

Bay Area Women's & Children's Center

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A Short Update from BAWCC

Summer, 2014

It's been a while since I've updated you on some of our Bay Area Women's & Children's Center's programs, so I thought this would be a good time to catch you up on some of what BAWCC has been up to lately.

Library Program: BAWCC continues to staff the Library at Tenderloin Community School as we have since the school opened 16 years ago. Because BAWCC provides a librarian at the school, this doubles our library staff so our students are able to have a library class every week. This is not the case with most public schools who have to share librarians with other schools. BAWCC's library staff teaches all of the kindergartners, first graders and third graders (200 students every week). BAWCC's and the SFUSD's librarians at the school work closely together to ensure that the children are learning important skills and concepts in their classes including research techniques and library skills.

This past year, **BAWCC sponsored our second annual Authors' & Illustrators' Day** at the school. This special day is organized by BAWCC staff and one of our BAWCC Advisory Board members, Elissa Haden Guest, a well-known children's book author. This past year's event was even better than the first! We had five additional authors join us for the day (making sixteen). Our authors are a wonderfully diverse group representing different cultures from around the world. We love it when our children get to meet and learn from women and men who come from some of the same countries that they came from! We have already chosen a date for our Authors' Day this year. It will be on October 1st, and since everyone who came last year said they were coming back this school year, we are very excited that this year there will be enough authors & illustrators to have one working with students in each classroom at the school!

The Dental Clinic: The Dental Clinic that BAWCC sponsors in partnership with UCSF's Pediatric Dentistry Division is doing all that we hoped it would do when we created it 12 years ago. By reconfiguring the staffing 3 years ago, we have greatly increased the number of patients we are able to treat each school year. This year, we completed 1,370 procedures in the Clinic. (This nearly doubled the number of procedures per year from several years ago!)

In our June meeting to de-brief the school year, Dr. Ling Zahn, our Clinic's supervising dentist from UCSF, told us that the residents always complete a satisfaction survey of their pediatric dental residencies at the end of each year at UCSF. This year, they all ranked their work at the Dental Clinic at Tenderloin Community School at the very top. We were all very pleased to hear this. UCSF is very happy to be providing this excellent opportunity for their residents. With the volume of low-income students they work on, not only is it extremely gratifying for the dentists, but they get a great amount of clinical experience, and much-needed dental work is completed for so many of our young students!

Here's just one story of a student who visited our Dental Clinic this year: Michael J., like many of our other kindergartners, had a mouth-full of cavities the first time our dentists saw him. Michael is a young kindergartner, and he looks even younger--he is tiny. He was also very dental and needle phobic when he first came to the Clinic. Since our Clinic staff always makes sure to call and connect with the students' parents the week before their scheduled visits, they were able to talk with Michael's mom before his first visit. She was great! She said that she would come for every visit, which she did. The only problem was that in the beginning, she was as nervous as Michael, which didn't help calm Michael down. Our staff is so good at working with nervous children and parents that by the second visit, things had greatly improved, and by the third visit, things were going very smoothly with Michael. By Michael's 5th and final visit to have the work done on his 13 cavities, Michael fell asleep in the dental chair!

Our New Technology Program: This year, we made a big shift in BAWCC's Technology Program. Since the school opened in 1998, we've had a Computer Center staffed by BAWCC, and all of the students had a weekly or bi-weekly lesson with our staff there. As we reported to you last year, after many school visits to Bay Area elementary schools on the cutting edge technology, we decided to switch our program to an iPad Program. Then, we started seeking donations to purchase iPads for every student at the school. So far, BAWCC has been able to purchase 50 iPads and two charging/sync carts through donations. These are currently being shared by the 380 students in all of the grade levels. Our goal is to have one iPad for each student to use at the school. Needless to say, the students are ecstatic to be using the iPads, and by the end of the year, even the teachers who had started out as the most skeptical of this new program were on board!

The iPads offer a wide array of applications and offer much versatility at the elementary level. Students can take photos, videos, record audio, create books, publish essays, search the Internet, and so much more, all from one portable device. This year we just began to scrape the surface of how we can use these devices. As we used the iPads more and more in the classrooms, more teachers started saying, "You know, these are great, but they'd be even better if I had some that could just stay in my classroom!" You know the wheels are spinning when teachers are asking for technology! These devices are so straightforward and powerful. It is our goal at BAWCC to not only have iPads available for every student at the school, but to provide staff assistance for teachers to use the iPads to enhance their curricular work. BAWCC's Tech Coordinator's mantra is "If you can dream it, you can do it! Teachers can think of a part of their curriculum in which they would like to utilize technology, and 99% of the time it is possible."

One of the more subtle positive aspects of the iPads is student-ownership. Students feel like they are in charge of and have responsibility for these devices. We can tell by how many students we have heard remind other students to “carry it like a library book!” or all of the students reminding each other to put away their water bottles so they won’t accidentally spill on the iPads! This sense of ownership and pride is always a positive, but particularly with our student population here in the Tenderloin. Many of our students do not have even a small a space in their home that they get to be responsible for. We love seeing our students feel like they are an important part of something to the point that they are so respectful and responsible.

One student’s story: This year, even students who really struggled to show respect for our community found themselves enamored by the iPads. One of these students, Tyrese, is a special education student at the school. This year was particularly challenging for him. The teachers and staff thought that he felt scared for much of this year because he was in fifth grade and he didn’t want to lose his school family and a place in his life that felt stable and supportive. One afternoon our Tech Coordinator, Emmie, was updating the iPads using our sync-charge cart. Tyrese was escorted to BAWCC’s Family Room for a cool-down time where Emmie was working. He was not having a good day, but he seemed to be calming down quickly. He started to wander around the room. He walked over and turned the power off on the sync-charge cart, not knowing what it was. Emmie calmly told Tyrese that he had shut the power off, and that she was going to have to start all over on updating the iPads. He apologized, very politely, and she said that she could tell from his reaction that he was very sorry for what he had done. This might seem like a very small or even unimportant moment, but a moment like this of positivity and connection was so important for Tyrese. Emmie says that she believes that this connection for Tyrese had to do with his desire to have the iPads working and ready to go at our school.

Outreach Study/Survey of Tenderloin Children, Youth & Family Issues: 3,500 children live in the Tenderloin. Our community has come a long way in addressing children’s needs since BAWCC opened in 1981, but we still have a long way to go! During the past year, BAWCC has worked hard to prepare for the launching of our new Outreach Study/Survey on Tenderloin Children, Youth & Family Issues. 25 years ago, our Survey of neighborhood parents led to BAWCC’s initiating the effort to get the 400-student, k-5th grade Tenderloin Community School built. It’s now time to go back to the community and ask our parents and others who live and work in the Tenderloin where the gaps in services and programs are for our children, youth and families.

As we did with our first neighborhood-wide Survey, we have again connected with Stanford University to partner with us. We also gathered input from other leaders in the community on children, youth and family issues--from childcare and after-school program directors to the pediatrician at St. Anthony Clinic to the Tenderloin police captain... We want to make sure that we are asking the most critical questions so that we can uncover the information that is most helpful for us to assess where the gaps are for these populations. Now, with staffing assistance from Dr. Kara Wright who worked with us twenty years ago on our Tenderloin school survey and was BAWCC’s first on-site pediatrician at Tenderloin school, we are finalizing our online research document. This will enable us to compile the information in a way that is most helpful to BAWCC as well as to others working on these issues in our community. We are ready to start conducting the interviews in the next month. We are so anxious to see what is uncovered this time so we can start working as a community to address the gaps.

Tenderloin Youth Sports Initiative: TYSI continues to be an important initiative for our children and families. Through this innovative BAWCC program, we have close to 400 students at Tenderloin school who get daily exercise as well as constant reinforcement on sports skills and good behavior/fair play modeling. BAWCC's Structured Activity Time (SAT) Program is now an important part of the Tenderloin school culture. It has been voted as the top priority program by the teachers four years in a row. For the SAT program, BAWCC has three full-time phys. ed. teachers. They work with every child at the school every day for 30-40 minutes. This is critically important since most of our children live in single room apartments or hotel rooms, and for many children this is their only physical activity during the week. As a result of this program, Tenderloin school is one of the very few schools in the district that has significantly more than the mandated hours each week for physical education with the students.

As a part of **BAWCC's After-School Clubs** program (14 different clubs each week, including academic and arts clubs as well), we offer several after-school sports clubs, including Rugby (with a member from SF Fog Rugby Club leading the club), Tennis Club with guidance from former pro tennis player Peanut Louie Harper, Team Sports Club that teaches the basics and rules of several different sports including baseball, flag football, ultimate Frisbee... Our sports clubs are very popular, and this regular exercise is so good for the children!

Finally, our **Ice Skating Program** in partnership with Yerba Buena Ice Skating Center is still as full as ever with 30+ children. In fact, we have a waiting list of children who want to sign up when there is a space. We have children who have skated for several years and are very strong skaters now, and others are just enjoying learning to skate. Also, our amazing Dinh Tran who started in this program when he was 4 years old, qualified for the second year in a row for Nationals that were held in Nebraska this year, and with the help of some sponsors to get there, Dinh skated at Nationals and came in 6th in the country for his age level. Dinh still lives with his family in a small Tenderloin apartment, and his mother, Mimi, is still on BAWCC staff as one of our SAT teachers. They are truly one of our Tenderloin's most remarkable families!

BAWCC's Drop-In Program & Food Pantry: The program we started on the first day we opened our doors at BAWCC on Leavenworth Street, our Drop-In Program, is still one of our strongest! Women and families come in every drop-in day. Each time we open our doors, we have people who are new to us and the community, and others who have relied on our respectful, homey services for a long time. This connection will always be a critical part of BAWCC's work, and helps guide all of the work we do to address needs in the community!

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BAWCC has many more programs that we sponsor in the community and at Tenderloin Community School such as our Tenderloin Scholarship Fund, Parent-Child Program, Parenting Classes... but we hope this gives you an idea of some of what we've been working on in a number of our long-term as well as our new programs or projects.

We so appreciate the support that you give our work! It continues to make a huge difference in what BAWCC is able to accomplish with families, children and women!

Warmest regards, *Midge*