



HEART Matters

Fall 2009
Newsletter

Developing a more compassionate world through education

OUR MISSION

To foster compassion and respect toward other people, animals and the environment by educating youth and teachers in Humane Education.



Welcoming students at Hunts Point Alliance for Children



Park Slope Summer Camp nature outing



Humane Living Leadership Club at Mamaroneck Avenue School

Making our Mark on Humane Education

Message from HEART's Executive Director and Chair

Welcome to another edition of HEART Matters. We are excited to update you on our efforts to mainstream humane education into our educational system. The need for humane education is great, but there are very few organizations capable of delivering humane education instruction to youth and teachers. HEART has worked very hard to develop the programming we now have in place and we are pleased to say our services are in ever increasing demand. Over recent months we have been focused on enhancing the experiential learning component of our program and that effort is being featured in this newsletter.

We are fortunate to be able to witness the power of humane education every day. It can be seen in our students who are captivated by being taught important social justice, animal welfare and environmental protection issues, and given the tools to take personal action to foster a more compassionate world. We also see it in the teachers and administrators who welcome us into their schools and appreciate the role we are providing in developing more caring students. Finally, we see it in our staff of skilled instructors who have the energy and dedication to teach youth about the issues they personally care so much about.

We hope HEART Matters will give you a glimpse of the vital role we believe our programs play in the education of our youth. We are moving ahead full steam on multiple fronts to achieve our ambitious goals. We expect to reach over 3,500 students this academic year.

HEART cannot accomplish our objectives without the generosity and encouragement of all of you who share our vision. We truly thank you for your support.

Humanelly yours,

Meena Alagappan, Esq.
Executive Director

Brad Goldberg
Chair

Have a HEART 4th Annual Online Auction Nov. 11 - 25

Just in time for the holiday shopping season, HEART is holding our fourth annual fundraising auction. Visit www.charitybuzz.com to bid on exciting items such as signed scrubs from the cast of Grey's Anatomy, vintage and handmade jewelry, Peanuts artwork, getaways to the Loews Portofino Bay Resort in Orlando and to the Acqualina Resort and Spa in Sunny Isles, FL as well as many more fabulous items.

HEART's Team of Instructors

We asked our talented teachers to describe one of their most memorable experiences as a humane educator and here is what they had to say...

From our NY office:

Kimberly Korona- “One moment that sticks with me is the reaction of a fourth grade girl to two classes I taught about child labor and puppy mills. The girl said, ‘It seems like the children and the dogs are being taken advantage of in the same way; being forced to do something against their will, and treated badly, for someone else’s profit. I think that is wrong.’ I was moved by her insight and ability to make that connection. It was a perfect demonstration of how these topics are interconnected and why HEART teaches about compassion toward people, animals, and the planet.”



Casey Sullivan- “Working at a camp this summer, I led a lesson on ants, teaching students how they might experience the world if they put themselves in the place of ants. Most of the students had mentioned that they hated ants, that ants would either steal their food or bite them. By the end, students were fascinated by ants and, as we went on a nature walk that afternoon, they spontaneously collected handfuls of dropped berries and leaves to give to the insects that they passed by. It definitely shows how a little education can transform the way people think about the other creatures with which they share the world.”



Karina Naumer- “During a HEART session a 2nd grader shared a very sad incident that he had recently experienced at home. It was the first time he had spoken of it at school. Though sharing personal stories was not part of the class lesson, his teacher thought that he was able to speak about it because he felt very comfortable and safe in the HEART program. I am proud that at HEART we create safe environments where children like this boy feel comfortable sharing their deep experiences and feelings. I believe that as teachers the classroom environments we foster are just as important as the subjects we teach.”



Jeannie Russell- “Last year we taught our new service learning course for the first time to a group of 5th graders in the Bronx. One of the brainstorm groups had a member whom I had noticed usually sat up front by herself, often the sign of a student in need of special attention from the teacher. When the time came to share in the large group, the ‘special needs’ girl, to my surprise, took the lead as the group spokesperson, and explained their idea. As she finished, her teacher rushed over to the table and hugged her, saying he had never heard her speak up like that in class, and telling her how proud he was of her.”



Ali Berman- “During our lesson on sweatshop labor my 5th grade kids learned that a large well known company was caught using sweatshops. Each student wrote a letter to that company, but wanted to do more. So they created a petition, collected over 300 signatures, and sent it to the President of the Ethics Office. The company responded, was impressed by their efforts and assured the students it would do everything possible to prevent ever using sweatshops again.”



From our Chicago office:

Bob Schwalb- “A while back, I worked with the 5th graders at P.S. 65 on a day-long cleanup and beautification of nearby St. Mary's Park. I was struck by the students' enthusiasm as they went about planting flowers, picking up trash, painting walls, and generally making the park a nicer place. There was no monetary compensation and their grades weren't affected by their participation. Cleaning up the park that day was the most important thing they could be doing. Witnessing their efforts gave me yet more inspiration to work with youth to bring out their incredible ability to transform this world into a better place.”



Samantha Gentrup- “An experience I loved was when my students reached out to help companion animals at a local shelter. They had been learning about the issues facing companion animals, such as homelessness, and felt so strongly about this issue that they created a humane teen club and began volunteering at a local animal shelter. The club grew and gained momentum, and these students decided to go even further by holding a fundraising event resulting in 8 of the shelter's dogs being adopted and raising over \$2,000. The success of the event received recognition from the Humane Society of the US, and it was decided to repeat the event annually.”



Our Expanded Service Learning Initiative

HEART has been hard at work bringing our curriculum more fully into the daily lives and communities of our students by expanding our program to offer a range of service learning opportunities. This experiential learning component has become a major focus of our work because it is a tangible way to illustrate to our students that they really can do something to make a difference. Below are some recent examples of exciting service-related activities.

- We implemented a semester-long service learning curriculum for the 5th grade students at P.S. 36 in the east Bronx. This unique curriculum is flexibly designed to provide an overview of



core humane education topics and then focuses on building the basic skills needed to create and effectively implement a meaningful community service project. The students conducted educational presentations for their peers in grades 3-5 on climate change, urban biodiversity and companion animal homelessness. They also made a carbon footprint pledge wall, feeders and planters out of recycled material, and a set of educational animal care posters and cat play houses that were donated to a local animal rescue organization.

- HEART collaborated with Wildcat Academy Charter School in the Bronx on a community outreach effort



to celebrate Earth Day. We offered educational information and hands-on activities that were designed to be intergenerational so that young children to adults could participate together in learning about helping the planet in a fun and dynamic way. Participants decorated fair-trade, recycled canvas bags to take home, planted herbs, and made eco-friendly, cruelty-free household cleaners.

- HEART also partnered with other non-profit groups to offer mini humane education service workshops, such as with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Animal Haven for National Youth Service Day as well as NY Week for the Animals, McBurney YMCA's Teen Action Program, and Young Heroes City Year, to name a few.



- Another form of service learning was through field trips. Middle school students in an animal protection elective we co-taught at the Salk School of Science in Manhattan had the opportunity to go to a

sewing studio to make dog beds and cat toys to be donated to Brooklyn Animal Care and Control. They also had the opportunity to meet rescued farm animals at Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary and assist with farm chores.

- HEART was engaged in several summer camps, which allowed more time for experiential learning. The most extensive program was at The POINT Summer Camp in the Bronx. Campers learned about many humane education issues and at the end of the summer completed culminating projects ranging from planting wildflowers in the neighborhood and preparing a global warming zine to making forts for homeless cats and creating informative posters about puppy mills.



We plan to continue growing and enhancing our service learning efforts to offer our youth the tools and information they need to spark awareness and turn it into action.

Recent News

- In partnership with the United Federation of Teachers' Humane Education Committee and the ASPCA, we are currently conducting a **30 hour credit bearing P-course for elementary school teachers**, approved by the NYC Department of Education, designed to promote success in science and literacy through humane education. This 3-credit course can also be used toward a salary differential for NYC schoolteachers.



- HEART collaborated with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Animal Haven to celebrate **NY's first Week for the Animals** from October 10th-18th. Matches of "Littles" ages 11 and up with their "Bigs" participated in service projects to benefit homeless animals, toured Animal Haven's adoption center and

talked to Animal Haven's veterinary technician about a career working with animals.

- Last spring we successfully launched our **joint humane education public service project with the American Bar Association** in NYC and Washington, D.C. HEART trained volunteer attorneys and law students to teach a four lesson program on animal welfare to 4th and 5th graders and volunteers are continuing to teach at local elementary schools this fall. We co-authored an extensive humane education training manual with the ABA that was distributed to volunteers as part of our workshops. We are pleased to announce that this program will be offered in Chicago in 2010.



- We expanded our humane education program to Chicago in January 2009. **HEART Chicago** is implementing our curriculum in six schools, reaching students in grades four through twelve. To develop relationships with additional schools, we began collaborating with Communities in Schools, which has led to a waiting list of schools that are eager to implement our lessons.

Legislative Update

HEART has focused its humane education advocacy efforts in the New York City Council and the New York State legislature to help strengthen enforcement of humane education mandates.

- The NYC Council passed, and HEART supported, Resolution 1541 which calls on the NYC DOE to survey schools for non-compliance with various curricular mandates in the state education law, including instruction in the humane treatment of animals, and to assist schools that are not in compliance to fully comply.
- We secured support from NYS Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh to sponsor A. 427, which would amend the NYS Education Law to include a two-hour teacher training certification requirement in humane education.
- HEART also secured the support of NYS Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal to sponsor A. 6126, which would expand the humane education mandate to middle schools and high schools, instead of just elementary schools.

New York Has HEART

We are pleased to share that HEART has been awarded \$46,500 for Fiscal Year 2010 from various New York City Council Members to support implementation of our Humane Living Program at public schools in their districts:

- \$8,000 from Maria del Carmen Arroyo (Bronx-17)
- \$5,000 from Tony Avella (Queens-19)
- \$10,000 from Sara Gonzalez (Brooklyn-38)
- \$5,000 from Melissa Mark-Viverito (Manhattan-8)
- \$3,500 from Rosie Mendez (Manhattan-2)
- \$15,000 from Annabel Palma (Bronx-18)

In addition, at the state level, New York State Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh (Manhattan-74) awarded us \$3,000, and NYS Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (Westchester-37) awarded us \$2,000, to bring our humane education programs to students in their districts.

HEART's services rely on the generosity of individuals like you who are dedicated to humane living.

Your contribution can be mailed to: HEART, P.O. Box 738, Mamaroneck, NY 10543. Or your donation can be made through our website- www.teachhumane.org. All gifts are enormously appreciated! For more information, please contact: Meena Alagappan, Executive Director, at 212.744.2504 and via email at meena@teachhumane.org.

