



From Our House to Yours

Caroline House News
Fall 2016

Where Great Minds *Grow!*

Caroline House Mission

*To enable women
and children
to reach the fullness
of their potential
through education
in English language
and life skills.*




Caroline House
An Educational Center for Women & Their Children

*Founded and sponsored by
the
School Sisters
of Notre Dame*

574 Stillman St
Bridgeport, CT 06608

Tel: (203) 334-0640

www.thecarolinehouse.org

“Caroline House has been a blessing in my life, because here I found love, friendship, peace, trust and above all else, teaching. Not only academic, but also personal and spiritual teaching... These women have kindness in their hearts. They want to share this goodness with us, and they do. They give their time and expertise. More importantly, they give us something priceless – *an education*. **Women, don’t let anyone or anything take away your desire for an education, because it is the greatest treasure that someone can have.**” ~ Josephina

Caroline House

Executive Director / President of the Corporation

Lucy Freeman

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Jean Fredricks, Preschool Director

Mary Lou Kasper, Bookkeeper

Betty King, CND, Teacher

Cyndie LaMastra, Grant Writer / IT

Mary Lynch, SSND, Teacher

Christine Paine, Development Director

Joan Pollack, Program Assistant

Katerina Vlahos, Preschool Assistant

Kate Whalen, SSND, Teacher

Continuing the Caroline House Mission

On September 12, 2016, we officially and warmly welcomed Lucy Freeman as Executive Director of Caroline House. Lucy brings almost three decades of experience working with homeless and underserved families in government and private agencies within the Fairfield County area.

Lucy succeeds Sister Peg Regan, SSND, whose six-year tenure as Executive Director has brought many positive changes and successes for Caroline House. Sister Peg has shared her caring and bright spirit with every person who walks through our door, and we are blessed that she will continue to



Lucy Freeman and Sister Peg Regan, SSND

stay involved while also branching out to dedicate her gifts to teaching English to women in Norwalk and Stamford. We are delighted that Sister Peg will continue to teach our weekly citizenship classes.

“I am humbled and excited to lead Caroline House into its next chapter,” Lucy Freeman has remarked. “As I learn more about the details behind this wonderful ministry, I feel as though the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Executive Directors of Caroline House through the years – Sisters Mary Lennon, Karen Kane, Brenda Lynch, Maureen Fleming, Ann Moles, and Peg Regan – have placed us in a position to take major steps in our progression.

“I am grateful to all who have made such an impact on the continuance of this ministry. Because of you, Caroline House has been able to provide ESL and life skills training to hundreds of mothers and children. Most importantly, you have given hope to our students for a better and brighter future.”

Our Jesuit Volunteers

Passionately Serving for Social Justice

We are in our fourth year of having a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps serving with us, and we now cannot imagine Caroline House without these caring and hardworking members of our family.

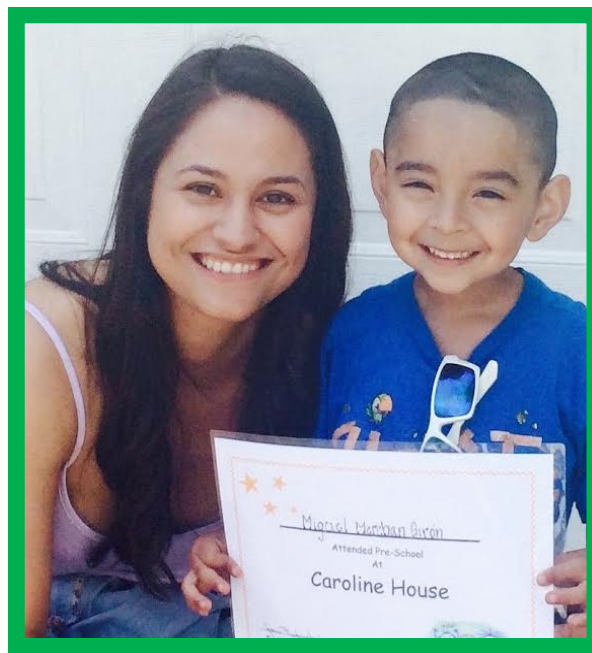


Taylor Barrow is our current J.V. She is originally from Detroit Michigan; however, she is no stranger to the East Coast having graduated from Boston University this past May where she majored in Biology and Sociology. So far, Taylor has fallen easily into place here and truly feels lucky to be able to call Caroline House a home. She wears many hats, from singing *Old McDonald* with the preschoolers, to coordinating student volunteers, to translating for students and staff.

“Caroline House has given me such an appreciation for women-run spaces. We cultivate a sisterhood here, one that reaches beyond education. This is a place where women - both staff and students - can feel safe, empowered and vulnerable if needed. To me, that is wonderfully radical.”

Janis Segura served during the 2015-16 program year. Hailing from New Jersey, Janis attended the University of Scranton, receiving a degree in Finance. Throughout the year, she co-taught women’s level 3 ESL and was often used as an interpreter. Janis especially enjoyed working in the preschool playing with the children (and playing pranks on Preschool Director Jean Fredricks!) She also worked with the after-school tutoring and taught the journaling class over the summer. After Caroline House, Janis is continuing to work with the low income population at Breaking Ground in New York City.

“I created amazing relationships not only with the staff but with the women and children. I bonded with the after-school kids who were full of energy and were always showing me new dance moves. They kept me on my toes!”



The Children's Corner

by Jean Fredricks, Preschool Director

It is hard to believe that another school year has begun. I look back at my sixteen years at Caroline House and marvel at how far we have come with building expansions, new equipment, college volunteers, and more recently we have added Jesuit Volunteers. Scores of women and children have received a priceless education, not only learning language and literacy but also gaining life skills and friendships. Countless times we hear from women, *"I had no one...no family and no friends. Then I came to Caroline House and now the people here are like my family."*

Recently, several women and children came back for a visit. It was wonderful to hear how well they are doing and how much they appreciated their time at Caroline House.



Preschool Friends Forever



Miguel with Animal Embassy's frog lovingly named after Miss Jean.

Animal Embassy has been visiting the classroom each month bringing a fantastic array of animals. Each visit has a theme to help the children learn about the animals we share the planet with. It has also been a great way to still the fears some of the children have about animals. We have all learned how to touch a snake or lizard, gently hold a bunny, and only pet the back side of a snapping turtle. I recently had the honor of having Animal Embassy's new exotic frog named after me!

In May we made our annual trip to the **Bronx Zoo**. The wonder and excitement of the children were overwhelming, and we are so grateful to all our donors who made our trip possible.

We recently acquired a finely crafted three-tiered water table through a generous grant from the **Kiwanis Club of Weston**. It has been a fun and very wet learning experience! The children have been learning about the flow of water, what sinks or floats, and what happens when you pull the plug.



Our new sand and water table!

One of the children's favorite books is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. We decided to expand the mothers' and children's palates by having a tasting. All the foods the caterpillar eats in the book were served. Some foods were greeted with delight when tasted, such as ice cream and strawberries. (Some were greeted with horror, such as pickles and leaves!) In every newsletter I invite our faithful readers to join our children for lunch. Please take us up on the invite...no leaves will be served!

Making the Grade Summer Program is a Success

Learning, laughing, and keeping it cool... that's what children in grades 2 through 8 were doing in our 2016 Summer Program.

Thanks to more than 90 enthusiastic high school, college, and adult volunteer tutors, during the 3-week program over 40 school-age children engaged in reading, math, journaling, art, outdoor games, and much more!



After-School Tutoring is Underway

Teens and adults – are you looking to make a difference in a young person's life?

After-School Tutoring has begun on Monday and Thursday afternoons for the 2016-2017 school year. We would love to have YOU join us. We guarantee that you and the children you tutor will benefit from the experience!

Please email **Diane Johnson** at radydian@optonline.net if you are interested in being a volunteer tutor or to learn more about the program.



Volunteer Voices

*“We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean.
But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.”
- Mother Teresa*

When she was almost 11, her mother told her to marry a man. She loved her mother, did what she was told; she became a wife at age 11. The reason behind her mother’s advice, I cannot say. Perhaps the mother wanted a better life for her daughter. Perhaps it was a step up. Maybe, but I don’t know. The 11-year-old girl became a woman and had five children along the way, one of whom she’s sent to Heaven.

Today, she is a grandmother of ten and one of my favorite students. She tries so hard. We start with the ABCs. “This is ‘I’ not ‘E,’” I say. “This is ‘H.’ Say ‘errrr’ like you’re very angry.” “Errrr,” she says 15 minutes later. “You did it. Great! Now say these words: girl, pearl, very, early, worried, married, buried.” She does. She writes the words. She never gives up.

This beautiful woman is learning how to read and write in English. Progress is slow; classes are repeated. It’s tedious work...for her; for me. But she reads and writes a little more and incorporates new words into her vocabulary each and every day. And when she gets her Certificate of Completion, the first diploma-type document she has ever received, she holds back her prideful smile. Then she looks up at me; and well, I’m not as strong as she... I’m dropping tears.

- Diana O’Branski

Diana O’Branski has been volunteering at Caroline House for two years. In addition to teaching ESL classes, Diana dedicates her time and talents to help teach Citizenship classes.



**Volunteer Diana O’Branski
(center) with students Amelia (L)
and Yvelice (R)**

Q & A with a Caroline House Student

Claudia grew up in Mexico. She left school after sixth grade and began working to help her mother provide for their family. Claudia worked several jobs as a young girl and throughout her teens. She married and then moved to the U.S. with her husband seven years ago. She is currently enrolled in our Level 2 ESL class. Her daughter Lupe is three years old and attends our preschool program.

How did you first hear about Caroline House?

My mother-in-law learned English here in 2009 and 2010. She told me, "Caroline House is a very good place. Everybody is very friendly."

Why did you decide to enroll in our classes?

I want to learn English, because I need to understand and speak English if I go to the store or the hospital or especially when my daughter starts school. I used to cry sometimes because everybody seemed to know English and I didn't.

What has been the most challenging part of your experience so far?

English is a hard language to learn! I am still learning to say things like, "The sun is not shining." instead of "The sun is not shine." We are learning about contractions; I still get confused when I hear someone say "isn't" or "aren't" instead of "is not" or "are not."

What do you like best about Caroline House?

The teachers. They have helped me since I first came here and didn't understand any English. When I come to Caroline House I feel good, because everyone says, "hello," and "good morning,"... it's comfortable. My teachers help me so much. I like to come here.

Have your classes helped you outside the classroom?

I am much more comfortable speaking English with other people. When people say, "Good morning," "How are you?" or "What time is it?" I understand! And I can answer in English. When I go to the clinic, I can read the signs and speak with the doctor in English. I also read stories to my daughter in English and watch the news on TV. My husband encourages me to watch movies with him in English.



"Read to me, Mama!" Lupe says to mom Claudia. Above they read Lupe's favorite book *Night-Night Little Pookie* by Sandra Boynton.

How is your daughter Lupe doing in the preschool program?

When I brought Lupe here last year, she didn't speak any English. Now she speaks English. At home, Lupe and her dad always speak to each other in English. At first Lupe was scared coming to the preschool. Now she is very social. She is more outgoing, even outside of Caroline House. She helps me more at home; she taught me "The Clean-up Song" that she learned in her class! Her writing and coloring have improved, too.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

I hope that my daughter will be doing well in school and that my husband will still be working. I would also like to have a job working with children or as a hair stylist or makeup artist.

My husband, daughter and I share a 2-bedroom apartment with my husband's parents and my brother- and sister-in-law. I really dream that my husband and I will own our own house one day.



Playing and bonding in the preschool classroom.

Financial Summary 2015-2016

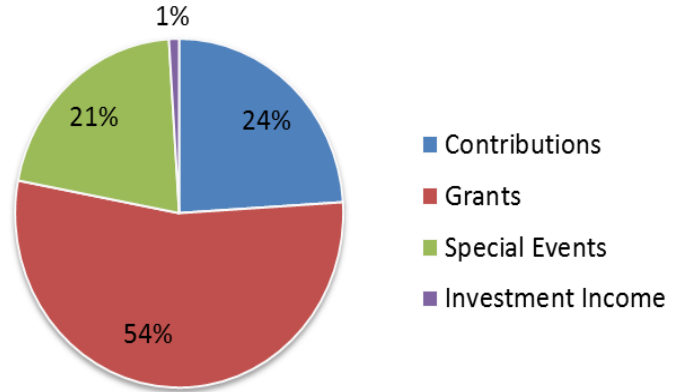
Caroline House is committed to responsible stewardship of all donations received. Support strengthens our programs and services to help **over 200 low-income women and children each year transform their lives through education.**

Total public support and revenue for fiscal year 2015-2016 was \$579,351. Funding was received through the generous support of individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations and from investment income. Expenses totaled \$477,679 for program services and supporting services.

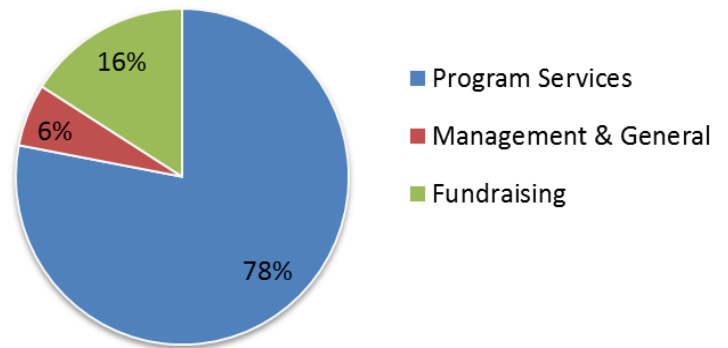


Donor support provides programs that bring families together through language and learning.

Support and Revenue



Expenses



Leave a Legacy of Hope

Planned gifts such as bequests, trusts and charitable gift annuities are a wonderful way to leave a legacy. These charitable gifts allow you to strengthen the future of Caroline House and offer the possibility of increased income and/or tax savings now.

We encourage you to inform us about these gifts now, so we can take the opportunity to thank you for your generosity. For more information, contact Christine Paine at (203) 334-0640 or cpaine@thecarolinehouse.org.



Events and Activities



Caroline House Tour Tuesdays

We're rolling out the welcome mat!

- * Every Tuesday Caroline House offers tours of our center between 9:30 AM and 12:00 PM.
- * See our programs in action and learn about the many ways you can support the ministry of Caroline House.
- * To make an appointment contact Christine Paine at (203) 334-0640 or cpaine@thecarolinehouse.org

Starry Night

It's not too early to reach for the stars!

Mark your calendars for Caroline House's signature gala on **Friday, April 21, 2017, at the Inn at Longshore in Westport.**

Caroline House Award Honorees:

100+ Women Who Care—Fairfield County, CT, Beth Kisielius, Tracy Yost



Check out our website for more information at www.thecarolinehouse.org. Interested in being an Event Sponsor? Contact Christine Paine (203) 334-0640 or cpaine@thecarolinehouse.org.



Sister Kate Whalen, SSND, discusses the history of Caroline House with students.

Celebrating Foundation Day

On October 24th we gathered to celebrate Foundation Day, honoring the 183rd anniversary of the date when Caroline Gerhardinger - who later became Mother Theresa Gerhardinger, SSND - began a community of religious women in Bavaria. Sister Eileen Denny said that Mother Theresa was the foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Mother Theresa believed that **the education of women would transform families.**

After asking students, **"Why are we called Caroline House?"** Sister Eileen shared the story of the life of Sister Caroline. She was born in France, moved to Germany as a young girl, and was later received into the congregation by Mother Theresa. Sister Caroline was a resourceful, strong, and hard-working young woman who volunteered to come to the U.S. as a missionary when she was 22 years old. She became Mother Caroline, and she expanded the SSND's educational ministry serving youth, women and the poor throughout North America. Sister Eileen remarked, **"We are proud to have Caroline House named after this great woman."**



Sister Eileen Denny, SSND (fourth from left) with her students on Foundation Day.

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Scan this QR code to visit our website — get the latest info about programs & volunteer opportunities, register for events, and more!

Greetings from Executive Director Lucy Freeman



Dear Friends,

It is an honor to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Caroline House. I am excited to be a part of this ministry that has been providing education, hope, encouragement and companionship to women and children for over 21 years.

I have spent approximately 30 years working with underserved populations, especially individuals and families experiencing homelessness as a result of limited education and job skills. I have worked in substance abuse and mental health treatment facilities and shelters in lower Fairfield County and New York City. I hold a Master of Science degree in Human Service Administration from New Hampshire College.

I am the mother of two amazing daughters, ages 19 and 25, and the wife of Levon Freeman, a Community Clinician for the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in Bridgeport. Together we have dedicated our lives to helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

For those of you who may not be familiar with Caroline House, I invite you to one of our “Tour Tuesdays,” when we welcome you to meet our students, volunteers and staff and witness our life-changing work in action. For those currently involved with us, I hope you’ll continue to stay engaged and to stand with us along our journey to empower women and children to learn English and gain access to opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.

Lucy Freeman
Executive Director