4 year old pre-kindergartners to enhance their Kindergarten Readiness.

We continue to prioritize the social and emotional wellness of our youngest kids, recognizing that this is fundamental to all learning and development, and as an essential component to grow and develop as an individual and reach your potential. Your support for PAL makes it possible for us to give the best start possible to kids in neighborhoods, such as Brownsville, Brooklyn, that have the highest rates of poverty.

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A NOTE FROM PAL'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As I read our latest newsletter, I see PAL's work reflecting the age-old saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." You're aware that PAL serves some of the most disenfranchised communities in our city. Only with your help can we provide NYC's families with the resources that are essential to giving kids the information, experience, and guidance they need as they learn and grow. Thank you for your ongoing support.

I am proud that within these pages we can show you the dedication of PAL staff and the ways in which they intentionally and intelligently work to support the social and emotional wellbeing of the kids we serve. Our kids face enormous challenges within their environments. Our work is essential in making sure these kids can dream big and rally for each other as they succeed and reach further together.

From this newsletter, I hope you take away a deeper understanding of the breadth of our work and partnerships. We want to reiterate how important your support is to all we do. We are so grateful to you for taking the time to read about the impact you have in the lives of the kids we serve.

CARLOS VELAZQUEZ

Executive Director, PAL



Saturday Night Lights - Building Trust Between Youth and Law Enforcement

In 2011, Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance, Jr. started an initiative, partnering with PAL to provide access to free youth sports programming on Saturday nights. They piloted the concept in one neighborhood in Upper Manhattan. Basketball skills and drills sessions were provided, giving young people a consistent place to be active on Saturday night. The pilot was a success. Local young people were flocking to the venue, quickly filling up the program.

Saturday Night Lights was born and rapidly evolved from there to 20 gyms, 11 more in Manhattan and eight spread throughout the city. In 2021 the program became a wider collaboration led by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) with the NYPD, the city's five district attorney's offices and several city agency partners, community based organizations and foundations.

DYCD had the capacity to rapidly scale up. With the support of Mayor De Blasio, 100 additional sites opened that year. Locations that needed it were renovated and the programming expanded to all the boroughs and beyond basketball to other sports including soccer, volleyball, dance and martial arts. A crucial component of the program has always been its focus on building trust between local police and the community. Youth Coordination Officers from NYPD precincts participate at each site and work alongside the staff and young people, helping to coach and mentor.

Today, the collaboration is thriving, with Saturday Night Lights running in 180 gyms across all five boroughs and PAL partnering to run 11 sites in four of the boroughs. Up until last month we centered our programs on basketball, but with the help of our supporters we're now expanding with a boxing skills and drills pilot at the Harlem Center, and in September, we will be opening an indoor baseball program at our Washington Heights center. These programs enrich the lives of young people in our city. When you donate to PAL, you make this work possible.



New Beginnings

Bart Schwartz

In January, Bart M. Schwartz, who has been actively working with PAL for 13 years, became its new Board President. Mr. Schwartz has served on the Board since 2009 and succeeds David Arena who has been the organization's President of the Board since 2016.

Bart M. Schwartz is a founder and the chairman of Guidepost Solutions. He is a former Chief of the Criminal Division of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. In 2019, Mr. Schwartz was selected to be the federal monitor over the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), which is the country's largest housing authority with over 400,000 residents. Mr. Schwartz and his team oversee the implementation of the agreement to achieve decent, safe, and sanitary living conditions for NYCHA's residents. For more than 30 years, Mr. Schwartz has managed compliance, ethics, and integrity monitoring and investigative services for a wide array of clients, including government agencies, international corporations, and not-for-profits.

Mr. Schwartz's long history of work with PAL is a testament to his commitment to the organization's mission and its values. We are delighted to extend our relationship with him and thank David Arena for his service as he hands over the baton.

Jami Landi

In October of 1979, Jami Landi hung up her dancing shoes, leaving behind a career on stage and screen for a future with Police Athletic League and never looked back.

For over four decades, Jami dedicated herself to raising funds on behalf of PAL by building relationships with foundations, corporations, and major donors spanning fields such as entertainment, business, law, and sports. Her innovative approach to her work resulted in millions of dollars raised for capital campaigns at our sites; garnered critical dollars for our youth- and education-based programming; and exponentially expanded PAL's Fund Development & Communications efforts to provide for the nearly 15,000 young people we serve today. In January of this year, Jami retired.

Her life-long commitment to the children of New York City has helped lay the foundation for PAL's growth. She has left an indelible mark on PAL, and her bubbly personality and infectious smile have forever solidified her as a "best friend a kid can have." We celebrate her work, thank her and congratulate her as she embarks on her retirement.



At the announcement of his new post, Mr. Schwartz commented: *"I am humbled by this opportunity and look forward to helping advance PAL's vision and mission. Under David's leadership, the organization has thrived, and I am honored to continue to work with PAL and its team in this new capacity."*



Remembering Steven Fisher

On May 1, our esteemed Board member, Steven Fisher, passed away unexpectedly at the age of 63. Steven was a respected leader in the real estate industry, as senior partner at Fisher Brothers, his family's fourth-generation real estate firm based in New York, and as Founder and Chairman of Fisher Capital Investments, the venture capital arm of Fisher Brothers. He was an active philanthropist and supporter of PAL for more than 20 years, following his grandfather, Larry Fisher, onto the Board of Trustees in 2019. He was active with many other New York City organizations, including the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum. The support of the Fisher family has been transformational to PAL, and Steven leaves his own legacy through the ongoing STEM program partnership he helped us establish with the Intrepid for PAL middle schoolers. He is mourned and missed by our entire community.



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Moldovan Study Tour - Sharing Skills Far and Wide

In March, PAL was proud to welcome a Moldovan delegation of police and education staff as part of the Moldova Legal Socialization Program U.S. Study Tour run by PH International. The study tour was supported by the U.S. State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

The itinerary included a few days in both the Boston and New York areas visiting non-profits, schools, and police departments to explore how to adapt programs and collaborative concepts that can help increase Moldovan youth's understanding of civic rights, responsibilities, and the rule of law.

When they arrived in New York, they began with a visit to NYC Police Department and PAL Youth Community Center in Brooklyn for a tour of the facility and meeting with Youth Strategies Division of NYPD. Their second day was at PAL's Harlem Community Center where Executive Director, Carlos Velazquez, gave them an overview of how PAL works with police and communities. They had time to hear about PAL programs including Playstreets, Saturday Night Lights, After School and Summer Programming, and PAL's Mentorship and Advocacy Programming.

We were delighted to hear that their time with PAL was a highlight for the group, who were impressed to hear of the extent of PAL's work with youth and their families, and

how we identify the support that's needed in our community for our young people to become inspired, productive members of society.

One of the delegation, the Deputy Chief of the General Police Inspectorate, commented that this program caused him to think deeply about everything he had seen on the tour. He particularly noted PAL's dedication to focus on the root of the problems these young people face and the tremendous collaboration he had witnessed. He was impressed with the volunteer work done by the police officers that he met on this study tour, especially in Brooklyn, and their authentic interest in working with people in their community. He is inspired to trial a pilot PAL-type program in the Siroca Region of Moldova, based on what he's learned, where he'd like his staff to give attention to working with minority youth from the Roma community.

Renee Berrian, the Senior Program Manager at PH International commented "I'd like to say huge thanks to Vivian and Carlos for setting up our visit in NYC and welcoming our group to their city. The Moldovans' experience at NYC PAL and the Brooklyn Community Affairs Division truly demonstrated the need and benefit for collaboration between police and community on so many levels to our group."



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- **ANNUAL GIFT:** A gift of any amount helps PAL youth and programs in NYC. You can use the enclosed envelope or visit PALNYC.org.
- **MONTHLY GIVING:** Consider making a recurring gift to PAL each month! You will be a member of the 1914 Club, exclusive for our monthly donors. Visit PALNYC.org or use the enclosed envelope.
- **MATCHING GIFTS:** Does your company match gifts? If so, this can double your gift to PAL!
- **DONOR ADVISED FUNDS:** Recommend a donor-advised fund grant to PAL through your DAF giving account online or by contacting your fund manager. Our Federal Tax ID Number is: 13-5596811
- **STOCK OR WIRE TRANSFER:** A gift of stock or a wire transfer is a simple way to support PAL. For more information, please contact the Advancement team at advancement@palnyc.org.

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