

RESILIENCE

Kids' Place Newsletter

Summer, 2007

Volume 3 Issue 1

Director's Farewell Address

It is with a heavy heart that I write this farewell address. After honorably serving this fine organization for the last seven years, I will end my term as director on June 28th. It is almost impossible to dissect the thousands of memories and experiences to find the one that expresses my deepest passion for this organization but I have found a quote that comes pretty close.

Marianne Williamson once said, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us. ...It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."



The children of Kids' Place for one last good-bye!

This light that shines deep within each of us is what kept me at Kids' Place for the last seven years. As each year past, the light within the precious children that I served grew brighter and brighter. I watched children discover the power of their light, the endless possibilities of their own potential.

And at the same time, their light was reciprocal. As their light shone greater, I couldn't help but shine brighter

myself. My passion and love for this program intensified and my desire to create a place where children never questioned the light within them took top priority.

I know that my life will be forever changed by my experiences with Kids' Place. For the past seven years, I have been blessed by a group of professionals who have respected my talent and dedication to this organization. I have been blessed with a job that built me up instead of broke me down. I have been blessed by the trust and support of the families I have served. And I have been eternally blessed by the beauty and resilience of every little life I have met while here.

Even though my time here has come to an end, I will forever support this program and my challenge to each of you is to do the same. Your light will only shine brighter if you do. Sincerely, Ms. Emily

Help Us Get to the Goal!

Thanks to the generous investments from the many supporters of Kids' Place we are at 85% of our goal of \$98,000 for this fiscal year. As a privately funded program we rely heavily on this support to keep the services of Kids' Place available to many needy children.

We hope that if you have not yet made a contribution, you will consider making Kids' Place a priority in your charitable giving.

Donors can take a charitable deduction for gifts made to Kids' Place. Kids' Place is a charitable outreach program of University United Methodist Church. Kids' Place falls under the tax exempt status of UUMC as defined under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. Kids' Place is governed by our committed Board of Directors.

Director's Update



Executive Director, Laura Speichinger

It is with joy and enthusiasm that I assume the role of Executive Director of Kids' Place. For the past 3 months I've had the opportunity to observe and interact with the students, staff, board members, volunteers and community that make this program possible. I must say I am impressed. On my first visit to Kids' Place I was struck by the energy, positive attitude and easy rapport of the staff and volunteers. I also noticed the well developed curriculum, and sense the program has for meeting children where they are. These strengths along with the positive supportive environment drew me to Kids' Place and assured me that my skills and experience would be a good fit. I am grateful to have found such a dedicated community where I can apply the skills I've acquired throughout my career.

I come to Kids' Place with 13 years experience in the fields of education and social service. I have worked as a classroom teacher, director, manager and mentor. Most recently I was part of a group of professionals instrumental in creating The Soulard School, an innovative non profit community school. There I created curriculum using qualitative research and inquiry-based education methodologies, as well as worked towards fund raising and donation efforts and developed creative programming such as The Artist in Residence program. Prior to this I served as Education and Disabilities Director at Youth in Need, a multi-service agency serving children, youth and

families throughout Eastern Missouri. In my career I have worked with a broad range of constituencies in a variety of settings which has enabled me to develop the ability to foster a cooperative work environment as well as align parties toward a common goal.

I draw on these strengths as I begin developing relationships with the broad range of constituencies dedicated to the continued development of Kids' Place. These efforts began with the Programming Committee. We've been working on developing our areas of focus, as well as creating exciting new programs and opportunities for cultural enrichment that will lead us into new collaborations for the coming year. I have also been working with the newly formed safety committee to look at Kids' Place in the broader context of our city, country and world which will help us form a comprehensive plan to ensure the continued safety of our children. The Development Committee and I have been exploring ways to expand our current levels of support as well as attract new resources. Through our upcoming "Wish Upon A Star" fundraiser and fall tour program we hope to introduce Kids' Place and its mission to a larger audience.

Kids' Place continues to develop a growing pool of human and financial resources that will solidify this important program and its place in the community. We will utilize these vast resources next program year as we continue to focus on Literacy with the addition of a Leveled Book Library, and grow our Civic and Social Responsibility Program through Family Style Meals.

In my second week at Kids' Place as I walked into the gym at Delmar Harvard I was greeted by a fourth grader who enthusiastically introduced me to her friends by shouting "This is Miss Laura our New Constructor!" Charged with the task of "Constructor," I embrace the opportunity to work collaboratively with this dynamic community to construct the future of Kids' Place.

Dates to Remember

August 6-10th	Summer Camp
August 13th	Board Meeting
September 10th, 11th	Volunteer/Staff Orientation
September 17th	Start of 07'-08' program year
October 21st	Wish Upon A Star Event

Family Literacy Night

On March 8th Kids' Place staff, students and their parents gathered to celebrate the literary works of the Kids' Place students. As part of the program's strong focus on literacy, the students, in addition to being required to read a minimum of 20 minutes aloud to an adult mentor each day, participate in a variety of literacy activities throughout the year.

At this year's Family Literacy Night children chose from their *story to a picture* or *best part of me* selections to share with the group. Parents received literacy tips to use at home and **each child left with two new books.**



Domonick shares his literary piece at Literacy Night.

Fun Fair

As a reward for a year of hard work, Kids' Place students participated in a fun fair during the last week of Kids' Place programming. The students had a blast getting their faces painted, creating sand art and taking a chance at the cake walk. Thanks to the generosity of Paul and Betty Adams of University United Methodist Church, the children also learned about the art of balloon animals. It was an hour full of smiles!



Ms. Sarah puts her artistic skills to use at the face paint booth.

Volunteer Spotlight

Sandy Marsh

Sandy Marsh is a busy woman. She currently serves as Chair of the University City Education Fund; she is on the board of the Breitmayer Community Ministry of Grace United Methodist Church; she is a volunteer at "Women in Charge," a program that helps women working toward their GED; she's a volunteer coordinator of the University City High School Writers' Room; she served for 3 years on the University City Board of Education; and for the past two years she has been instrumental in the success of the **Wish Upon a Star** fundraiser, which raises 25% of the Kids' Place operating budget.

Sandy's interest in Kids' Place stems from her love of Delmar-Harvard Elementary School. Both of her children are alumni of D-H, and Sandy says that **many of their classmates could have benefited from a program such as Kids' Place.** When a friend and Kids' Place board member, Ed Renner, told Sandy about the inception of Kids' Place, she wanted to get involved and for that we are forever grateful.

Sandy has already begun her work as Co-Chair on the 2007 **Wish Upon a Star** event, which will be held in October. We don't know how she finds the time and energy for her many commitments, but we're thankful that she chose Kids' Place!



Kids' Place children appreciate all you do for this program!



Kids' Place
A Safe Place for All Children to Shine
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KIDS' PLACE WISH LIST

If interested in making our wishes come true, please call Laura Speichinger at (314) 863-8055, ext. 19 or bring donations to University United Methodist Church, 6901 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63130.

Art and School Supplies

Book Bags
 Pencils
 Folders
 Kleenex
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 Rulers
 Scissors
 White Paper 11" X 14"
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Miscellaneous

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