Commitment, Dedication, and Consistency...all are key attributes that come to mind when I think of the staff and volunteers who work with children. The Sara Holbrook Community Center is most fortunate to be connected to **many, many** staff, volunteers, and donors who possess these qualities. Our own Linda Hamlin (formerly Cadorette) exemplifies these core values. Let me tell you about a day in the working life of Linda…

- Roll out of bed before the crack of dawn
- Accompany Ed, her husband, to the Center at 5:00 a.m. to clean, put trash out, etc.
- Head for her mom’s house to make sure she is up and about
- Back to the Center at 7:45 a.m. to prep for her day as the aide in the pre-school
- 8:30 a.m.: meet and greet 15 preschoolers and their families; four hours of play and curriculum begin
- 12:30 p.m.: prepare 15 little ones to head home, greet parents again, discuss the days happenings
- 12:45 p.m.: eat lunch, try to unwind, often there is a staff meeting
- 2:00 p.m.: prepare for the after-school program
- 2:30 p.m.: open the doors for 36 elementary school children for after-school programming; lead craft projects, cheer on kids, chase balls over the fence, teach the children games and the importance of following the rules, and answer the continual cry, “Linda, I need you”.
- 5:00 p.m.: pack up the elementary school troops, ship them out the door and turn the building over to the Teen Program staff and….  

Get up the next day and do it all over again!

How many people do you know who have worked for the same organization for almost 40 years yet still come to work each day with a smile? Linda’s love of children and her willingness to do whatever it takes to get things done epitomizes the culture at the Sara Holbrook Community Center. The Center is small enough that no job descriptions fit into square little boxes. I am reminded of that every time I see Linda and Ed wielding the floor waxer; when I see Kathy Olwell endlessly driving kids around the city, so they may participate in enrichment activities that are not available in the New North End; when I see Tricia Reynolds loading a bag of dirty, preschool dress-up clothes into her car on Friday to be washed, folded and returned Monday morning; when I see Kim Wojcik unpacking a car full of groceries and restocking the food pantry; and when I see Heidi Weston staggering through the back door, buried beneath an armful of snacks and drinks to stock the next teen dance. I am very fortunate to know—and to work with—every single staff person here. Thank you all!
**Garden Makeover: Sara Holbrook Edition**

Again this year *Garden Day Campers* sowed seeds of summer beauty at the Center—and the community is reaping the rewards! A rainbow of flowers—lilies, marigolds, snapdragons, —fresh herbs like basil and mint, various vegetables, and a new mural decorate the front of the Center. The mural is the latest addition to the Center’s front-yard makeover.

The two week *Garden Day Camp* is made possible through a collaboration with *Friends of Burlington Gardens*. Eight children participated in the camp this summer, which ran from June 20th to July 1st. Garden planning began in early April, when children met with artists from *Very Special Arts of Vermont* to create the mural. By combining the children’s ideas, words, and drawings, the artists designed a meaningful picture that resonated with the youngsters.

“In helping to design and paint the new mural, the *Sara Holbrook Garden Day Campers* had a unique opportunity to express their creativity and artistic talents”, states Jim Flint, Executive Director of *Friends of Burlington Gardens*. “Watching the roots, trees, flowers, worms, birds, and butterflies come alive, and seeing the smiles from neighbors passing by, are experiences that the children will long remember—and a wonderful reminder of the importance of plants, gardens, and art in the life of the community.”

Many thanks to all the project’s supporters and volunteers: *Friends of Burlington Gardens*, Linda Deliduka, Susanne Whyte, Jim Flint, *Very Special Arts of Vermont*, Peggy, Meghan, Anna, & Rachel Rainville, Susan Lepple, and Emily Anderson.

The Center’s mural is one of two garden themed murals in the city of Burlington.
Not Just Clowning Around: 
Refugee Children Learn About Teamwork & Friendship Under the Big Top

Juggling, tumbling, tight-rope walking, and flying (on the trapeze!) created a delightful “circus buffet” for New Arrivals participants. For one week, children attending the New Arrivals program explored the circus arts at Circus Smirkus Academy. This added enrichment activity was made possible by a three-year grant awarded by the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust.

Since 1989, the Sara Holbrook Community Center (SHCC) has offered New Arrivals, an educational program for immigrant and refugee children with limited English proficiency. The program provides language instruction to children while public schools are closed, alleviating the summer slip. This summer 60 children participated in New Arrivals, representing 14 countries and 16 different languages! Nearly 50 percent of the children spoke Maay-Maay, the most predominant language this year.

Interestingly, New Arrivals stems from humble beginnings. Sixteen years ago, “Mrs. B” (Mary Ann Blaisdell, a SHCC Board member) was a teacher at Lawrence Barnes Elementary School. When students returned in the fall, Mrs. B noticed that many immigrant and refugee children had regressed in English language skills. The summer slip was making school difficult and children were falling behind.

In the summer of 1989, Mrs. B recruited some fellow teachers and SHCC Board members to help teach summer school. Mrs. B accessed space at the Center; leftovers from the school year became summer staples and personal funds were used for trips. Over the years, Mrs. B’s summer school has formalized into respected, structured program—New Arrivals. New Arrivals was the first program of its kind in Vermont.

With support from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, the program expanded to five weeks this summer; with the extra week focusing on enrichment activities. Young children, preschool to 2nd grade, spent a week exploring Shelburne Farms and learning about farm animals—goats, sheep, cows, and chickens. Older children, 3rd grade to 8th grade, adventured to Circus Smirkus. Teachers incorporated the two themes into the program’s curriculum. For instance, preschoolers prepared for their trip to Shelburne Farms by learning animal names and singing farm-themed songs.

The collaborations with Shelburne Farms and Circus Smirkus strengthened the program in various ways. An extra week of programming meant more time to practice English. Additionally, enrichment activities, such as Circus Smirkus, reinforce important life-skills: cooperation, self-discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence. Mark Nigolian, New Arrivals Program Director, was thrilled with the youths’ progress. “The first two days many of the kids were hesitant to try anything, but by day three everyone was participating and challenging themselves. Being at the circus was a great week for the kids”.

Many thanks to the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, all the program’s donors, Shelburne Farms, Circus Smirkus, program staff, and community volunteers (who donated over 410 hours of community service!) for making this year a success!
Tell Me More, Tell Me More…

Last April we asked, “Why do you give to the Sara Holbrook Community Center?” Answers were received and it was a joy for the Center’s staff to read them. Many thanks for sharing your positive thoughts and remarks; below is a sample of responses.

I give to the Sara Holbrook Community Center because…
- You do so much good for our community and you have for a long time
- The programs benefit some of the poorest members of our community and I want them to know that people in this community care
- You do so much good work!
- I worked with Sara Holbrook
- Your mission is important
- I always read your mailings and realize the wonderful work that is being done of Lyn Leavitt
- You do an excellent job to help young people
- I like the interest in children
- You provide very valuable services to the community! Keep up the good work!
- The great work it does with so few people!
- We have always admired the work you do
- Of the essential work you do for an important segment of our community
- You do such important work and you do it with joy!

If you have not already shared with us your “why”, please do so. Whether it is a particular person, memory, program, or just that fuzzy feeling you get in your heart when you think of the Center, we would love to know.

What’s True About the Neighborhood?

For 68 years, the Sara Holbrook Community Center has been providing opportunities and programs to children and families in need. Located in the Old North End of Burlington, the Center serves a diverse community, with families struggling to just get by; in fact, according to U.S. Census 2000 data, Old North End neighborhoods constitute the highest concentration of poverty in Burlington and the entire state of Vermont. The community’s need has been well documented:
- 20% of Burlington residents live below the federal poverty guideline (U.S. Census 2000).
- 31.4% of residents in the Old North End of Burlington live below the federal poverty level (Community Economic Development Office).
- 100% of elementary school children living in the Old North End receive a free or reduced priced lunch (Burlington School District & Community Economic Development Office).
- In 1980, Burlington, Vermont became one of ten federally funded refugee resettlement sites in the United States.
- From 1980 to 2000, 3,828 refugees have been directed to Burlington; 1,438 of them within the last 6 years (Vermont State Refugee Coordinator). Because the Old North End is the most affordable location in Burlington, refugees and immigrants tend to settle within walking distance of the SHCC; hence, access to SHCC programs is convenient.
- Refugee families have eight months of Federal financial support; during this time, it is expected that refugees learn a new language and culture, establish employment, and become self-sufficient.
- Your support to the Sara Holbrook Community Center is an investment that makes a difference in the lives of children and families in need. In 2004, 90 cents of every dollar raised went to program services.
During program breaks, students liked to hang out with Miss B (far right), a practicum student from St. Michael’s College. Miss B worked with 3rd to 5th graders in New Arrivals.

A Taste of the Outdoors: Teens strike a pose at Owl’s Head Berry Farm in Richmond.

Double the Fun: When asked, what’s your favorite part of summer camp? The twins enthusiastically reply, “The beach!”

Counting Sheep: Exploring sheep fields at Shelburne Farms made little ones tired after a day of hiking—however, parents were pleased to pick-up their sleepy ones.

Lounge Where?: At Circus Smirkus, Patrice relaxes for a few minutes—on the tight rope!
History Comes Alive: The Bob & Maggie Green Youth Adventure Camp

Summer in Vermont! It very well may be the best time of year in our Green Mountain State. Warm weather, sunny skies, and gorgeous mountain views create the perfect environment for summer adventures—hiking, biking, kayaking, and swimming. Unfortunately, for many families at the Center, exploring the outdoors is not a possibility; both parents are working to make ends meet, transportation is not reliable, or the family budget just can’t cover it. Thus, for many Burlington youth the urban routine continues.

However, new thrills are on the horizon! The Bob & Maggie Green Youth Adventure Camp is a new teen program this summer, which is the ultimate escape from the urban routine. Highlights this summer include: kayaking down the Lamoille River, hiking Mt. Philo, exploring the caves at Smuggler’s Notch, tasting the outdoors through blueberry picking, mountain biking, visiting Stowe and screaming down the alpine slide, and staying cool at natural swimming holes, such as the falls in Bolton—a group favorite.

A generous grant from Northfield Savings Bank Foundation first secured the program for this summer. Interestingly, Maggie Green, former Director of the Center, read about the new teen program in our spring newsletter. It was then she knew how she wanted to memorialize her husband. “When we received the newsletter from Sara Holbrook Center, I jumped at the answer to how do we honor Bob,” says Maggie. “It was tailor made; it couldn’t have been more perfect—its intent and geographic design. As a family, we are thrilled. Bob would have volunteered for the program.”

The Green Family has a special history at the Center; Maggie was Executive Director for 13 years and her children attended and then worked or volunteered in the Center’s programs. “Our family has a long history with Sara Holbrook Center. Myself and most of my siblings grew up with the Center as a central part of our lives. We visited and worked there,” adds Bruce Green. “Equally rewarding were the experiences of being involved in the start up of programs [food shelf, emergency homeless shelter] that eventually became self-sufficient and went out on their own. These activities were always supported and encouraged by both my mother and father who believed deeply in community service and cared deeply for the community the Center served. With the timing of my father’s passing and the Center’s desires to create an outdoor program, this seemed like the perfect opportunity to honor my parents and the community they loved. Through the Adventure Program we could honor my mother’s dedication to the Center, my father’s passion for teaching kids through outdoor activities, and fulfill our family’s desire to provide back to the community some of what we had received ourselves. Not to mention, it gives us the opportunity to once again be involved in the creation of a great new community program with the Sara Holbrook Center.”

Adventure camp was a fitting program to honor Bob and his legacy; he was a very active community member and outdoorsman. “Bob was an active youth participant in the New North End. The father of six children, five of them boys, he participated to the maximum in little league, football, hockey, baseball, and Boy Scouts”, explains Maggie. “On top of all of that, Bob taught the children to hunt, ski and hiking was always a very big part of family life...A fifteen passenger van that belonged to family the was on the go every weekend to some outdoor adventure”.

The Green Family is thrilled that the program “got off the ground” and is eager to see their vision take shape. “My vision is a program that stays true to the needs of the community by providing an environment for the community’s teenagers to learn more about themselves, others, and nature through their experiences in the outdoor adventure program”, says Bruce. “My hopes are that the program will include fostering activities to: create new friendships and enrich existing ones; learn respect for one’s self, others and nature; experience teamwork and the power of working together to accomplish goals; enhance communication and interpersonal skills; find and push the physical and mental boundaries of what they can do and accomplish; and to have fun enjoying great outdoor activities.” With a growing list of outdoor adventures, enthusiastic, smiling teens, and supportive parents, it appears that the Greens’ vision is becoming a reality.
Teens’ Turn: Youth Adventurers Have a Summer To Remember

This summer was about a lot of “firsts”; first time camping, first time berry picking, first time at Stowe, first time rock climbing, first time stepping outside of your comfort zone. Teens at the Sara Holbrook Community Center have had a whirlwind summer, full of new experiences. The generosity of Northfield Savings Bank Foundation and the Green Family added the outdoor adventure program to year-round teen programming. Youth had the opportunity to sign-up for the camp’s offerings: hiking, tubing, mountain biking, kayaking, camping, rock climbing and more.

The teens embarked into unchartered territory; many of the participants had never played beyond Burlington’s urban landscape. With so many new experiences and “firsts”, the program truly embodied the spirit of adventure. “To adventure is to venture forth into the unknown and to undertake an activity that has an uncertain outcome for the adventurer and may be risky or dangerous. The risk may be physical, social, spiritual or intellectual and it is taken not for the risk but what comes out of the risk”, states Heidi Weston, the Center’s Teen Director.

As the camp’s Director, Heidi has witnessed the teens’ growth first hand. “They took chances, tried new things, opened new doors within themselves, and discovered fun healthy activities to do. Some gained different perspectives about themselves, their strength, and their potential, and that also among their peers. The teens laughed, screamed, cried, smiled, giggled, and shared all parts of themselves with each other; whether they were wet, tired, happy, frustrated, scared or goofy. I believe that through their adventures they discovered new qualities about themselves, their friends and world we live in—things that they will take with them for the rest of their lives.”

Additionally, the program has sparked feedback from parents. “The Center’s teen program has been a wonderful adventure for my daughter. Ever since she joined any program or activity at Sara Holbrook, she comes home telling me she had a blast. I love the fact that my daughter has fun, meets new friends, learns new things, and she learns where new places are located”, states Alma’s mother. Alma, a youth adventurer this summer, has been involved with the Center’s programs for several years; however, she points out that this summer has been different, “because I did a lot of new stuff”. Alma sums up the Bob & Maggie Green Youth Adventure Camp, “It was so much fun! I love the Sara Holbrook’s summer teen program. It rocked my summer!”

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