Reflections from the Director’s Desk: This I Believe
Leisa Pollander, Executive Director

After a whirlwind winter, a large part of which had the Center’s staff focused on the production and implementation of The Festival of Cultures, I needed a break. I spent part of April school vacation with family members, touring the nation’s capital. This trip was a long-awaited anecdote to a Vermont winter, that in my mind at least, had gone on far too long…I was starved for signs of spring.

The weather was warm and sunny, the cherry blossoms, forsythia, and tulips were spectacular. Like most tourists, we spent much of our time flitting from site to site, trying to absorb as much history and culture as we could in our brief stay. Late in the afternoon on one of our multiple stops, we landed in front of the Holocaust Museum. As we walked through Daniel’s House, the children’s exhibit, I could feel an overwhelming sense of horror, sadness, outrage and anger settling in on me. The feelings burgeoned as we toured a model ghetto, and then entered the mock railroad station, where I imagined the fear and despair of thousands upon thousands of families as they were loaded onto freight cars for a long journey to an unknown end. How could human beings inflict such pain, sorrow and cruelty to any living soul?

Leaving the museum for the bright Washington streets, we were all quiet, reflective and sober—not at all the persona normally exhibited by my 13 year-old nephew Peter, or my 16 year-old niece Kaylee. We were all deeply impacted by this very brief tour; then, back at the hotel, we turned on the news to hear about genocide in Darfur. The events in Darfur were as appalling, unfathomable, and real as the Holocaust. I have thought about my museum visit and current events many times since coming home.

Upon returning to work the following week, I found that I couldn’t spend enough time with the kids at the Center—especially the preschoolers. Their effervescent energy, enthusiasm and wonder was infectious, rejuvenating, and affirming. I needed to be surrounded by hope of young children. There is pain, cruelty and ugliness in many venues in our world. But each of us has the capacity to make a difference, in some way, shape or form. I believe in the goodness of the human heart. I believe in change and a bright future for our children. To all our supporters, thank you for believing with me.
Gifts that Give Opportunities

Over the holiday season, sponsors took a “leap” with us and chose to support experience gifts for kids at the Center. Instead of buying traditional gifts such as clothing or toys, sponsors purchased experience gifts. Gift certificates and donations supported an array of activities such as cross country skiing, mini-golf, admission to local museums, pottery, and many more activities.

Many, many thanks to everyone for your generosity! Your support allowed kids at the Center to get out and about this winter. After-Schoolers explored the Fleming Museum and Catamount Family Center, played golf at Pizza Putt, went ice-skating at Leddy Park, rock-climbed at Petra Cliffs, and more. The teens also went ice-skating, explored the Catamount Family Center, had a pool party at the YMCA, and much more.

All of us at the Center appreciate your generous spirit of giving. Thank you for giving gifts that create opportunities, nurture abilities, and make memories!

Swinging into Summer

At the SHCC, we are looking forward to:
• Preschool Graduation; 4 little ones are moving on to kindergarten!
• Garden Camp at the SHCC beginning June 19th
• Summer camp and New Arrivals beginning on July 5th
• New Arrivals participants will again attend Shelburne Farms and Vermont Circus Academy thanks to the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust
• Fun, summer courses just for middle-schoolers at the New North End Youth Center
• Bob & Maggie Green Youth Adventure Camp; some grants are pending, but we are determined to have Burlington youth explore VT!
• A new special event, Night Golf! Nothing is more fun than chasing a glowing golf ball under the moonlight!

No Longer Under Construction

Learn more about upcoming events and the SHCC at our new website!
www.saraholbrookcc.org
Pop Quiz

The Sara Holbrook Community Center (SHCC) has been meeting the needs of the neighborhood for 69 years. During this time, a lot has happened—programs have evolved and grown, our location has changed, and many special people have contributed the Center’s success. Below is a short quiz to test your SHCC knowledge. Good luck!

1.) The Sara Holbrook Community Center was originally named the:
   A. Cherry Street Drop-In
   B. Holbrook Helpers Unit
   C. Burlington Nursery Center
   D. Burlington Community Center

2.) Sara Holbrook opened the Center in 1937; she modeled the Center based on her:
   A. work in English hospitals
   B. anthropological studies in Brazil
   C. experiences in settlement houses in New York City
   D. work in Canadian orphanages

3.) Minnie Blondin was the Executive Director of the Sara Holbrook Community Center for 32 years.
   A. True
   B. False

4.) Ducky Donath, a SHCC Board member, was awarded at 2006 Governor’s Award for Outstanding Volunteer Community Service for her:
   A. 15 years of service to the SHCC
   B. weekly cooking and baking activities with SHCC kids
   C. relentless fundraising efforts to support the SHCC
   D. All the above

5.) The New North End Youth Center first opened its doors to kids after-school in:
   A. 1993
   B. 1995
   C. 2000
   D. 2003

6.) Located in the Old North End of Burlington, the SHCC serves a neighborhood that constitutes the highest concentration of poverty in Burlington and the entire state of Vermont.
   A. True
   B. False

7.) In 1989, Mary Ann Blaisdell and her loyal recruits started the New Arrivals program to:
   A. help expecting women prepare for motherhood
   B. rescue abandoned kittens in Burlington
   C. teach refugee and immigrant children English
   D. nurture heirloom varieties of tomato plants

Answers:

1) D  2) C  3) A  4) D  5) B  6) A  7) C
College Connection: A Student’s Reflection

Alida Pannill-Siersma, a senior at the University of Vermont, interned at the SHCC for three months. An Anthropology Major at UVM, Alida has a profound interest in different cultures. After spending a day in the preschool, Alida knew the Center’s classroom was where she wanted to learn. Alida shared some thoughts about her experience with us:

“The Service Learning Internship is a program that is offered at the University of Vermont. This program allows students to serve their community while receiving credit toward graduation. I was originally drawn to this opportunity at the Sara Holbrook Community Center because it was a chance for me to get out of the classroom and explore a different side of Burlington.

I interned at the Sara Holbrook preschool. The preschool class is made up of a diverse group of young children from different backgrounds and different parts of the world. During my experience, I really became more attentive to the issues that people of all ages face when they are immersed into a new community and culture. Working with these children was an incredibly rewarding and valuable experience, as I was able to offer them service and support in many ways. Moving to a new community is a very emotional and overwhelming experience, especially to young children. My work at the Sara Holbrook preschool offered these children peer support at a time when they needed it the most and I was able to act as a positive role model at a vulnerable time in their lives.”

A Festival of Cultures: An International Exposition

On April 8th, nearly 800 people attended the Sara Holbrook Center’s premier event, A Festival of Cultures. The event was fantastic—music, dance, art, costumes, crafts, cultural demonstrations, henna art, ethnic foods, children’s activities, and more!

So many people generously gave their time, talents, and treasures to make the Festival a success. Thank you to everyone: performers, vendors, crafters, donors, volunteers, sponsors and community supporters! Your contributions made this event successful and memorable.

At the Center, we have received great reviews about the Festival of Cultures. We look forward to hosting the event again next year. Again, many thanks!
Check out more Festival pictures at our website: www.saraholbrookcc.org