

COMMUNITY ROOTS NEWS

SPRING 2016



COMMUNITY Growing and learning together

At Community Roots students learn through a community-based education model. We believe that children learn best when they do so alongside their peers and are then able to gain a depth of understanding through a variety of perspectives and experiences. We also believe that our families are important members of our community and that their experiences are enriched through developing relationships with other families.

Our integrated studies curriculum begins in Kindergarten with concepts that start with our students' identities and extend to their families and communities. Students then use what they have learned about who they are (their own cultures, neighborhoods, and belief systems) and use that lens to look at events, people, and places in history. They are taught the skills to formulate meaningful questions, draw similarities, and look for answers that lead to a deeper understanding of content.

To be effective, our community work needs to also embrace our families. We work hard to create spaces where our students and their families can come together, have a shared experience, and learn alongside one another. We are proud of the success of our adult and family programs like COOKS: a parent-led, adult cooking class; COW: a family-staff extracurricular workshop collaborative; elementary and middle school LSA: a series of student-led community service projects; and Community Sing which you can read more about in this newsletter.

It is through our intentional work with our students and their families that our concept of 'community' is developed and deeply understood. We are so grateful to have a community who is willing to be on this journey together. We hope you enjoy the stories in this newsletter that share some of these personal experiences of collaboration at Community Roots.

Sincerely,

Allison Keil, Co-Founder & Elementary School Co-Director
Sara Stone, Co-Founder & Elementary School Co-Director
Sarah Weeks, Middle School Co-Director
Perren Peterson, Middle School Co-Director

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ROOTS RUN DEEP..AND FAR!

Meet our marathon team going the distance for CRCS!

This November and for the first time ever, Community Roots will have our own team in the New York City Marathon. These runners, new and experienced, are dedicated to crossing the finish line while collectively raising money to support Community Roots Charter School. To support any of our runners, please donate to their fundraising pages at www.crowdrise.com/communityrootsnyc2016.



Kristen



Rich



Flávia



Abi



Chris

Is this your first Marathon?

RICH: This is my 5th marathon and 4th time running NYC (I ran Boston once). I've run and raised money for Team Continuum in the past.

KRISTEN: This is my first marathon! I've ran two half-marathons and have always wanted to run a full marathon. Thinking about getting to run the NYC marathon in honor of CRCS brings a huge smile to my face.

What about Community Roots inspires you to raise money for us?

RICH: CRCS is near and dear to my heart with my wife being part of the staff and my daughter beginning there in September. The work that is done by the staff and their dedication to the community has really been inspiring to watch develop over the years. It's an honor to be able to support the school by raising money and running.

ABI: Community Roots has improved my daughter's confidence, critical thinking, math, and reading while teaching her the importance of teamwork. Her autism makes learning and collaborating more challenging and Community Roots has been our partner since day one.

In the spirit of "working hard" what do you anticipate being your biggest training challenge and how will you overcome it?

CHRIS: My biggest challenge is finding time to get out and do the workouts. I love running but it's not always easy to find time with three kids, a couple of dogs and a small business. I'm working on being more organized this season and using my helpers more efficiently to help make more time for me.

ABI: The biggest training challenge is training while I have health challenges. I am battling breast cancer while managing Crohn's disease and arthritis. Attempting to train independently and trying to find time around a demanding work schedule while in constant pain is extremely challenging. However, I want to raise awareness for anyone that has a goal in mind, especially for my daughters. Never allow your circumstance to defeat you.

Where are your favorite places to run in the neighborhood and why?

CHRIS: I love running Fort Greene Park. It's perfect for a moderate distance run and it's easy to work in the stairs for a little extra challenge. For a longer run, I'm into running the bridges. It's always inspiring to hit the peak of the bridge and take in the city views.

FLÁVIA: My route always depends on the distance I need to go, the time of day, and my mood. Running up Vanderbilt Avenue and then the Prospect Park loop on a Saturday morning is a favorite because I experience the early beginnings of the brunch crowd followed by the farmers market at Grand Army Plaza. I also love going up Kent Avenue and across the Williamsburg bridge at night. The city view and fresh air as I cross the bridge are exhilarating.

What is one personal inspiration that gets you running?

KRISTEN: I remember when I ran my first half and every weekend I had to run a mile longer than the week before. That last mile was always the hardest. Every step of that additional mile I would say to myself, this is longest you've ever run in your life. At the end, I would be exhausted and ecstatic. That feeling keeps me running.

FLÁVIA: My dad. An avid runner his whole life, he was my original inspiration and continues to drive me today. I love to make him proud.

In one word share how you feel about this opportunity:

RICH: Honored **CHRIS:** Excited
KRISTEN: Honored **FLÁVIA:** Honored
ABI: Blessed

PARENT CORNER WITH RACHEL GRADY

I had an unusual start to CRCS.

I was told by a trusted friend that I had to apply but I shouldn't bother visiting the school because I won't get in and I'll be really sad. So I applied and I also applied to every other school.

We didn't get in anywhere and we ended up going to a zone school. The school was fine but it didn't feel like the right match. My child, who prior to school, has been encouraged to be interested and curious, was now getting in trouble every single day. It was heartbreaking, but we resigned to that being our lives for the rest of the year until we could re-apply to schools and hopefully get in somewhere else.

Five weeks into the year I received an automated text saying that a spot has opened at Community Roots and to respond 1 for Yes. I thought it was a glitch but I did it anyway and minutes later I got a call from Sandy in the office.

I had all the natural hesitations of switching schools and how changing his environment would affect him. We scheduled a site visit and within five minutes I knew this was the place for us.

Community Roots embraced us immediately. Desi jumped right into the Bread Study where he literally broke bread with kids in his class that look and live differently. Through this experience he has found a sense of safety in trying new things and finding connections with other kids. Shortly after I received an email from his teachers sharing that they think he's so smart and funny and that they love him. I cannot express how important and comforting that validation is for a parent.

Since he started here we've been taking academic hurdles positively-- my son reads now and he's proud to read but our experience goes deeper than school work. Desi has a stronger sense of empathy and compassion that I can

strongly credit to the emphasis on inclusion and diversity at this school, even as a five-year-old in kindergarten.

I feel so much appreciation for the creativity and dedication of the educators and staff at Community Roots. In looking back on our year at Community Roots I'm filled with excitement for the many more to come. What a place we would live in if every child could have this experience.



Left to Right: Josh, Desmond and Rachel

COMMUNITY SING

Each month K-5 students join together to showcase the music they have been learning in class. This community time is an opportunity for students, families and staff to share together and celebrate our community.

"The idea was to create a space for all of the kids to be together," said Jaquetta, K-5 Music Teacher. Community Sing began in Spring of 2009 as it begins every month, with Jambo. Since then, Community Sing has evolved to a student-led program where each grade leads the rest of the school in a collective voice. "It's really special to see the Kindergarteners leading 300 plus people in song."

"A lot of the songs we do are older songs, for lots of reasons. It's important to keep a culture of storytelling through song alive," said Jaquetta. "So we'll do a mix of new songs like Bruno Mars and some classic Cat Stevens and families can make these connections through their feelings tied to these songs."

All of Community Sing comes out of music class. Students make music together and agree that a certain piece is something they are proud to share or want to build on.

Collaboration and song doesn't stop with the students. Jaquetta and the teachers work together to integrate arts and song into the social studies curriculum. "The 5th graders are studying the Black Freedom Movement and we really talked through how to use song as a pathway to learning," said Jaquetta. "We studied songs of protest followed by conversations about styles and music as a communication tool."



“Singing can bind and move people. Inspire and give strength. Community Sing allows us all to personally feel the power of that.”

SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER



Community Roots Charter School



@communityrootsnyc

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