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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCES THREE NON-PROFIT PROVIDERS SELECTED TO OPERATE NEW YORK CITY'S FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTERS: BRIDGE BUILDERS & CHILDREN'S VILLAGE; GRAHAM WINDHAM; & GOOD SHEPHERD SERVICES

First Launched in 2017, NYC's Family Enrichment Centers Are a Groundbreaking Approach to Reducing Child Welfare Involvement and Supporting Communities; Centers Are Co-Developed With Families in the Community & Apply a Racial Equity Lens in Planning, Services & Goals

NEW YORK, NY – The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) today announced the three non-profit provider agencies selected to operate the City's Family Enrichment Centers (FECs): Bridge Builders & Children's Village; Graham Windham; and Good Shepherd Services. FECs are walk-in community centers that are co-designed with local families and community members. The FECs aim to reduce child welfare involvement by working with local community members to provide families with the concrete support and services they may need, and support efforts to address racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.

The FECs are located in East New York, Brooklyn (Good Shepherd Services), Highbridge, Bronx (Bridge Builders & The Children's Village) and Hunts Point/Longwood, Bronx (Graham Windham). Each center was named by community members through a participatory process and are locally known as: The C.R.I.B. (Community Resources in Brooklyn), Circle of Dreams and O.U.R. Place (Organizing to be United and Resilient) respectively.

The first FEC launched in 2017, as part of the agency's primary prevention approach to reducing child maltreatment, an approach that proactively addresses families' service needs (generally related to the consequences of poverty) that may unintentionally lead to child welfare involvement if left unaddressed. The FECs partner with families to co-design "offerings" responsive to their needs and interests, providing resources and supports across various domains of child and family well-being.

Examples of programs offered at the FECs include: movie nights (for families to meet in a safe space and allow children to make new friends); a therapist-led Healing Through the Arts offering for families recovering from community violence; cultural activities; and Café con Amiga (Coffee with Friends) facilitated by Spanish speaking parent leaders to provide support to parents and caregivers. Additionally, the FECs sought to provide families with what they needed during the pandemic including technology/hotspots to assist children with virtual learning; LYFT car credits so community members could pick up food, medication and commute to doctor visits; and food, laundry cards and detergent were provided to family members.

A [recent evaluation of the FECs](#) showed that the centers are having a positive impact on families. The report said that FECs were enhancing members' social supports (from family, friends and neighbors), family functioning, emotional connection with their children, and outlook on life. Additionally, those surveyed reported significant increases in their access to advice and resources in addressing several life challenges, including parenting, financial issues, relationships, food and nutrition issues, and stress management. The report also said that FECs were having a positive effect on members' access to concrete supports, which can help families better cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis. For example, while the evaluation was conducted prior to the global pandemic, just recently, the FECs helped ACS quickly identify some of the hardest hit families in-need of emergency funds due to COVID-related economic challenges. More than \$10,000 in funds have been distributed to families and young people via the Family Enrichment Centers to help cover the costs of rent, utilities, food and other expenses as a result of the pandemic.

"Family Enrichment Centers are part of our ambitious vision to support families through a range of services, support and social connections in their communities. Over the past few years, and most recently during the pandemic, these centers have proved to be a vital lifeline for families in need, and it is good news that this work will be able to continue on into the future," **said Commissioner David A. Hansell.** "We look forward to the continued success of Bridge Builders & Children's Village, Graham Windham and Good Shepherd Services."

"Neighborhood spaces where individuals and families can connect with peers, access resources, and participate in communal activities are a vital part of vibrant community life; Family Enrichment Centers (FECs) provide just that. FECs have also been essential to maintaining health and wellbeing in communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At Good Shepherd Services, we are thrilled to continue partnering with the East New York community through our FEC to empower and equip families and their children to thrive and flourish," **said Michelle Yanche, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services and partner with the Community Resources In Brooklyn FEC located in East New York.**

"Bridge Builders and The Children's Village are extremely excited and humbled that ACS has selected us to operate the Family Enrichment Center (FEC) for an additional three-year period. The Circle of Dreams FEC strives to provide members of the Highbridge Community opportunities through "offerings" that will help them realize their true potential while affording them the ability to assist their neighbors. For the last three years, the Circle of Dreams FEC has provided families with a safe, inviting environment that the community can be proud of and truly embrace. We at the Circle of Dreams recognize that the success of the FECs over these past years are mainly due to the resilience of community members who view the staff as their extended family and the FEC as their second home. Bridge Builders is honored to be a part of this journey standing alongside the amazing community of Highbridge, ACS and our local leaders. We are truly grateful for this award and are eager to see what the future holds," **said Warren Kent, Vice President for Community Based Services The Children's Village and, Executive Director, Bridge Builders Inc.**

"We at Graham are privileged to be a part of the Hunts Point and Longwood communities and to help lift up the enormous strength there. We are thrilled to continue to partner with local leaders, businesses, and civic organizations, providing the space and opportunity for dreaming big dreams, for community and personal connection, and for delivering the support families tell us is most helpful in their lives. The community named the Family Enrichment Center in Hunts Point/Longwood "O.U.R. Place" and our fabulous team strives every day to live up to that name,

making sure it always feels like home," **said Jess Dannhauser, CEO & Kym Watson, President.**

"Family Enrichment Centers are an incredibly valuable and important resource for our communities, offering wide ranging services, supports, and primary intervention. I look forward to Bridge Builders & Children's Village, Graham Windham, and Good Shepherd Services building upon the good work they have already accomplished within the FECs to the benefit of New York's families," **said Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the Children and Families Committee.**

The agency's primary prevention approach, including the implementation of the FECs, is just one of the ways in which ACS has been working to address racial disproportionality across the child welfare system. ACS is committed to ensuring that equity strategies are both innovative and evidence-based. The FEC approach helps to ensure that families disproportionately impacted by systemic racism, trauma and poverty are provided opportunities in their own neighborhoods, to raise healthy and resilient children. In January 2019, ACS re-launched its coalition-based Community Partnership model which relies on community leaders and providers to connect families to resources, using Collective Impact, 2Generation and Equity as operating frameworks. In July, ACS launched its redesigned prevention services system. The new system offers universal access to the full range of programs to all families across the City, regardless of where they live, expands therapeutic supports to families, increases parent voice and choice in service delivery and promotes racial equity through mandated efforts to address racial disparities in all programs. Additionally, ACS is currently implementing its Equity Action Plan, which addresses racial disparities across the child welfare system. The plan is being led by the ACS Office of Equity Strategies, a dedicated office that works to develop and advance practices that reduce disparities in outcomes for children and families that are the result of biased based on race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression and/or sexual orientation.

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