Reflections from the Director’s Desk: “Changing Times”
Leisa Pollander, Executive Director

How fleeting Vermont summers are! The Center provided many action-packed experiences for children, described in further detail in this newsletter. Pre-schoolers in the New Arrivals program refined social and language skills couched in play, and attended a week-long science camp at Shelburne Farms. Elementary-aged children enrolled in our collaborative venture with Burlington’s Parks and Recreation Department. Barnes Summer World Academy offered field trips galore - sailing classes, drama classes, art classes, afternoons at the beach, book club – all kept the kids busy and positively occupied. Middle-schoolers in the Bob and Maggie Green Youth Adventure Camp gardened, sailed, went mountain biking, hiking and kayaking. What better way to see Vermont at its finest?!

There is also a down side to this summer. Economic conditions are hurting many folks – businesses are cutting back, some of our families have lost their jobs, the price of food, gas and heating oil is concerning to all. Children come to the Center early in the morning – and have not had breakfast because there is not enough money for groceries. The Center’s tiny food shelf is decimated – stocked full one day, it is often emptied within 24 hours. There are many in our community who will be making hard choices – whether to pay for food, medication or fuel – because there simply is not enough money to cover every expense.

A long-standing donor who relocated to California recently sent her annual donation to the SHCC. She enclosed a very caring note: “Due to the economic situation – and so many other problems in our country today, I hope you will still be receiving donations. It would be devastating if the SHCC could no longer be of help to the needy children and their families. Please continue your good work”. Your donation will help to continue the good work done at the Center!

- $10 provides afternoon snack for 36 youngsters
- $25 purchases art supplies for a week-long project
- $50 allows the teens to buy groceries and cook dinner for the “Fire in the Kitchen” program
- $70 subsidizes a week of pre-school for a 3 year old
- $100 pays for a field trip for middle-schoolers
- $500 replenishes the food shelf
Erin Affronti has been working with the Sara Holbrook Community Center since 2006. She has demonstrated her commitment, versatility and patience throughout her time here by always giving 100% in any program she works in. The kids, from first grade to high-school aged, as well as the staff at the Center, have only positive things to say about Erin. Her go with the flow personality, hard work and dedication to the Center has proven that she is a wonderful addition to our programs. Erin shares with us her experience working at the Center.

The Sara Holbrook Community Center is a special place in many ways. For me it has provided what I see as a unique opportunity. Over the past two and a half years I have been able to spend my time with youth from as young as first grade through high school. Each of the different age levels; after school with middle school students, evenings with high school students and summer with first through fifth graders have created many special memories and helped me gain knowledge that you can only obtain through experience.

The After School Drop-In at the New North End Youth Center has taught me the importance of having a free space available to youth. When I was in middle school all I wanted to do was hang out with my friends all the time. However, it seemed there was never a centrally located relaxed place with entertaining things to do. The Center provides the kids a safe place to play basketball, pool, be creative, listen to music and just hang out. I love just being with the kids - listening to what is on their mind one minute, then playing an intense game of pool or designing a creative picture the next. There is never a boring moment and it seems I am always laughing with the kids about something.

Through High School Drop-In in the evenings at the New North End Youth Center, I have learned what it means to be a motivator, friend and counselor. When you are a teenager it is really important to be able to have someone in life that you feel you can comfortable confide in and then share in a laugh or two. At that age, having someone around that is willing to motivate you to do something to get out of a funk, be silly and make you laugh or listen when you need it is priceless. The Sara Holbrook Community Center creates a youth center that not only serves as a comfortable space, but one that allows teens to be open about themselves.

Summer Camp has given me more then I could ever ask for. Everyday I get to see kids truly happy and excited for what the day holds. It always makes me feel amazing when I tell a camper that they are going to get to do something new like go sailing, visit a place they have never been or spend a beautiful day at the beach. Summer camp is also a great place for kids to grow, by creating new friendships, facing social situations and stepping outside their comfort zone. Plus, I get to be a big kid all the time!

Overall, working for Sara Holbrook has been a wonderful opportunity. I get to be a friend, mentor and facilitator to an incredible group of kids. I get to see kids grow by facing new challenges, learning from experiences and developing ideas. I know I would never have learned what I know now without the experiences Sara Holbrook Community Center has made available to me. I feel very lucky to have the chance to work with an amazing organization and group of people that is the Sara Holbrook Community Center.
This summer, according to one participant in the Bob and Maggie Green Youth Adventure Program, was “very, very, great – so much fun!” The kids who have participated in the program have had the opportunity to engage in a variety of exciting adventures in our community and around the state. One main goal of the program was to tie in activities with the themes of the New Arrivals Summer Program. This summer the kids were able to experience a number of new activities and visit a variety of new parks, beaches, lakes, and rivers. Many of the youth were introduced to the numerous local gems such as the Ethan Allen Homestead, Colchester Pond, and the Auer Family Boat-house all of which are easily accessible to them by bike, bus, or foot! Some of the more distant adventures brought the kids out of their community and into places like Stowe and Jericho. Whether within in Burlington, or in the greater Vermont area, the youth who participated in the Bob and Maggie Green Youth Adventure Program not only had a great summer but also developed leadership skills, learned to work as a group, and discover many hidden qualities within themselves.

The teens had the opportunity to visit Stowe to ride the chair lift, breathe in some mountain air, and finally, to race down the Alpine Slide! After getting tired, hot, and sweaty hiking the trails at Ethan Allen Park, the teens discovered new swimming areas in and around Burlington. Many of the kids rowed their first boat, paddled their first canoe, and navigated their first river. Several of the teens were able to view Burlington from a different perspective and learn about our community’s history of commerce, tourism, and recreation while upon a Lake Champlain scenic cruise.

The weather this summer was unfortunate—because of all the rainy days many trips had to be postponed or cancelled! Working together with the participants, program staff searched out new indoor activities to undertake. One of these activities took place in a familiar location for many of the kids, Leddy Park. The indoor skating rink not only offered a haven from the heat, haze, and humidity but also allowed the participants to have an indoor adventure! Many of the kids had never laced up skates before, but with the help of those who had, they were all skating around the rink and having a blast. Sometimes a little rain can lead to a new type of adventure....

While undertaking a series of adventures the teens often found that while they were having fun, there were also learning new skills and growing as individuals. The teens embarked on their first fishing trip at Colchester Pond where they learned that patience and determination are often rewarding. When one participant landed her first fish she beamed with delight for the remainder of the trip and began giving her newfound pointers and tips to other members of the group. During a blueberry picking trip the group began to work together to find the sweetest, juiciest berries. In nearly every activity, the group demonstrated their unity and their desire to work together to tackle challenges, overcome obstacles, and share in the fun together.
This summer, middle school students in the SHCC New Arrivals (a summer school experience for English Language Learners) benefited from a collaborative effort between the instructors of the academic morning and the Bob and Maggie Green Youth Adventure Program. There was a direct connection between the literacy topics and afternoon recreational activities as the students explored a 5-week unit focused on the theme: Lake Champlain - Recreation Attraction and Key to the Local Economy of Burlington, VT. This unit provided the participants practice in all the skill areas required to learn a second language: listening, speaking, reading and writing, as every student interviewed community leaders and business people in and around town. A huge “Thank You” goes out to our community professionals who cleared their busy schedules to answer our students’ questions: Burlington Mayor, Bob Kiss; Parks and Recreation Director, Wayne Gross; ECHO Science Center’s Senior Education Manager, Tracy Truzansky; Lake Champlain Chocolates Executive, Gary Coffey; Leunig’s Bistro Owner/Manager, Bob Conlon; Lake Champlain Transportation Owner, Trey Pecor; and Shelburne Farms’ CFO, Alec Webb. Their stories and passion for their careers and community sparked these students’ interests in the history of this region, the legend of Champ, agricultural practices, shipwreck exploration, the upcoming quadricentennial celebration, and their future career choices. At the very least, these young students’ eyes were opened to the fact that their community is the product of the efforts of many hardworking people.

A highlight in this five-week study was the week at Shelburne Farms, which was afforded our group through the generosity of the stakeholders in Shelburne Farms and the educational staff of Linda Wellings. Here our students had hands-on experiences doing water quality tests, observing minute creatures in the water, visiting farm animals sustained by the lake water, and exploring their own entrepreneurial ideas. Our final day of class was spent traversing the Lake on the Burlington-Port Kent Ferry, thanks to the generosity of Lake Champlain Transportation.

New Arrivals gave these middle-schoolers a new appreciation for Lake Champlain and its’ surroundings. All that the students learned this summer can be summed up in their own words:

“Lake Champlain is a place to do a lot of fun things and it has an interesting history.” (8th grader, Ilmira)

“Lake Champlain is very important to me because it is a good place to go swimming and it is very safe and people in America should come to see Lake Champlain.” (7th grader, Benjamin)

“People love the Lake because it is beautiful and it calms people down when they are stressed out.” (6th grader, Hassan)

“I never knew that people from around the world come to see where the bike path leads, how our community looks, and people are actually saying nice things about the waterfront. I think that Burlington is not just a community. It’s a city that people want to remember.” (8th grader, Madina)

Thank you to all of you who support the programs of SHCC. New Arrivals has been a program that has bestowed summer learning and fun on the English Language Learners of Burlington for two decades.

P. S. Keep an eye out for a 2009 calendar, created by these students, which will highlight the beauty of Lake Champlain in time for the Quadricentennial. The plan is for proceeds of the calendar sales to support teen programs at the SHCC and educational programs at Shelburne Farms.
Creating Connections Mentoring Program

The Creating Connections program is a community based mentoring program at the Center with the goal of matching youth in the community with caring and responsible adults. Our program seeks to match school aged youth, grades K-12, with adult mentors to develop positive relationships that can foster healthy lifestyle choices. Creating Connections works in all Burlington communities, with a focus on serving underprivileged and refugee/immigrant populations in the North End. Mentors are matched with youth based on the similar interests and activities of the pair, such as exploring the community, attending an event, baking cookies, drawing comics, or just hanging out. Once matched, mentors have a weekly two to four hour commitment to spend with their mentee for one full calendar year. This program aims to have mentor-mentee pairs share experiences that can positively shape the development of the youth. Training, on-going support and activities are provided.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, or know a child who would benefit from participating in this program, please contact Casey or Tim at 862-6342.

Tell Me More, Tell Me More...

We asked our supporters, “Why do you give to the Sara Holbrook Community Center?” We received more great responses this year and it was a pleasure for the Center’s staff to read them all. It means so much to the Center to hear back from the ones that make it possible, through their donations, commitments, and love for the Center and for kids! Many, many thanks for sharing with us your reasons for giving and your positive thoughts and remarks. Below is a sample of responses.

I give to the Sara Holbrook Center because:

- They helped me to learn English. Thank you.
- The Center is right in our backyard and we love hearing the kids playing outside and having fun!
- I believe in supporting local efforts.
- We love and respect your mission.
- It fulfills needs in our community and it feels good!
- Our son graduated from your preschool back in 1980.
- It’s a worthy organization, doing a fantastic job in the community.
- The outreach you give to young children and their parents learning English is one of the many reasons we think so highly of SHCC.
- You serve with love.
- Every child deserves a good start.
- We love kids!
- I so respect and admire the great things you do for so many who need quality activities and relationships.
- There are so many children who deserve a chance for a better life.
- Of my good friend, Liz Swim.
- Of all Kathy Olwell does for youth in Burlington.
- It is great for the community.
- Of a handwritten note from Ducky Donath.
- The Center provides a safe, nurturing place for children after school.
- Mary Ann– she has an amazing heart!
- Of all the good work you do for children.
- We are part of the community you serve and we are your neighbors!
The Gallery: A 2008 Summer Exposition

Children and youth enrolled in summer programs through the Sara Holbrook Community Center were busy with loads of activities this summer. Between visiting the Alpine Slide in Stowe, to interviewing prominent members of the community, to creating stained-glass art at Hunt Middle School, kids were kept busy with enriching and fun activities at the Center and in the community. Children in the Barnes Summer World Academy went sailing on Lake Champlain, ventured to Shelburne Farms, the ECHO Center, Fletcher Free Library and Shelburne Museum, participated in the Wig-Wag Festival and the Cardboard Box Parade on Church Street, went blueberry picking, sampled chocolates at Lake Champlain Chocolates on Pine Street and were visited by the Playmobile, bringing giant games like Connect Four, Jenga, checkers and basketball to play with! The New Arrivals participants spent a week at Shelburne Farms, exploring, playing with animals, and learning about farms and the impact that Lake Champlain has on the Burlington community. Kids enrolled in the Hunt After-School Program learned how to make paper, created stained-glass art, gardened, practiced their drumming skills, took hip-hop dance lessons, went sailing on the lake and made graffiti-art on canvas.
The Sara Holbrook Community Center is considering publishing monthly e-newsletters. If you would like to receive these e-newsletters, please include your email address on the donation envelope provided in this newsletter. We look forward to sharing with you updates, news, events and information about our programs on a monthly basis!
The Sara Holbrook Community Center’s fiscal calendar begins April 1st and closes March 31st of the following year. The following financial information reflects the 2007-2008 fiscal year. For the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the Center’s total agency income was $479,875.15. The chart below identifies the Center’s income sources and actual totals for each source.

**FY 2007-2008**

- **Program Fees**: $68,634.69
- **Grants**: $175,171.50
- **United Way**: $102,604.55
- **Holiday Appeal**: $30,926.36
- **Solicited Contributions**: $52,285.00
- **Investment Income**: $9,916.65
- **Misc. Income**: $1,128.20
- **Contribution**: $10,621.25
- **Rental Income**: $900.00
- **Special Events**: $27,686.95

**Did you know...?**

- The Sara Holbrook Community Center has been a part of Burlington for over 70 years?
- That 4,000 individuals are served annually by the program offered at the Sara Holbrook Center?
- The Center’s New Arrivals program for immigrant and refugee children was the first of its kind in Vermont?
- That on a typical school day, nearly 200 children are engaged in Sara Holbrook program?
- That over 1,000 youth attend the New North End Youth Center program annually?
- That over 300 families utilize the emergency food shelf at the Center annually, receiving a four day supply of groceries?
Thank you!

Our programs are made possible thanks to the generous support of the community. The following individuals, corporations, and foundations have contributed to our success. The following donors made their gifts between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008.

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Skinny Pancake Restaurant  
Ellen Sklar  
Ann Smith  
Donna & Richard Smith  
Vicky Smith  
Smuggler’s Notch  
Dick Smullen  
Lauren Solt  
William Sorrell  
Stacy Spaziani  
Kathleen Speedy  
Mary & Susan Sperry  
Nancy Spier  
Jenn Spiller  
Sports and Fitness Edge  
Sarah Sprayregen  
Spruce Mortgage  
Square Riggs LLC  
Janet & J. Ward Stackpole  
Janet Stambolian  
The Stamper Family  
Elinore & Michael Standard  
Lisa Steele  
Peter & Margie Stern  
Caryl Stewart  
John Stewart  
Katherine & Roger Stone  
Stone Soup  
Richard Stoner  
Nancy Strong  
Sugar Snap  
Judy Sullivan  
Joe & Sara Sussman  
Kathy Swartwout  
Liz Swim  
Sweet Lady Jane  
Bee & Burt Tabakin  
Todd & Alicia Taylor  
TD Banknorth  
Temple Sinai Sisterhood  
John West Thatcher  
Thai Phat Market  
Christian & Elizabeth Thomas  
Herman & Mavis Thomas  
James Thomas  
Three Tomatoes  
Christine Tissot  
Tribeca  
Al & Evie Trono  
Julie Trottier  
Trowel Trades Supply, Inc.  
Tracy True  
Trust Company of Vermont  

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The following loved ones were remembered with gifts to the Center:

- Cynthia Antell
- Anthony Bove
- Geraldine Breiner
- Martin Glassberg
- Louise Kokis
- Jeffrey Lewis
- Verona Michaud
- Wil Parker
- Hortense Westover

The following loved ones were honored with a gift to the Center:

- Boone & Jack Appleton
- Ruth Athanas
- Mary Ann Blaisdell
- Michael & Nicola Boutin
- Stephanie Clark
- Ducky & Frank Donath
- Lily Grant
- Bob & Maggie Green
- Ann & Frank Guillot
- Linda Hamlin
- Burt Hamrell
- Hunt Middle School Staff
- James & Susan Larche
- Leonard
- Natalie Lisman
- Dick MacKenzie
- Barbara McGrew
- Phil Merrick
- Sharon Moffatt
- John Nolan, Sr.
- Kathy Olwell
- Patricia M. Place
- Andrew E. Robinson
- Ron Seeley
- Harold & Mary Simpers
- John D. Simpson
- Liz Swim
- Joel G. Thomas
- Tremblay-Hickey Family
- Jodi Whalen
- Edward A. White

At the Center, we do our best to recognize those who have supported us; we try to ensure this list is as accurate as possible. If you find an error or omission, please accept our apology and contact Leisa at (802)862-0080. Thank you for understanding.

Save the Date!

The 4th annual Festival of Cultures will be held April 4, 2009 at the Davis Center at UVM.

Please check out our website (www.saraholbrookcc.org) and blog (http://saraholbrookcenter.blogspot.com) in the upcoming months for updates and information regarding the Festival!

A special thanks to Duncan-Wisniewski Architecture for their support in production of this newsletter!
United Way of Chittenden County

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