

# MAR VISTA FAMILY CENTER NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009

## NEW YOUTH CENTER UNVEILED!

Mar Vista Family Center celebrated its anticipated Grand Opening of the Everychild Foundation Youth Center on Saturday, March 14th. After waiting patiently for 10 years, the By Youth For Youth program was thrilled to finally have its own space to operate all of its educational and leadership activities. The new facility will host



Jacqueline Caster, Founder and President of Everychild Foundation, speaks at the ceremony.

most of the existing youth and other community programs, which include after school tutoring, the community café, and a computer lab,

as well as giving way to countless opportunities for new activities in all program areas.

Community residents, Board members, staff members, and public officials along with members of the Everychild Foundation joined in the celebration as the new building was unveiled to a crowd of about 300 people. Local dignitaries in attendance in-



Councilmember Wendy Greuel greets guests after the Grand Opening ceremony.

cluded County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the keynote speaker for the event, Councilmember Wendy Greuel. Also in attendance were representatives from each of the offices of Congresswoman Diane Watson, Congresswoman Jane Harman, Assemblymember Ted Lieu, Mayor Antonio Vilaraigosa, and Councilmember Bill Rosendahl.

## MISSION STATEMENT

*Mar Vista Family Center provides low-income families with quality early childhood education, youth enrichment, and educational tools to create positive change in their lives and their communities.*

### Key:

**MVFC** = Mar Vista Family Center

**BYFY** = By Youth For Youth Leadership group

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## FINESHRIBER FAMILY FOUNDATION TO MATCH \$300,000 IN GRANTS

As the economy has declined, many families in our community have lost jobs, are living in overcrowded apartments, and are facing increased violence. We know that these negative influences

can pressure youths to turn to gangs and other anti-social behaviors. Mar Vista Family Center's programs encourage children and youth to develop realistic visions and the skills to take responsibility for life

decisions, to reject feelings of powerlessness, to advocate for what they want and to become responsible community citizens. Mar Vista has a waiting list of more than 300 youths who are hoping to participate

(Fineshriber continued on p. 5)



## A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Friends,

It has been a year of struggles but I also think that it has been a year of learning, a year to create awareness, consciousness, and to make decisions. In hard times, everybody must make tough choices in our organizations to balance our lives and our budgets while protecting our families and the public well-being.

A year ago when we began hearing about changes in the economy, like many, I did not know what was going to happen. What I did know is that I needed to make changes that were not going to be easy for me or anyone else.

We all know that in hardships many turn to extended families, neighbors, faith groups, food banks, and other community resources. I was glad that I was able to turn to my extended family at Mar Vista Family Center. Children, youth, parents, staff and board members supported me by volunteering, cleaning, painting, fundraising, tutoring, teaching, mentoring, and training others. I truly appreciated all those individuals who have been working side by side and continue to survive during these difficult times.

I am especially grateful to our founders who have always been there to provide me with the tools that help create positive experiences from negative situations.

I have learned that tough times influence the way decisions are made. This is not the time to feel sorry for ourselves and our situations, but rather a time to grow and acknowledge those who are supporting us to survive and make things work.

I would like to give a special thanks to the Fineshriber Family Foundation for the matching grant as it gave us the opportunity to hire Lisa Daggett as our new Chief Development Officer. I would like to welcome Lisa to Mar Vista Family Center in her new role within the Center's leadership. We are confident that with Lisa's strong development skills we will be able to match this grant and guarantee the long-term sustainability and growth at Mar Vista.

Sincerely,

Lucía Díaz  
Chief Executive Officer



## MVFC WELCOMES THE NEW CHAIRWOMAN OF THE BOARD

Dear Friends,

I am thrilled to be addressing you as the new Chair of Mar Vista Family Center's Board of Directors. My story is typical of many Mar Vista volunteers – it took just one visit to recognize how effectively Mar Vista was empowering and uplifting an entire community. In my case, as a Marketing Consultant, I accompanied a client who was interested in providing a significant contribution to Mar Vista's Capital Campaign. We spent time visiting Mar Vista's Preschool, observing the incredibly happy children, meeting their moms and dads—who were working as volunteer teachers, and hearing about Mar Vista's "Shared Responsibility Curriculum" from the preschool staff. And, as if that wasn't enough, CEO Lucia Diaz then took us to visit the highly effective youth and community programs. It was obvious that this small center had figured out how to inspire the children and adults of the community to dream a better life and then achieve it. I knew this was an organization that I wanted to support. (And, luckily, so did my client.)

To this day, the good work of Mar Vista Family Center has never ceased to amaze me. Mar Vista is one of the most uplifting and positive places I know. At any time of the day, Mar Vista is abuzz with activity and enrichment. There are parents and babies learning how to bond with each other, preschoolers and parents developing communication skills, children developing problem solving skills, and teens learning how to take leadership while also learning how to write an effective college application essay.

As Chair of the Board, I am excited to be working with a very dedicated board, with talents ranging from Finance to Law to Entertainment. Together, we roll up our sleeves to get the job done, whether it is serving hot dogs at the annual Literacy Fair or soliciting contributions to the Capital Campaign. For all of us our work is a "labor of love" and we are very committed to Mar Vista's mission.

The future is very bright for Mar Vista, although there is much more work to be done. Our Board is ready for the challenge, as Mar Vista continues to make a life-changing difference in our community.

Respectfully,

Susan Rosenblum  
Chair, Board of Directors





## WELCOME NEW CHAIR AND BOARDMEMBERS!

There have been many organizational changes within MVFC since the beginning of 2009. Our dedicated and positive Board of Directors has welcomed new members while undergoing a transition of multiple positions. Mar Vista Family Center's families, youth, and community would like to welcome Susan Rosenblum to her new position (Chair), and Halleh Rabizadeh, Esq., Kristina Deutsch, and

H. Allen Evans as the newest Board members.

In addition to the new Board members, Mar Vista Family Center is pleased to have actress Belita Moreno (George Lopez Show) as the newest member of MVFC's Advisory Board. Mar Vista would also like to thank past Board chairs Ronnie Avedon and Beth Farb for their continued service and dedication to MVFC's mission.

## BETTY'S DREAM

Thirty-three years after its founding, Mar Vista Family Center continues to grow in capacity, programs, families served, and youth leaders. Along the way there have been many supporters who believe in Mar Vista's mission, making contributions at all levels financially or through volunteering their services. MVFC is grateful for all who have had a hand in the

success and continued growth of the Center.

However, none of this could have been possible without MVFC founder and visionary Betty Factor. Betty had a major role in guiding MVFC to its accomplishments and paved the way for reaching one of her bigger dreams—the new Youth Center which is now a reality. Thank you Betty!

## TO SPEAK OR NOT TO SPEAK

Mar Vista Family Center's newest Advisory Board member, Belita Moreno, gave a workshop on Public Speaking to MVFC staff. With a background in acting, on stage and on film, Belita has the experience and accolades of a successful acting coach, which she does when she is not in front of a camera. Her other passion is getting involved in her community which she has now accomplished through her advisory role as Artistic Consultant at MVFC.

Belita began the morning with exercises that were calming and relaxing



Belita leads an activity with Lazaro during the workshop.

before getting into activities, like face stretches, to help loosen up the staff. Staff members were able to express their personal feelings on public

speaking, while also reflecting on their own experience at the center.

Belita shared a few methods to help the staff members deliver a speech that was more balanced, while maintaining constant eye contact with the audience. With this in mind, the staff were able to put this advice into practice when each staff member was allowed to share their Mar Vista experience. All MVFC staff members are excited to have Belita on the Advisory Board and anxious to see the creativity she adds to the organization.

## SPARK-ING INTEREST IN READING

Through a partnership with City Scholars, the Los Angeles Sparks participated in the first Pitney Bowes Fast Break to Reading event of the 2009 WNBA season. On June 23rd, Sparks rookie Lindsay Wisdom-Hylton visited MVFC to read the book *The Real Slam Dunk* by Charisse K. Richardson to 50

children (3rd-5th graders) from the community.

Upon finishing the book, the children were asked questions about the story and were rewarded with Sparks gear when answered correctly. All the children received gift bags from the program that included a

Sparks t-shirt, school supplies, and 2 tickets to a June 28th Sparks home game versus the Seattle Storm.

The Fast Break To Reading program supports literacy and education in local communities and encourages youth nationwide to read for 1 million minutes.



LA Sparks Rookie Lyndsay Wisdom-Hylton reads to children



## SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY FOR GRANDMOTHERS

Grandmothers from the community were treated to an elaborate lunch at Mar Vista Family Center by the Commission for Children, Youth and their Families (CCYF) in partnership with the office of District 11 Councilmember Bill Rosendahl. The grandmothers were given special recognition during a ceremony that acknowledged the time they commit to caring for their grandchildren and for playing important roles in the child's early education.



A few of the grandmothers enjoying lunch.

CCYF provided the grandmothers with gift bags and Certificates of Recognition for their hard work and dedication to

their children and grandchildren.

The luncheon opened up with dialogue about starting and organizing a Senior Program at MVFC, which would include craft classes among other activities. Many of the grandmothers in attendance displayed a keen interest in the ideas mentioned and they have already made preparations to form committees by early winter.

## GIVING WAY TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

On May 8th the Commission on the Status of Women, in collaboration with the Office of Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, held a clothing drive for women of all ages from the Mar Vista Family Center community. The Clothing Give-Away was held at Mar Vista Family Center was created to support underserved women with appropriate clothing for job interviews and other important professional opportunities. The clothing



Women of the community searching for the right outfit.

drive allowed 140 women to choose from different styles, sizes, accessories and brand names that had been donated by women all across Los Angeles. One college-bound

participant was appreciative of the program because it allowed her to find professional clothing for her upcoming scheduled interviews.

The program was a success and it was evident through the amount of

clothes that were being selected by younger and older women alike. Mar Vista Family Center thanks the Commission on the Status of Women and Councilmember Rosendahl's Office for providing the women of MVFC's community with the opportunity to be comfortable and prepared in their professional endeavors.



Imelda finding the perfect fit.

## PRESCHOOL PARENTS RETURN TO SACRAMENTO FOR ADVOCACY DAY

Thanks to California Community Foundation for creating the opportunity for MVFC parents to attend Early Learning Advocacy Day at the State Capitol on June 9th of this year. Five parents with children in the MVFC preschool program made the trip north and had the opportunity to

talk with a representative from Assemblymember Ted Lieu's staff.

Each parent was able to share their personal experience with the Center and the importance of parents getting involved in the child's education starting at an early stage of their lives. They

also expressed how high of a need there is for programs that promote parent involvement in early childhood education in the Mar Vista Family Center community along with the resources to continue outreach and advocating for parent involvement.



## FINESHRIBER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

in these life-affirming and life-changing programs. To include those youths, the Fineshriber Family Foundation has challenged us with a matching grant. Your gift today will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$300,000. With your help, 900 children and teens – a 50% increase above the 600 current participants – will be given the opportunity to receive quality educa-

tional instruction and academic assistance; enrichment programs that focus on personal growth, community leadership, and education; and a sense of shared responsibility for their community and the environment they live in.

The Fineshriber Family Foundation focuses on underserved children and families and carefully selects the organizations that it supports.

The Foundation conducts a thorough vetting process, inviting only the grant candidates that have the greatest positive impact and ability to sustain their programs. Following several site visits and previous grants, the Foundation recognizes that Mar Vista's programs, and its model of community building and shared responsibility, are exemplary.

(Fineshriber continued on page 8)

## A FAMILIAR SOUND FOR AN UPLIFTING SIGHT

On Sunday May 3rd, Mar Vista Family Center successfully hosted its third celebration of the Annual Sights & Sounds of DJ Dusk Festival on a scenic Southern California Sunday afternoon. The event was held in the new courtyard of the recently completed youth center with the new building serving as a backdrop for those in attendance to witness the progress MVFC has made in its 33 years of operation. The event celebrated the life of Tarek "DJ Dusk" Capitan, a former youth mentor and college prep advisor at MVFC, by integrating his passions for music, art, and youth empowerment within this community and around Los Angeles.



BYFY member Braulio jams out for the crowd. Photo courtesy of Azul 213.

The festival featured live music from local musicians Alex Painter and Ray Ricky Rivera, cumbia band Buyepongo, and hip hop from Aesthetics Crew. In between bands,

various DJs from the Los Angeles music scene played selections that were not only eclectic, but represented the genres of music that the late DJ Dusk loved to play in his day as one of LA's most coveted DJs.

Throughout the duration of the event, 3pm-8pm, approximately 200 people filled up the courtyard and engaged in multiple activities that included a DJ workshop, a story room where guests were invited to record their favorite stories of the late DJ Dusk, and an altar honoring our celebrated mentor with photos, art, collages, and articles. Many of the guests in attendance indulged in the fresh food from the booths that the youth program and preschool program used for fundraising purposes, serving homemade tacos, sopes, taquitos, fruit cocktails, and aguas frescas.

Thanks to generous donors like Mochilla

([www.mochilla.com](http://www.mochilla.com)) and Lather One Barber Shop, MVFC was able to raffle off gift baskets that included cd's from different artists including DJ Dusk's own album Top Ranking, dvd's like the recently released DJ Dusk Sound-clash and Brasilintime (Mochilla), and chocolate and soap designs by Hip Hop Chocolates. All the funds raised through the event have been directed towards furnishing the multimedia room and all creative arts programs that are currently in the planning process.

Now with three festivals in the books, MVFC hopes to build on the success that has been achieved to prepare for the 4th Annual Festival next year. With the help of The Captan Family ([induskwetrust.com](http://induskwetrust.com)) and friends, we can continue celebrating the life of DJ Dusk through our commitment to the community and the youth by empowering them with the tools to succeed.



Buyepongo performs live. Photo courtesy of Azul 213.



BYFY members dance to the music of DJ Sloepoke. Photo courtesy of Azul 213.

**Save the date for the next installment on May 2nd, 2010!**



## YOUTH EXPLORE LIFE'S CHANGES

Since the beginning of 2009, our country has seen many changes. With the recent inauguration of President Obama, new international policies, domestic economic disruption, and a new generation of students seeking higher education, today's youth are getting more involved in the new tides. On June 26-27, the By Youth For Youth group of Mar Vista Family Center held their 9<sup>th</sup> annual BYFY Confer-



Mike the Poet leads the Poetry Workshop.

ence in the newly opened Everychild Foundation Youth Center. Their goal was to discuss and understand the various perspectives of this year's theme, "Living Through Change." Throughout the day the youth participated in workshops that allowed them to explore and conquer many of these issues. The morning workshop focused on "Points of View" and it addressed the various definitions of personal ideas, respecting those ideas, and how through indirect and direct

### UCLA EXTENSION HONORS CEO

UCLA Extension presented Mar Vista Family Center CEO Lucía Díaz with the Professional Achievement Award during the Certificate Graduation Ceremony at Royce Hall in June. She



Youth working together during a team-building activity.

communication various negative messages can create stereotypes.

By the end, the youth made a personal promise to respect and understand the various points of view that exist within their social network. Additionally, the youth were given space to tap into their creative minds and explore the art of poetry with a special Poetry Workshop with help from local icon, Mike the Poet. The afternoon workshop, "Patterns, Pictures, & Myths," allowed the youth to open their minds and discuss long-held traditions within their families, culture, community, society, and within themselves to find new ways to positively move away from or work with patterns, points of view, and stereotypes.

The general workshop for all youth at the end of the day featured keynote speaker and actress, Belita Moreno (George Lopez Show).

was given the award for her impact in and around the MVFC community and for the leadership she has demonstrated since her days as a volunteer parent in MVFC's preschool to head

The youth were given the opportunity to ask her questions about her childhood experiences and her successful career. MVFC thanks Belita for sharing her time, knowledge, advice and laughs with the BYFY Conference participants.

The feedback received was positive and the theme "Living Through Change" was a great success. All the youth realized that even with the various changes happening within the community, state, nation and society, they can work with and make room for improvement. With these changes, the BYFY group's goals of personal development, education, and community leadership can and will be attained. Special thanks to the sponsors, and also to Mike the Poet, Belita Moreno, the staff and lastly the youth for participating.



Belita takes questions from the youth.

teacher, and now as CEO. As a UCLA Extension alumna, Lucía exemplifies the determination and personal growth it takes to achieve a dream. Congratulations Lucía!



## SEPPY'S SUMMER CAMP CELEBRATES 13TH YEAR!



One of the groups performs a dance at the closing ceremony.

With the demand of Seppy's Summer Camp on the rise due to the closures of other local programs, Mar Vista Family Center managed to fulfill the needs of the community by expanding camp enrollment to an all-time high of 130 campers, in addition to offering a summer group for 12 five year-olds. This group was created also to meet the needs of families in the community whose children were too old for preschool but not old enough to enroll in Seppy's Summer Camp.

Serving the increased number of participants would not have been possible without the support of the camp's funders and new partner, Sodexo-LMU (Loyola Marymount University). Prior to the beginning of camp, MVFC was put in direct communication with Sodexo-LMU to discuss the possibility of having breakfast and lunch meals provided by the company in-kind for the duration of the 6 week camp. Having completed its 13th year, MVFC was grateful and fortunate to have Sodexo-LMU as a sponsor for the summer, providing 200 breakfast and 200 lunch meals daily for all the children, including the 5 year olds, all 45 camp staff and volunteers.

Although the Summer Camp had never served breakfast before, MVFC estimated savings of approximately \$9,000 based off last year's expenses for lunch meals throughout the 6 week term. Having already demonstrated their generosity, the Sodexo-LMU team went above and beyond to catering to MVFC. During the last week of camp, the Director of Sodexo-LMU, the Executive Chef and his team of cooks came to MVFC to cook for all the campers, counselors, volunteers, camp staff, and MVFC staff. They grilled hot dogs and hamburgers and prepared an assortment of sides that included salads, baked goods, and drinks.

One of the new additions to this year's Summer Camp was the addition of yoga classes during the exercise/dance activity. Rosa Kooyman, longtime friend of MVFC's



Campers during a yoga session.

fallen mentor Tarek Capitan, felt it was her duty to give back to the place that her dear friend had dedicated so

much time to. She volunteered once a week for 3 weeks and taught yoga to the campers. There was a positive response from the children since it was a new activity and hopefully one they will take more interest in as they grow older.

With the recent downturn in the economy, in addition to the limited amount of grant funds available, the Summer Camp had to cut down

on weekly field trips. A special thanks to the parents who took action and were able to raise \$12,000 in 6 weeks to help cover trip costs and camp expenses. Extra thanks to the creativity of the camp



Sodexo-LMU serves up a BBQ for the Camp.

staff and volunteers who contributed an enormous amount of time into planning the extra-curricular activities. Together, they coordinated a Camp Carnival that included activities that mirrored those of large fairs with face painting, fortune telling, water balloon toss, knocking down stacked cans, and bobbing for apples amongst other things.

As tradition goes, the Closing Ceremony for this year's Summer Camp was not a disappointment, but rather a spectacle that featured the artistic talents and teamwork of the youth volunteers and staff that was put into designing each group's set and respective costumes. A perfect ending to a fantastic Summer!



Youth leaders lead an activity during staff training for camp.



## MAR VISTA FAMILY CENTER

5075 South Slauson Avenue  
Culver City, CA 90230

Phone: 310-390-9607  
Fax: 310-390-4888  
Email: [ldiaz@marvistafc.org](mailto:ldiaz@marvistafc.org)

WE'RE ON THE WEB

[WWW.MARVISTAFC.ORG](http://WWW.MARVISTAFC.ORG)

EMPOWERING FAMILIES FOR 33 YEARS!

### Dates to Remember:

- ◆ Dec. 9- Scholarship Fundraiser at Shakey's, 5604 S. Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City; 6pm-9pm
- ◆ Dec. 12- Community street clean-up, 8am-10am
- ◆ Dec. 14- Las Posadas, 6pm
- ◆ Dec. 21- Community Children's Christmas party, 12pm *(new, unwrapped toys needed for children ages 5-12; also requested this year are \$20 gift cards)*
- ◆ Dec. 22- Jan. 4- MVFC closed
- ◆ Jan. 30- Cash For College Event: 8:45am registration, last workshop at 2pm
- ◆ April 17- Literacy Fair, 10am-1pm
- ◆ May 2- 4th Annual Sights and Sounds of DJ Dusk Festival
- ◆ June 25-26- BYFY National Conference (for inquiries contact Blanca at 310-390-9607 ext. 115)

\*All events at MVFC unless noted

### FINESHRIBER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

"We see Mar Vista as the solution to gangs and school dropouts," says the Foundation's executive director, Marcia Antopol. "These kids are empowered. How many other youth programs result in no teen pregnancies? It's exciting to see the engagement of young people at the Center, designing and leading their own programs, helping each other. Many of the staff came up through the program and returned after college; they are terrific role models. Although we have not offered matching grants in the past, we decided to help assure that Mar Vista grows in this difficult economy, while the children and families it serves are becoming needier and more numerous. We hope the matching grant will encourage others to join in sustaining this worthy organization."

Please join the Fineshriber Family Foundation in making a difference in the lives of 900 young people - these children and teens are the future of our communities. You may use the enclosed envelope, make your donation online at [www.marvistafc.org](http://www.marvistafc.org) or call Lisa Daggett, Chief Development Officer, at 310-390-9607 x124.

### WISH LIST

#### Early Childhood Education Program:

- ◆ Reading books (big print)
- ◆ Soft building toys
- ◆ Small tables and chairs
- ◆ Music CD's (Spanish and English)
- ◆ Color chalk
- ◆ Age appropriate outside bench
- ◆ Blankets and cot sheets (nap time)
- ◆ Air conditioner condenser unit
- ◆ Air door fan for preschool entrance

#### Youth Program:

- ◆ Board games
- ◆ USB flash drives/memory sticks

- ◆ Glue (liquid)
- ◆ Printer ink (HP Laser Jet 1012, Dell 1110, Dell 1710n)
- ◆ Poster paper and poster paint
- ◆ Wall clocks
- ◆ Office trash cans
- ◆ SAT computer programs
- ◆ Computer tutorials- high school subjects
- ◆ Mini-DV camcorders & accessories

#### General:

- ◆ Easels and easel paper
- ◆ Bulletin boards
- ◆ White boards
- ◆ Boom boxes
- ◆ New or gently-used office/classroom chairs and desks