

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Like all programs in the Harlem Children's Zone, the Harlem Peacemaker Program is founded on great expectations.** We expect great things from our programs because we expect great things of and for those who participate in those programs.

Ten years ago, when the Peacemaker Program was founded, the expectations for young people in our country seemed to be at a low point. You could tell that simply by reading the label the media had attached to an entire generation. During that time of rising juvenile crime, the media had begun demonizing these youngsters, calling them "super predators."

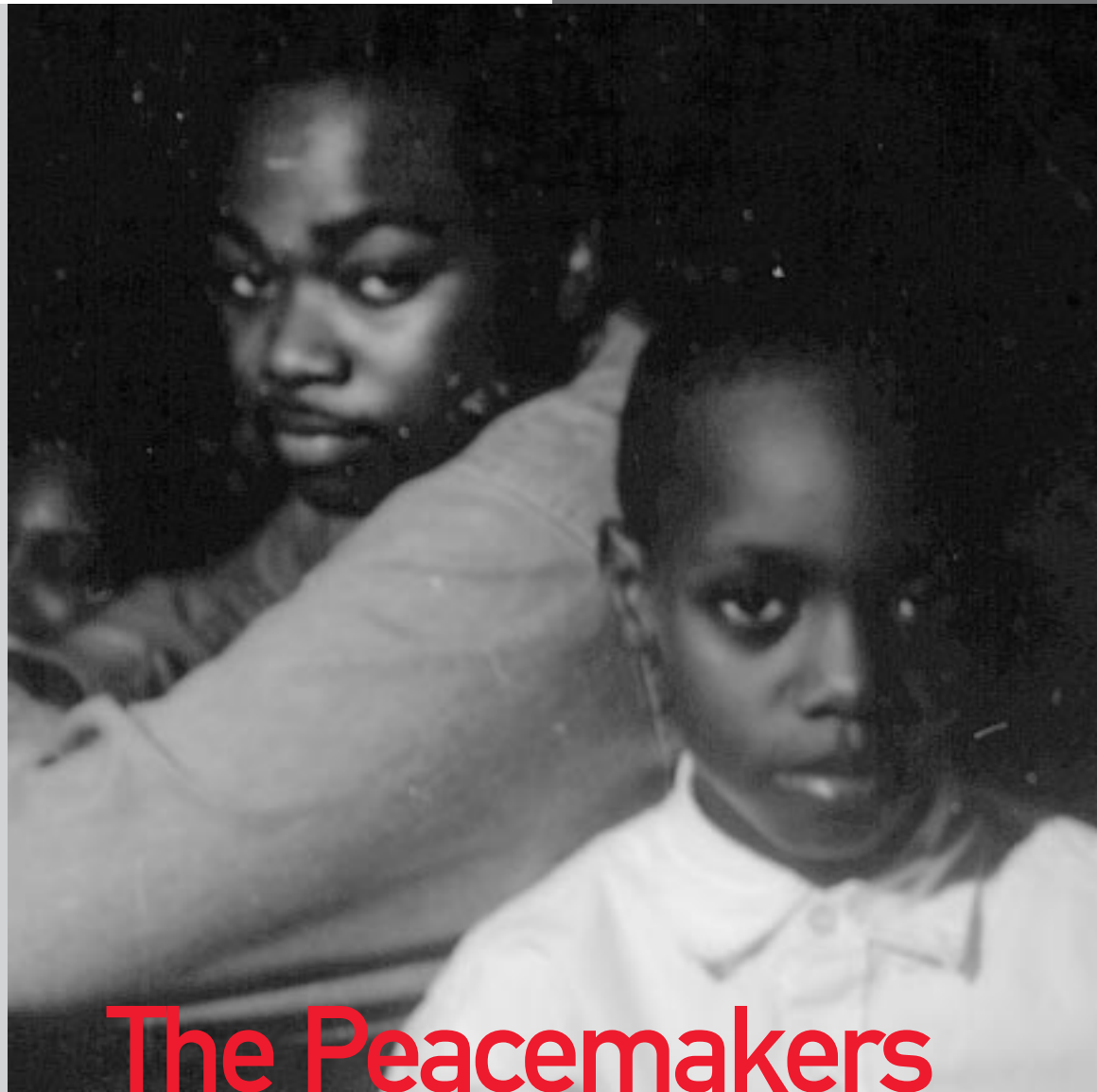
At HCZ, we see young people another way. We see them as caring and concerned about their friends, families, and communities. We see them as builders, creators, leaders, working for a better neighborhood, nation, world. In other words, we see them as part of the solution, not part of the problem. And we are determined to give them the training, tools, and opportunities that help them to be and do their best—and in return, we expect the best from the young people in our programs.

What we at HCZ have learned over the years is that great expectations yield great results. As you will see in this report, the young people who participate in the Peacemaker program have had a tremendous positive effect on the children they work with and on the institutions that serve those children. And the Peacemaker program seems to have had a tremendous effect on the young people who join it.

Today, with the opening of its new headquarters and its new charter school, HCZ is taking on some of its greatest challenges yet. To meet those challenges, we are looking to the source of our greatest strength—the people who participate in our programs, including the Peacemakers.

We expect a lot from them. You can tell by the name we gave them—Peacemakers. But we also expect a lot for them. On good authority. "Blessed are the Peacemakers," the Bible says, "for they shall be called the children of God."

GEOFFREY CANADA  
President/CEO



**All the other children in the second-grade classroom at PS 242 become silent as their classmate, Bernice, near tears, puts down her crayons, leaves her desk, walks over to Siobhan Graham, and whispers in her ear. Graham listens attentively, quietly asks a few questions, and then says aloud: "You mean to tell me that Myles called you a cheese-burger and you didn't say anything unkind back to him? Wow! That's great. That gives him time to think about what he said, doesn't it? I'll bet he's already beginning to feel sorry that he called you a name. Let's wait just a little bit and see if Myles decides to apologize."**

Now Bernice is beaming. Most of the other children in the classroom resume their workbook exercise. Myles, apparently deciding against an apology for the moment, begins ripping his worksheets into lengthwise strips. Graham walks over to him, puts her arm around his small shoulders and asks, "Are you having a hard day today?" Receiving no answer, Graham takes a book down from the library shelf and kneels down next to Myles. "Let's read," she says. "I know you like to read, and sometimes reading can make a hard day seem much easier."

For the rest of the school day, Graham will stay close to Myles. As she moves around the classroom, assisting individual students with their math assignments; while she helps keep order in the lunchroom; outside, as she supervises play at recess, Graham always finds a spare moment to spend with Myles. Sometimes they talk. Sometimes Graham simply stands near the young boy, or rests her hand on his head, or



looks at him closely and smiles. Slowly, over the course of the day, Myles becomes more communicative, less angry. During the afternoon story-telling session, he seats himself on the floor next to Bernice. As the teacher opens up the story book Myles turns and says something softly to Bernice. She listens, thinks for a moment, then nods and pats his hand.

“Yes,” Graham whispers, pumping her right arm in exuberant emphasis. “Yes. Today I earned my title: Peacemaker.”

Siobhan Graham is one of a select group of 130 young adults now working every day to earn that title. They are participating in the Harlem Peacemaker Program, a project of the Harlem Children’s Zone funded by Americorps.

Peacemakers receive their title after a rigorous application and selection process. Recruited from a nationwide pool of young adults, applicants are screened for qualities of character as well as performance. Those who qualify receive training in skills they will need in their work, especially literacy and conflict resolution. Most of those who make the final cut are from the Harlem community. To receive the title Peacemaker they must demonstrate leadership, commitment, dedication, and resourcefulness. To earn that title, all those qualities, and all the skills learned in training or on site, will be tested strenuously—starting very early every school day.

### A Role Model for Children

“The job of the Peacemaker starts before classes begin; it starts at breakfast,” says Regina Garrett, HCZ director of education and head of the Peacemaker Program. “When children come to school each day, it is the Peacemakers who greet them, watch over them, and attend to them while they are eating their breakfast. What are the lessons in that? Consistency, caring, and continuity.

“The world of some of our children can be unpredictable in very stressful ways,” Garrett continues.

“They may be uncertain about the health or employment status of a parent. There may be financial or legal issues threatening their family’s residence. But when those children come to school, the same Peacemaker, the same thoughtful, helpful individual, shows up and shows them love and guidance every day, from 7:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., from the first bite of breakfast through the last of their afterschool activities. That’s powerful.

“There are many kinds of learning and many ways to learn. One of the primary ways the Peacemakers teach the children they work with is through their good example. Peacemakers are excellent role models for our children.”

That modeling occurs on many levels. For



Siobhan Graham, it means, at a minimum, showing patience, encouragement, and understanding to every child in her care. It means working with those children, one-on-one and in groups, to improve their skills and to foster a love of learning and a spirit of tolerance. It also means working hard at her own personal development and education in order to reach her full potential.

Interns serve as Peacemakers for up to two years. In their first year, they usually focus all their efforts on developing the skills they need for the job. During the second year, they are encouraged to also pursue their education. Like most second-year Peacemakers, Graham takes college courses in the evenings. She is a full-time student at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

“When I accepted the Peacemaker internship, I wanted to make sure I had the skills to do the job well,” says Graham. “It turns out I didn’t have to worry about that. HCZ provided full and intensive training before we ever entered a classroom. And they follow up with ongoing workshops, training sessions, guidance, and mentoring from program staff members. But there’s more to it than that. I know, because I have a daughter of my own, two years old. If I want to convince my daughter, if I want to convince any child, to live up to the best that’s in them, I know I must try to live up to the best that’s in myself. If I want children to value learning, and work at it, then I must value and work at my own education, continually. Having a child has helped me to see things from a child’s point of view once again, to see the world new every day. Now

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I see every moment as an opportunity to learn. I have very high expectations of myself, of my own child, and of all the children I work with as a Peacemaker. And I think high expectations are a very good thing.”

## A New Standard for a Generation

The Harlem Children’s Zone would agree. The issue of what is expected of children, especially inner-city children, is what led to the creation of the Harlem Peacemaker Program.

The concept of the program began to take shape in the early 1990s. Juvenile crime rates, which had been rising for several years in the U.S., and particularly in large urban areas like New York City, peaked in 1993. The response in much of the mainstream media, and in some academic journals, was to demonize a generation of young people as “super predators,” brutally violent and amoral criminals who threatened the very foundation of society.

Geoffrey Canada, HCZ president and CEO, felt that this characterization was not only unfair and untrue but dangerous. And he began discussing with his staff ways to combat this pervasive image of inner-city youth. The staff member most deeply involved in those discussions was G. Rasuli Lewis, who became the first director of the Harlem Peacemaker Program.

“By 1993, Geoff had already been working with young people for a long time and with great success,” says Lewis, who is now director of the HCZ Practitioners’ Institute. “He believed, on good evidence, that young people will try hard to meet the standards you set for them. So we set high standards for the children in our programs, and then we work hard to help them live up to those standards. But you have to ask yourself, ‘If young people will succeed in meeting a high bar for behavior, what if you set the bar at the lowest possible level? What happens if a society

just accepts the notion that a generation of inner-city youngsters are vicious predators?’

“Did Harlem have a problem in the late eighties, early nineties? Of course it did,” Lewis continues. “Drugs were everywhere. Crime was a serious, a mortal threat to the community. We couldn’t even guarantee the safety of our children, not even in school. In 1993, a kindergarten student was shot in the face while attending PS 154, right on 127<sup>th</sup> Street. This was a time of real crisis. Was the proper response to that crisis to write off a generation of youngsters? For Geoff Canada, for all of us at HCZ, the proper response was exactly the opposite. We resolved to engage young people in addressing this crisis in our community. We knew that most young people are responsible and caring and committed to the well-being of their neighbors and their neighborhood. And we resolved to find a way for these young people themselves to play a lead role, and a public role, in changing the climate of violence and rebuilding their community. These young people would be the new standard for their generation, not a generation of predators but a generation of Peacemakers.”

The Harlem Peacemaker Program was launched in 1994. In collaboration with the Children’s Defense Fund and the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Columbia University’s Teachers College, HCZ trained the small initial Peacemaker cohort in sophisticated conflict resolution techniques. In the fall, they were brought into a few public elementary-school classrooms in Harlem to assist teachers in maintaining calm and order during the school day. It was a delicate, if highly successful, experiment.

“We didn’t want teachers, principals, or parents, for that matter, to feel as if we were stepping over into their territory,” say Lewis. “We entered the schools as conflict-resolution specialists only. But teachers in our

schools work so hard, with so many demands made upon their time and resources. And the Peacemakers are smart, creative, dedicated young people with a lot to offer. The teacher/Peacemaker relationship began to evolve quickly, with Peacemakers given increasing responsibility. At HCZ, we responded by giving the Peacemakers more training in other areas, like math, reading, and computer skills. As the breadth of the program grew, so did the number of participants. More than 550 young people have interned as Peacemakers since the program began. Today, 98 full-time and 32 part-time Peacemakers work with parents, prin-

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principals, teachers, and children at numerous sites in Harlem, including public school classrooms, Beacon schools programs, and HCZ programs. And the range of duties and services they perform is amazing.”

### **A New Strategy Inside the Classroom**

Peacemakers work in the classroom during the school day at PS 76, PS 242, and PS 197. Through the School Success Program, one Peacemaker is assigned to each classroom in grades K-5. While retaining their original function of conflict-resolution specialists, fostering a safe and secure environment for learning, Peacemakers also provide an array of support services, including watching over the children at meal times and recess; assisting with schoolwork, particularly math and reading; and providing special attention and care to individual students or groups of students when needed.

The Peacemakers' work in the classroom affects more than just the teachers and students; it affects the Peacemakers themselves. According to Heidi Lopez, “This job changes your perspective, your understanding, your life.”

Lopez began working as a Peacemaker in a first-grade classroom in PS 149 in Harlem in 2001. In her first few weeks on the job, she encountered her first great challenge. “One of the students in class had a painfully negative attitude,” says Lopez. “She wouldn't socialize, she wouldn't share with the other students, and she wouldn't do the coursework unless she felt like it. One day, she got back her class assignment and didn't like the results, so she threw a handful of her papers onto the floor. I went up to her and insisted that she pick the papers up or she wouldn't be allowed out for recess. Well, I guess I had accidentally pushed the havoc button, because this young child just tore the

place up. She turned over the bookcase, threw some boxes across the room, and ground a few crayons into the floor for good measure. I remember thinking to myself, ‘I guess that direct-confrontation strategy doesn't work with this child. Time for a new strategy.’

“In our Peacemaker training sessions, the HCZ staff had prepared us to remain very flexible,” Lopez says. “I distinctly remember Rasuli Lewis saying to us, ‘Being a Peacemaker is not rocket science. No, it's much, much harder. You don't learn some rules or laws and them apply them. Every day you face a new challenge—in the classroom, in the play yard, in the principal's office. And every day you have to solve problems with new strategies and new skills. A child is upset and

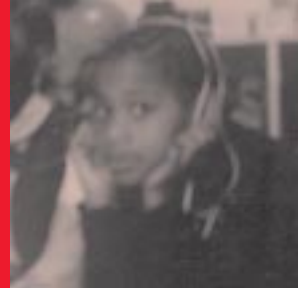
you don't know why, and that child is looking to you to make things better. And you had better find a way to do that, because you're dealing with a child's life, a child's future.’

“I spent the next few weeks trying to find a way to work with that child. And I did find a way. I learned that she needed to understand, in detail, why she was being asked to do things. If you could make that clear to her, she was fine. We worked it out. And eventually she became one of the highest-achieving students in the class. She came in testing below grade level and she left as one of our best students. On the one hand, that was a source of great satisfaction to me. On the other hand, it made me realize how this child might have slipped through the cracks if there were not someone in that classroom to deal with her specially, one-on-one, every day. And I think that realization affected the many decisions I have made since then about my own future.”

Lopez began college as an education major. But after working as a Peacemaker she switched to sociology. She intends to found a nonprofit organization that helps to bridge the gaps between theory, practice, and policy in the field of education.

“I took a course in American education,” says Lopez. “and I learned some great education theories there. But then I actually worked in a classroom, and I began to understand that you need a lot more than theory. You have to understand that policy, including economic policy, affects everything that happens in the classroom. Almost all teachers want the very best for the children in their classroom. But if you are teaching 25 or 30 kids, with no extra help, how can you possibly spend time with one child who needs that extra attention? What message does a child get about the value





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society places on education if there is no money for scissors and paper and crayons—not to mention computers—in the classroom? How do our communities, especially inner-city communities, get government to respond appropriately to the education needs of our children? There are so many things that affect the education of our children. We need to begin to understand how all those things relate to one another. That's the work I want to do with my nonprofit organization. It's a huge undertaking. It could last a lifetime. But it seems to me like a very worthwhile way to spend my life."

### **A Path to Personal Achievement**

Many Peacemakers, like Lopez, work primarily in the classroom as part of HCZ's School for Success Program. Others help to operate intellectually ambitious, ongoing extracurricular programs for children.

The HCZ Chess Program teaches Harlem children chess fundamentals through a summer camp and twice-weekly training sessions. Children who pass the first level of training participate in tournament play. Last year, HCZ Chess Program participants won 61 trophies at local and national chess tournaments.

In collaboration with the READ Foundation, Peacemakers work one-on-one with young children, using innovative research-based educational methods to help them become proficient readers. During the summer, the program targets students in grades K-2 who are reading below level.

Through the SMART Program, specially trained Peacemakers use advanced literacy software programs to offer students academic support that is both individualized and broad. With its low student/tutor ratio, Shaping Minds Around Reading and Technology offers supervised computer time during in-school and after-school hours as well as in summer programs. The computer labs provide opportunities for children to practice phonics, vocabulary, writing, and reading

comprehension. To motivate children to read on a regular basis, SMART runs a Lending Library at the schools, enabling children to read on site and to borrow books to take home. Children are rewarded for regular attendance and for completing steps in the program with gifts and prizes distributed in the SMART Store. Prizes range from whistles to Thinkpads and bicycles. Last year, computer-based literacy services were provided to more than 1,100 children at seven sites through SMART, and more than 2,000 books were made available to those children through SMART lending libraries.

Peacemakers also play key roles in other HCZ programs. At the Baby College, Peacemakers identify, recruit, and help train caregivers in critical parenting skills. Peacemakers work individually with Harlem Gems four-year-old participants. Peacemakers also help out at the Employment and Technology Center, the Family Support Center, and at two of Harlem's Beacon programs—Countee Cullen and Booker T. Washington public schools. And much of the staff of HCZ's TRUCE program consists of Peacemakers. In fact, many Peacemakers, after completing their two-year internship, go on to join the HCZ staff. At present, about 40 staff members are former Peacemakers, including Brian McClendon.

McClendon joined the Peacemakers in 1997, worked as an intern for two years, then as a site supervisor for the program. He is now a program coordinator for the HCZ 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Institute, which teaches leadership and social skills to fifth-graders. "I just got hooked on working with children," he says. "That wasn't how I started out. In fact, I'm nothing like the person who started out working as a Peacemaker. I think I'm a much better person. The program has changed me. I joined the program in part because I wanted to take advantage of the education grant that's part of the package. I wanted to go to college, and the grant was a big help. But being a Peacemaker turned out to be a much more important kind of education. I learned a lot about myself and what I really wanted."

As Americorps members, Peacemakers are eligible for government benefits, including a scholarship award after one year of service. McClendon used the award to attend John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in Manhattan. "As the name tells you, the Peacemaker Program started out as a mediation or conflict-resolution program," says McClendon. "I think that when I came into the program I already had some of those skills. I'm from the neighborhood, and you could say that conflict-resolution skills were useful growing up in Harlem. But in the Peacemaker training sessions we learned to think about the peacemaking process in a scientific way, to break it down into its component parts: benefits; qualities necessary for a good media-





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tor; stages of conflict resolution, like information gathering, examining issues and concerns, identifying options. That was truly empowering, both to know and to teach to others.

“I did a lot of my growing up at the Children’s Aid Society when I was a kid,” McClendon continues. “I know what a difference a good counselor can make in your life, because I know what they did for me. But I had no idea how good it was going to feel to be able to make a difference in the lives of other young people. I would see kids come into class with all that anger, looking for an opportunity to express it, usually violently. And I was able to show them a better way. And they got it. And now some of those young people are teaching other kids how to talk through their conflicts.

“I loved everything about being a Peacemaker. But I especially loved the job of conflict resolution. So when it was time to choose a major in college, I decided on criminal justice. I want to go into federal law enforcement. It will make it possible for me to do what gives me the most satisfaction: give back to my community. I hope I’ll be able to spend my life doing something I learned to be really good at in the Peacemaker Program: making and keeping peace.”

In 1999, at the end of his two-year service as a Peacemaker, McClendon had become so good at his job that he won the Peacemaker of the Year Award. The award was established to honor the memory of David Chen Joseph, a Peacemaker who was shot and killed in a random act of violence in fall 1997. It is presented annually to one Peacemaker who provides “outstanding service throughout the year to the children and families of the Harlem community.”

## A Way to Serve the Community

Service is the foundation of the Harlem Peacemaker Program. It is the key principle of the training Peacemakers receive and the chief lesson that Peacemakers impart to the young people with whom they work. It is also the focus of a host of special events and activities that Peacemakers direct and participate in throughout the year. Peacemakers lead children in a variety of community-service projects such as food and clothing drives that culminate on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 15. In collaboration with Abyssinian Baptist Church Peacemakers facilitate conflict resolution workshops for community children. Peacemakers support parents by providing outreach and child care with structured activities for parent-teacher conferences. Peacemakers work with corporate and community volunteers to plant community gardens, clean up streets and vacant lots, paint murals in school yards. To mark the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968, Peacemakers present an annual event based on the

works of Dr. King and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. In the spring, Peacemakers play a lead role in the yearly clean-up and planting of Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem. Every summer, 50 children are selected by Peacemakers, teachers, and principals to attend the Peacemakers Institute at Bowdoin College, in Maine. There, under the supervision of Peacemakers, youngsters learn conflict-resolution and team-building skills, undertake research projects and presentations, go on field trips, and take part in the Peacemaker Olympics—all part of a curriculum that stresses service to the community. In July and August, Peacemakers also operate Freedom Schools at PS 76, PS 242, and PS 197, providing hundreds of children in grades K-2 with a literacy-based experience during the summer months. Each year, the closing ceremony at the Freedom Schools take place just a few hours before one of the signature events of the Peacemaker Program, and of the entire Harlem Children’s Zone—The Annual Children’s March for Peace.

The Peace March was launched by HCZ in 1994 to honor the children whose lives had been lost to senseless acts of violence. Just as the Peacemakers were intended to contradict the public image of a violent generation of young people, so the Peace March was intended to demonstrate publicly the entire community’s desire for a safe neighborhood. Every year since then, thousands of parents, children, teachers, and community leaders, led by HCZ staff, march through the streets of Harlem together, in mid-August, to show the strength of their determination to secure and maintain peace for their families and neighbors. The collective show of strength is powerful and, to many, inspiring.

“It inspired me,” says Mizetta Wilson. “The first time I participated in the HCZ peace march was the year I graduated high school. I grew up in Harlem and had lived here all my life. But I had decided that after I got my diploma I would leave the city. I’m not sure what I wanted; just to get away, I guess. But the march made me realize how much I love this community and how much I wanted to help Harlem to flourish. I had already done some work with HCZ. After the march I happened to run into Rasuli Lewis and I asked his advice about ways I could best serve the community and at the same time follow my own dream of getting a good education. He suggested the Peacemakers.”

Wilson joined the Peacemakers in 1998 and went to work in the second-grade classroom at PS 242. “I was 18 years old and very idealistic,” says Wilson. “And the first couple of months were totally a honeymoon. I thought to myself, ‘This is fantastic. The kids are great. The job is a breeze.’ And then came the second phase, which I think of as ‘test phase.’ And it’s not the kids who are being tested, but the staff.





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“You see, some children have had very little continuity in their life. Even if they're very young, they may already have moved many times or had many different caregivers. They don't want to invest their time or feelings in you if you're just going to move out of their life soon. So they start testing to see if you're there for the long haul. They get ornery, they stop listening, they even curse you out. When that first happened I began to wonder, 'What did I do?' And more to the point, 'How on earth did I get myself into this?'

“But that's when the training kicks in. I went back to the Peacemaker basics I had been taught, the four A's—attitude, acceptance, attention to detail, and attendance. Meaning stay upbeat and focused, take what you're given and work with it, learn from every bit of information available, and show up every day, prepared to do your best. We teach that to the kids and we model it for the kids. And it works. In a short time, things turned around at school. The kids would come in for breakfast in the morning and give me a big hug on their way to their table. They saw I was there to stay, and I saw that working with children was going to be my career.”

Wilson finished her two-year internship in 2001 and won the Peacemaker of the Year Award at the end of her term. That same year, she became a site supervisor in the Peacemaker Program at PS 242. “The site supervisor is the link that connects HCZ, the school staff, the parents, the children, and the Peacemakers,” says Wilson. “Most of my time is spent working with the Peacemakers, making sure they've got the tools they need to do the job well. I help them to think strategically, not just to concentrate on what's happening with one child in the moment, but to try to think about what's best for that child in the long term. For example, you have a child who can't sit still; he's disruptive in class but he's also highly intelligent. It's not enough to simply get him to quiet down time

after time. You need to figure out what's causing that behavior and do something about it. Does he need a physical outlet like sports or martial arts? Could he possibly need medication? Does he need a different kind of intellectual challenge, maybe chess? Is something going on in the home? Should you talk with the teacher about the need for a parent-teacher meeting? If you're a Peacemaker, you must attend to every individual child's need and understand the big picture at the same time.”

That's how Wilson works. Radiating calm and authority, she seems to be everywhere at once at PS 242, checking in on Peacemakers in the classrooms, talking school policy with the principal, filling out mounds of paperwork, and always watching over the children, making sure each one is cared for, each one is safe.

In the spring, Wilson graduated from Marymount College with a degree in history. From her work in the Peacemaker Program, she now knows she wants to work in school administration. “It's not just that I like administration,” Wilson explains, “it's also where I think I can make the greatest difference. The Peacemaker Program has helped me to think about what works, about being effective, and that's where I want to put my efforts and energy. Look at PS 242. The Peacemaker Program works here because we address many different issues at the same time: lack of resources, large class size, the need for individualized attention for students, the need for a safe and secure environment that promotes and rewards learning. The Peacemaker Program was designed by HCZ to address many aspects of the big picture, and to make the big picture better as a result. I think we're succeeding at PS 242. I think we've really made a difference. And I want to keep making a difference like that in my career.”

## A Success Story

There is general agreement that PS 242 is in fact succeeding. But it has been a not been easy. The school moved to its present location on West 122<sup>nd</sup> Street in fall 2001 after the school district closed one of its lowest-performing schools, PS 144, at that site. PS 242 absorbed the students who had attended PS 144 and began the difficult task of giving children with low achievement levels all the tools they would need to succeed.

Within a single year, PS 242 had gained a coveted place in the guidebook *New York City's Best Public Elementary Schools*. The author, Clara Hemphill, describes PS 242 as “a cheerful, relaxed place where the principal's door is always open, parents are welcome to stay, and the teachers work so hard that the principal, Donna Brewster, says she has to throw them out at 8:00 p.m.”



*The contribution of the Peacemakers has been absolutely tremendous. They spoiled me, they spoiled all of us. I cannot imagine this school without them.*

Walking into PS 242 on any school day, visitors can easily verify that description. The halls are bright, spotless, and orderly. The classrooms are lively, with both teachers and students engaged and committed. Parents visit freely and are welcomed warmly—as are a stream of educators, who come to the school regularly to talk to the principal to find out how she has accomplished this turnaround. Brewster gives a lot of the credit to the Peacemakers.

“Things look great now, but I can tell you we had a disastrous beginning,” says Brewster, who became principal of PS 242 in 1998, when it was located on West 120<sup>th</sup> Street. “We were thrown into this and didn’t know what we were getting into. But that became clear the day we moved in: the environment we inherited was chaotic, unsafe, and generally unsupportive of learning.

“We made some important decisions immediately,” Brewster continues. “The staff voted to go to a policy called school-based options, in which the school sets many of its own criteria. Under that policy, teachers and parents help make decisions on hiring and firing, which meant some teachers who were just putting in time decided to leave and a lot of energetic and idealistic teachers took their places. Another decision we made was to bring in Peacemakers. ‘I was skeptical at first,’ Brewster admits. ‘I wasn’t sure what kind of a difference Peacemakers could possibly make. So I opted to bring in just six or seven of t

hem, to work with only the youngest children. But I quickly became a believer. I saw that these young people were bright, creative, resourceful, and dedicated. And I decided right away to work with them to help make them as effective as possible. We started providing extra training for them, in math and reading especially. They were willing and eager to learn. Now we have fifteen Peacemakers and two site supervisors, and they give us the abili-

ty to really give extra care and attention, both social and academic, to children who need it.

“Today I think the Peacemakers are the best thing since sliced bread. They are excellent role models for the children. They are consistent: what they say they will do, they always do. And they have this wonderful can-do attitude. They also get close to the children and their families. Very often it is through the Peacemakers that we find out we need to do some outreach to a family, because of some financial or other problems the family might be having. The Peacemakers always seem to know first.

“You know, everyone has worked hard to turn this school around—parents, students, teachers, Peacemakers, and myself. We work hard together because we all share this attitude that this is our neighborhood and our children and we need to make them the best they can be. I was born in Harlem and I have every intention of retiring here. And when I’m an old, old lady, who’s going to take care of me? I’m going to need doctors and lawyers and electricians to work on my house. And I want them to be from my own neighborhood. I want the children I’m educating now to be capable of taking care of me in my old age.

“We’re all working together at PS 242 toward this same goal. But I have to say, the contribution of the Peacemakers has been absolutely tremendous. They spoiled me, they spoiled all of us. I cannot imagine this school without them. I’m very stubborn. I was determined from the beginning to turn PS 242 into a first-rate school. And we’re doing it. When people come in to ask, ‘How can our school do what your school is doing? How can we transform our school into a real institution of learning and caring?’ I always answer, ‘Try to get yourself some Peacemakers.’”

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