



## MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Gerardo Salme



Greetings,

I hope this communication finds you all well and you were able to enjoy the fall season with a successful start to the new school year and a joyous Thanksgiving holiday. Most of our newsletter readers are aware that **FOCUS** offers a range of services to address the needs of all community members, from the very young to the elderly. This fall, we received three new Grants helping us to serve clients at both ends of that spectrum, youth and seniors, as well as the community at large.

**FOCUS** Academy Program Learners After School (FALAS) received a grant from the PSEG/United Way After School Collaborative, to assist in providing quality after-school programming that contributes to positive youth outcomes. The grant enables **FOCUS** not only to help students achieve in school, but also to provide a comprehensive and balanced set of activities fostering youth and family development. **FOCUS** and seven other organizations were recognized as providers of high-impact, extended learning opportunities for youth of Essex and Hudson counties.



For **FOCUS** seniors, a grant from the GROTTA Foundation opens a new avenue of service. A Wellness, Independence and Nutrition (WIN) program will promote active and healthy lifestyles among seniors and will help them remain independent and safe in their homes and communities. WIN program elements will include instruction in chronic disease self-management; health screenings and health education workshops; and guided physical activities.

Please see the story on page 4 to read about our recent ShopRite Partners in Caring Grant and how it has served our community.

As **FOCUS** continues its mission to provide community leadership, I thank the **FOCUS** Board of Trustees, staff, partner agencies, and the many volunteers who work diligently in providing services.

## STUDENTS FEAST ON NUTRITION LESSONS



**FOCUS** students at Maria Varisco-Rogers Charter School participated in a weekly nutrition program, provided by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), during the daily after-school program. UMDNJ representative Alisha Jackson taught students about the food pyramid, maintaining healthy weight, and optimizing body and brain function by choosing good foods and limiting "empty calories" from soda pop and sugary snacks.

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## FALL HEADLINES-13TH AVENUE SCHOOL

### “LIGHTS ON” AT 13TH AVENUE SCHOOL

The **FOCUS** Academy of Learners after-school program at 13th Avenue School is on a non-stop trip to victory, success and outstanding, expanded learning this year. Our first victory of the year was on October 21, 2010, when we celebrated our annual “Lights On” after-school event.



“Lights On” is a yearly opportunity for students to express their love for after-school and to tell how the program benefits their lives. This year, students performed

skits about after-school, depicting where they would be if they had no after-school program to go to. They also performed sign language and poetry through songs. The event was topped off with an unforgettable step exhibition. A tremendous number of parents and friends came out to celebrate the importance of after-school along with the staff and administration.

### A HAPPY HALLOWEEN AT 13TH AVENUE SCHOOL



On October 28, 2010, the **FOCUS** Academy of Learners after-school program at 13th Avenue School was fortunate to receive over 100 Halloween costumes, donated by NJ Cares. Kindergarten through fourth-

grade students were invited to receive a free Halloween costume. After-school’s “Mummy Halloween Party” gave costume recipients an opportunity to show off their marvelous costumes in a Halloween parade. **FOCUS'** after-school administrators and staff extend a heartfelt thank you to NJ Cares for sharing and caring about the community we serve.

### FOCUS ACADEMY OF LEARNERS NOVEMBER STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Ta'Miyah Alexander (Group1); Tah'Asia Thomas (Group2); Qua'mayne Woodard (Group3); Racquel Wilson (Group4); Inasia Belton (Group5) and Sahara Smith (Group6).

**By: Iya Green**  
**Program Coordinator**

## NOVEMBER: RANDOM-ACTS-OF-KINDNESS MONTH AND THANKSGIVING



At the Academy of Learners, students explore a new theme each month. November's theme had students busy every Friday participating in “Random Acts of Kindness.” Students in kindergarten through second grade made thank-you cards for teachers, administrators, parents, family and friends

who have had a positive impact on their education thus far. Third and fourth-grade students creat-

ed acrostic poems out of the word THANKSGIVING. The fifth graders gave Food Services staff a day off, by cleaning up the cafeteria, taking out the trash, sweeping and washing down tables. The sixth, seventh and eighth graders became school custodians for an afternoon, washing teachers' chalk boards, sweeping classrooms and changing trash bags. It was a great experience and all of our students now know the meaning of random kindness.

On November 23, 2010, **FOCUS** Academy of Learners participants had a pizza party celebrating Thanksgiving and “Random Acts of Kindness.”

## STUDENTS FEAST ON NUTRITION LESSONS

... continuation (coverage)



Students participated in hands-on activities to boost critical thinking skills and maximize good choices for each of the food groups (meat/beans, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and grains).

They learned ways

in which all food groups can be combined to make one nutritious meal and were taught how to analyze the amount of carbohydrates, proteins and calories contained in various foods.

In one exercise, students were given a menu featuring a number of nutritious lunch options, with snacks included, adding up to over 700 calories. Students had the task of figuring out how to cut the calories and limit fat without cutting nutritional value. Some

students eliminated white bread and opted for whole wheat bread or a wrap. Others used a lower-fat mayonnaise for a tuna sandwich and replaced whole milk with low-fat milk. Some skipped the chocolate bar in favor of an apple for the snack.

Participating in a game called "Guess the Food," students chose a food cutout, and hid it. The class had to guess the food item by asking questions, beginning with what food group the item was in. Through this activity, students learned to better classify food items.

Ms. Jackson will return to the afternoon program to help students brainstorm and plan nutritional menus for breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

**By: Kelly Nicholades**  
Program Staff

## 7TH ANNUAL QUEEN OF THE GOLDEN AGE



On Tuesday, September 17th, we celebrated the 7th Annual Queen of the Golden Age, sponsored by **FOCUS** and Council/Vice President Luis Quintana. This

year's nominee was Elba Cosme, representing the beautiful women of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Elba was chosen among other women because of her free spirit and her progress in battling to build a rewarding life after losing her husband.

Elba graduated as a nurse from the InterAmericana University in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. She served as a maternity nurse for 31 years and enjoyed her profession very much. Elba's primary doctor referred her to **FOCUS** five years ago, when she lost her husband of 40 years and his death affected her tremendously. For months, Elba hadn't been feeling like her self

and nothing seemed to make her happy. With her daughters' help and the Seniors' Congregate Program, Elba began to take part in many activities offered through **FOCUS**, such as Tai-Chi classes, Walking Club, and Crocheting Club. Most importantly, Elba stopped isolating herself and began socializing with other individuals her age who also had experienced the loss of a spouse. Slowly, Elba began to overcome her loss and to live a full and active life.

Elba was recognized as this year's Queen for being a strong-willed individual who appreciates life and who always sees the good in people. Elba has three wonderful daughters; eight grandchildren, whom she loves and admires; and her mother, who currently lives in Connecticut. Elba says that the **FOCUS** Seniors group has become her family and that she cannot imagine life without the **FOCUS** Hispanic Seniors program.

**By: Noelia Nazario**  
Program Coordinator

**Welcome**

**Maria Avilez**

*Instructor- Workforce Learning Link*

**Conratulations**

**Awilda Perez & Janel Bell**

*Certificate for Adult Protective Services*

*Basic Worker Training*

*Rutgers School of Social Work*

## SHOPRITE GRANT AND THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION

The **FOCUS** Emergency Assistance Program is grateful to have been chosen by the Community FoodBank of New Jersey to receive a 2010 ShopRite Partners in Caring Grant. The need for emergency-assistance food has increased tremendously in our community and this grant will enable us to help those suffering from "food insecurity." The Grant pairs **FOCUS** with ShopRite of Passaic and ShopRite of Kearny, that have recognized our work in the community and have committed to partnering with **FOCUS** in the fight against hunger.

Through this Grant, **FOCUS'** Emergency Assistance Program purchased 260 turkeys and 170 holiday boxes containing traditional accompaniments. The **FOCUS** Family Success Center hosted a "Thanksgiving Turkey Celebration," and distributed the turkeys and holiday fare. Celebration participants learned how to prepare a nutritious Thanksgiving dinner on a tight budget and received recipes. All were thankful for the opportunity to prepare a traditional Thanksgiving meal for their families.

By:

**Awilda Perez**  
FSC Program Coordinator

**Yamilet Torres**  
Social Worker



## FOCUS

**Hispanic Center for Community Development, Inc.**  
441-443 Broad Street  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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Editor: Jean VanSteenberghe  
Graphic Designer: Fatima Cantos