HFA launches Project Play

After enjoying a fun filled playdate at the new playground at Liberty State Park, Zabrina Stoffel and Regina Gannon had an idea. Why didn’t Hoboken have such a park? Both moms spent many days at Church Square Park and thought Hoboken should enjoy the same type of safe playground.

Gannon and Stoffel approached the City of Hoboken with their concept. Both the outgoing and incoming Director of Environmental Services met with them with open arms. A green light was given to solicit draft proposals. They learned about the latest in playground design including environmentally-sustainable building materials. The City Council’s Parks and Recreation sub-committee was impressed with all their work and encouraged them to keep moving forward. After multiple meetings with concerned parents and the community, Gannon and Stoffel learned that safer parks for Hoboken kids was a top priority.

So in October 2009, The HFA launched Project Play. As active members of HFA, Stoffel and Gannon were the obvious choice to lead this initiative to rebuild ailing sections of Hoboken’s public parks, starting with one of the most urgent needs: Church Square Park.

There are three sections of Church Square Park to address: (1) the center wooden structure designated for 5-12 year olds (2) the wooden structure along 4th Street designated for 2-5 year olds and (3) the swing area along 4th Street.

HFA’s Project Play is off to a great start however there is still a long road ahead. A concept needs to be presented to City Council by the Parks and Recreation sub-committee. If there is agreement, it will be presented at a public meeting. Upon approval, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be sent to several playground equipment providers.

To fund the project, HFA’s Project Play will approach individuals, businesses, and foundations for donations as well as solicit grants. While fundraising in this economic environment is an enormous challenge, HFA is confident that Hoboken is ready.

Stoffel said that “as members of an amazing community of families and friends, we saw this as an opportunity to mobilize and make a difference making Hoboken an even better place to live and raise a family.” HFA is thrilled to kick off the effort and has made a leadership donation of $10,000 toward the goal.

Here is where you, our members, can get involved. HFA’s Project Play needs marketing, further research, advertising, accounting, bake sales and most of all, your participation in the events. For more information or to volunteer, please contact HobokenProjectPlay@gmail.com.

HFA Holiday Celebration

Come celebrate itchy snowsuits, loud sneezes and snow this holiday season. Join us for a Winter Wonderland Show featuring Erin Lee & Marci and holiday treats served afterwards.

Date: Friday, December 18th
Time: 4:00pm
Location: Club H, 110 Sinatra Drive, Hoboken
Cost: Free to all HFA families, $5 suggested donation for non-HFA children

For information on Erin Lee & Marci, visit www.gotaplay.org

Note: Stroller parking will be limited so be prepared with carriers and locks.

In the spirit of giving, HFA will be collecting children’s pajamas and bedtime books to Pajama Program, our annual holiday drive. To donate, bring a new pair of pajamas and book to donate at the event.

This is our second year in this undertaking and we hope to donate even more than last year. All donations will distributed to local Hudson County families for the holiday season. For information on Pajama Program, visit www.pajamaprogram.org.

If you have questions, contact Heather Khazen at hthomas29@yahoo.com.

Special thanks for the HFA Swap Meet

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2009 Fall Swap Meet. As usual, thousands of items were brought to St. Matthew Trinity Church to swap or donate. People went home with items ranging from a few pieces of clothing to strollers and exersaucers. The event went smoothly with special thanks to our Steven’s Institute of Technology volunteers, who worked diligently for hours sorting, folding and organizing the event.

An extra special thank you to all attendees who brought their items neatly bagged and labeled and to all of you who willingly put out your items in the appropriate locations. This effort truly helps keep the event running smoothly.

Finally, thank you to Primetime Learning Centers for allowing us to use their space as a drop off location.

In the end, many HFA members found some great bargains, and we were able to donate hundreds of items to charity and help build the HFA Philanthropy Fund with the event proceeds. The HFA Swap Meet is a true community event because of your participation and support.
Changes to Hoboken Special Needs Education

by Theresa Howard

Exciting changes for Hoboken students with special needs are on their way as the district and parents advocate for greater inclusionary programs, increased training for aides and better transition for children as they advance through school.

At the October 13 Board of Education meeting, the school board approved the appointment of Dr. Pamela D. Straker as Acting Interim Supervisor of Instruction for Special Education. She will work primarily with the “Teacher of the Handicapped” staff at the schools to strengthen their skills with respect to parental support and knowledge. Dr. Straker will further assist the teachers with knowledge of the special ed child.

As part of a curriculum Subcommittee overseen by board member Ruth McAllister, parents of general education and special education students are invited to provide feedback and concerns at the meeting held every third Thursday of the month at the Board of Education building. One of the top priorities is to solicit feedback and ideas on ways for the district to appropriate expected funds of more than $300,000 as part of the Federal Recovery Act. Other priorities include: inclusion and aide’s training.

“We really need to work on an inclusion framework and to bring all the classes on par with the quality of inclusive instruction that is available in Kim Tarabochia’s class,” says Mirnua Stratan, whose son attends an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Kindergarten class at Wallace School. “We need to reach parents and work together creatively on every child’s objectives.”

Additionally, the district is in the organizing phase of a Parent Advisory Group for parents of children with special needs. Under a code for district eligibility for assistance under I.D.E.A. Part B (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), “each district Board of Education shall ensure that a special education Parent Advisory Group is in place in the district to provide input to the district on issues concerning students with disabilities.”

Candace Stout, who oversees special education at Hoboken Charter School, is leading the charge to create the advisory council and met recently with parents to help shape the group, its mission and volunteers. You will hear more about it at an upcoming Board of Education meeting.

If you are interested in additional information regarding education for your special needs child, contact Theresa Howard at thoward315@gmail.com

Pedestrian Safety

By Theresa Howard

If you think some pedestrian walkways look brighter and walk signs flash longer, you may be noticing the first visible signs of pedestrian safety initiatives under community policing approach. In a community policing philosophy, police officers walk the beats of their neighborhood in order to have a better pulse on the issues and concerns of those blocks.

In an effort to clamp down on reckless drivers and in some cases pedestrians, the Hoboken Police Department under Chief Anthony Falco has increased ticket writing for parking and moving violations, added message boards that clock vehicle speeds, applied for grants and will soon introduce more initiatives designed to improve pedestrian safety around town. The city is expected to receive a $500 grant for teen safety.

“We’re moving forward,” said Chief Falco, who is hosting meet and greet sessions around town to speak with Hoboken citizens about safety concerns. As part of a survey conducted by the Hoboken Police Department on Quality of Life concerns – pedestrian safety is the top issue. (To be a part of the survey, take the survey at hobokenfamily.com.)

One recent meet and greet was coordinated by Councilman Peter Cunningham, who advocates for stronger education and enforcement. “The fact we are one square mile and walkable, our emphasis should be on community policing to educate and enforce and traffic controls such as painted lines, stanchions on corners to improve visibility and notice boards,” says Cunningham.

In September the police department issued 120 speeding tickets and more than 800 moving violations. A significant increase over the same month a year ago.
Sharing Thanksgiving with the Library
By Lois Gross – Hoboken Public Library

Thanksgiving is coming. You’ll be planning menus or making travel plans. Your children will be bringing home the traditional handprint turkey. As you bustle through your plans for the holiday season, schedule a stop at the Hoboken Public Library.

Sometimes, as a parent, it may seem easiest to do the holiday preparations yourself, but making your children part of the planning will make the day extra special. You might start the process by borrowing some kids’ cookbooks and having your child contribute a dish to the holiday table.

• Be your child’s sous chef, doing all the prep work, but having your child plan, mix and measure will demonstrate that math and science have very practical applications in everyday life.

• Paula Deen’s My First Cookbook might awaken the inner chef in your child.

• Rachael Ray’s Cooking Rocks includes child-appealing recipes for the fussiest gourmand-in-training.

Are you leaving town for the holiday? The library’s collection of destination books will prepare your child for the trip, whether it’s to the next town or grandma’s condo in Boca Raton. Learning a little New Jersey lore is a great way to prepare for a local destination. For example, one of my favorite newly acquired books may be more appropriate for Halloween than for Thanksgiving, but it is a great bit of New Jersey folklore. The Jersey Devil by Shirley Raye Redmond is about the creature that allegedly lived (or lives!) in the Pine Barrens of South Jersey, stealing livestock and scaring colonial residents. When I was a child in Pennsylvania, our Thanksgiving trips to my South Jersey relatives were always a little spookier with the possibility that the Jersey Devil might be lurking in the dark woods.

Do you share “what are you thankful for” thoughts at the dinner table on Thanksgiving? How about substituting with a new tradition, a poem or a story about the holiday. The library has several versions of Over the River and Through the Woods, the most traditional of Thanksgiving poems. You might also find a poem for sharing in Thanksgiving Stories and Poems by Caroline Bauer.

The Hoboken Public Library has some closing days, during November. The library will be closed November 3 for Election Day, November 11 for Veterans Day, and November 26 through 30 for Thanksgiving. Plan your trips to the library around those days.

However you celebrate the holiday, remember the library is an excellent resource for family sharing and should be on everyone’s list of things for which to be grateful.

On Wednesday, October 7th, Sofie, a therapy dog and Connie Shannon, her trainer, enjoyed books read to them by local children. Photographed here: (left to right) Luca Conetta, Lily Conetta and Sonia Petrocelli. Sofie will be at the library the third Wednesday of each month at 3pm beginning on November 18, 2009.

Join Us for a Very Special Day of Reading

Saturday, Nov. 21 at 11 A.M.
Symposia Book Store 510 Washington St., Hoboken NJ
Dedicated to Children with Special Needs But Open to All

Hudson Psychiatric Associates, LLC

Hudson Thanks to Our Gold Level Sponsors

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Quick and Easy Thanksgiving Tips
by Liz and Anthony Pino, Anthony David’s

Make feeding friends and family simpler this Thanksgiving, follow these tips:

Planning ahead is always the best method

Preparing sides days in advance

- Make your secret stuffing, your grandmother’s famous yams with marshmallows, cauliflower au gratin, even your appetizers and antipasti in advance so that you can spend time making your turkey that day. Or better yet, pick up your pre order crave turkey and sides from Anthony David’s.

Tricks to save time

- Cook your turkey and stuffing separate. When your turkey is unstuffed, the heat penetrates from the inside and out and reduces cooking time by 30%.

- For your stuffing, mix all your ingredients the same as you would for the turkey but this time, your going to pack it down into a baking tray about 2 1/2 inch thick. Cover with aluminum, foil then half way through cooking time remove foil until golden brown.

- Make a pasta dish that can be served easily. Pumpkin Tortellini or Penne Rigate with Carbonara Sauce. Make sauce the day before and store in a container. On Thanksgiving, reheat the sauce 20 minutes before serving, cook pasta, strain and toss. Serve family style, this will keep everyone in the family involved and hint back to old world style.

- If you are really busy, just go to www.anthonydavids.com and let Anthony David’s take care of the rest.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Kids Eat Free

The suburbs aren’t the only places with restaurants offering special kid-friendly deals.

Bin 14 Trattoria Wine Bar
1314 Washington St
(201) 963-9463
Children, 10 and under, eat free at Bin 14’s Saturday and Sunday Brunch from 9:00am – 11:00am. Brunch is served from 9:00am – 3:00pm.

Elysian Café
1001 Washington Street
(201)798-5898
www.elysiancafe.com
On Tuesdays, kids eat free at the Elysian Cafe all night with the purchase of any adult entrée. (Up to two children, 12 and under, per adult can choose dinner from the children’s menu.)

Little Grocery
214 Jefferson Street
(201) 610-9220
www.littlegrocery.com
Children eat free at the Little Grocery’s Buffet Supper on Thursday. The buffet is $17.95 per person and BYOB. Other days, children eat for $7.95.

Trinity
306 Sinatra Drive
(201) 533-4446
www.hobokentrinity.com
Children, 12 and under, eat free on Family Night on Monday. Limit of two children per adult food purchase. Dine-in only.

By Lexi Coen
Philanthropy Drives Benefiting Hudson County Children

by Michele Hulsman

Helping those in our community who are in need this holiday season is an opportunity for us to make a difference in a child’s life. In fulfilling HFA’s mission, we hope to provide comfort and love to needy children by creating a warm and nurturing environment.

This holiday season we are offering two giving opportunities:

**Pajama and Book Program**

HFA is joining the Pajama Program to collect new pajamas and new books for homeless and needy children.

By providing pajamas and books, we are helping to create a warm and nurturing bedtime environment for vulnerable children and young adults living under difficult circumstances. The Pajama Program, a 501 (c) (3) charity, provides new pajamas and books to disadvantaged children, many of whom are waiting and hoping to be adopted. Many of these youngsters have been abused or abandoned and in many cases, have never enjoyed the simple comfort of having a loving mother or father tuck them in at bedtime. Through the Pajama Program, we hope to contribute to a warmer, more loving environment for these children.

Pajamas must be new and unused for all sizes, infant to 17. www.pajamaprogram.org

**Toy Drive**

Toy donations can bring a smile to the face of a Hudson County child on Christmas morning. HFA hopes this event to bring something special to the children and are asking that all donated gifts be new and unwrapped. Toys will be collected for ages infant to 17.

Any donation of any size brings holiday cheer for a child who may otherwise not have received any gifts. The items are often given to families who cannot afford to buy presents, so the children can open a gift that is given to them by a loved one, not a charity.

**How to Donate:**

Both drives will run concurrently and have the same drop off locations:

**When:** Friday, November 13th – Friday, December 17th

**Where:** Drop off items at three Hoboken locations.

**Downtown:** Club H, 110 Sinatra Drive (Hours: 7:00am – 7:00pm)

**Midtown:** Big Fun Toys, 602 Washington Street (Hours: 11:00am – 7:00pm)

**Uptown:** New York Sports Club, 210 14th Street (Hours: 7:00am – 7:00 pm)

Thank you. HFA truly appreciates your generosity this holiday season.

The first birthday party of the 2009 school year at the Jubilee Center was quite well received. As usual, the children enjoyed this special event as a highlight to September. The Jubilee Center’s Enrollment is up to 99 children, with plenty of new faces enjoying the pizza, smiley face cupcakes, Make-Your-Own-Puzzle craft and games. HFA donated Target gift cards to all of the children with birthdays in August and September.

Special Thanks to:
- Margaretta’s for donating pizza for this and future birthday parties
- Cindy Altberger for making smiley face cupcakes
- Cindy Altberger, Lynn Cortese, and Alexis Cortese who created and helped the children with Make-Your-Own-Puzzle craft and games
- Tracey Gavant, Lynn Cortese, Colleen Nguyen, Alexis Estremera for donating festive tablecloths, cups, and plates and party decorations.

The October party was October 23 and the theme was Harry Potter/Halloween. The next birthday party is Friday, November 13 from 3:00pm - 5:30pm and the theme is “traditional” birthday party with Pin the Tail on the Donkey and other fun games. At this party, children will be making birthday cake tissue paper ornaments.

Donations Needed:
- Pin the Tail on the Donkey-type games (about 6)
- Tacky glue
- Brightly colored disposable plates, cups, napkins and tablecloths
- Smarties candies (about 80 pieces)

In addition, The Jubilee Center needs paper and/or disposable plates and cups on an ongoing basis so they can serve dinner to the children daily. If you can help with this, please let Colleen Castle know at ccastle34@gmail.com
November Craft Project

By Marta Cirilli, Smocks and Giggles

Crayola Iron Leaf
Children decorate their own dazzling sun catchers as they get into the spirit of fall.

What You Will Need:
- Old Crayons
- Yarn to hang leaf
- Scissors
- Cheese grater or vegetable peeler
- Iron
- Wax paper

How To:
- Cut two large leaves out of wax paper.
- Use a cheese grater or vegetable peeler to grate red, yellow, and orange crayons. This is a great way to get rid of old worn out crayons.
- Place a wax paper leaf on the table and encourage children to sprinkle the crayon shavings onto the leaf.
- Place the other wax paper leaf on top. On a low setting, place the iron over the leaf for about 10 seconds.
- Poke a hole at the top of the leaf, thread with yarn.
- Display your new sun catchers in a sunny window.

Hand Tree Project
Help your child create their very own fall tree with either pre-cut leaves or leaves they find outside. This project can be a bit messy but truly fun for everyone.

What You Will Need:
- Construction Paper - 9” x 12”
- Art Tissue Paper or actual leaves
- Glue
- Heavy-Duty Brushes

How To:
- Prepare in advance by cutting 1” squares out of orange, red, and yellow tissue paper or let the children collect leaves on your next walk.
- Paint each child’s palm and lower arm with washable brown paint. Then, have each child press his hand and arm onto a sheet of yellow construction paper (this will be the tree). If your child is not interested in painting his/her hand, simple outline their arm and let them color it in.
- Encourage children to decorate their trees with colorful leaves made of the crumpled tissue paper squares or leaves collected from outside.

UPDATE: New Parks Development
by Laura Burkhart

In conjunction with our October newsletter’s survey of new parks development, Hoboken Family Alliance sent a letter to our City Government representatives (Mayor and City Council Members) urging them to make new parks a priority.

Thank you to Mayor Dawn Zimmer, Councilman Peter Cunningham, and Councilwoman Carol Marsh for responding to our inquiries. They all indicated that they are committed to securing more parkland for Hoboken and will update us as they make progress.
The purpose of the Hoboken Family Alliance is to improve the Hoboken Community and its way of life through the efforts of individual and family volunteers. The HFA focuses its efforts on education and parenting issues, philanthropy, children’s resources and events.

Additional Hoboken Family Alliance contacts:
For adoptive families: Lynn Danzker lynnt@thehuntergroupllc.com
For volunteering with HFA: Elissa Brachfeld elissabrachfeld@gmail.com