

PROJECT UPDATE



VOLUME 23 NOVEMBER 1996

PLAYING WITH FIRE: THE REPORT

This summer the Project helped twenty kids play with fire! We gave them matches and some old rags soaked in gasoline and then... Actually, **Playing With Fire** was the theme for this summer's annual One-on-One productions. Ten kids and adults spent a week on Block Island and another group went through the same rigmarole in Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania.



STEPHANIE BERGER

Thom Babe and his insect legs (Nat Magee, Noah and Aidan Walsh) meet their nemesis Jonathan Brown on Block Island.

One of the particularly hot moments in the July shows was had by **Tanika Parsons** up on the tightrope in "High Wire Act." Halfway through the run her adult partner **Dion Graham** had to leave town unexpectedly and his emergency replacement was none other than Project teenager **Victor Rojas**! **Jonathan Brown** faced his fear of bugs (and of **Thom Babe**) in "ID5." **Rufus Read** nobly suffered through the humiliations of being a jester in "Jester Minute." **Alex Cooper** gave James Bond a run for his money in "Why Spy" and nabbed the evil Dr. Korrupto, whose brain was so twisted he could barely remember his lines! **Candy Godoy** predicted the future (and helped 5 year old cameo king **Nat Magee** find his light onstage) in "Keeper of the Flame" written by **Rusty Magee** and **Alison Fraser**. **Jason Prieto** showed he was tough enough to face down the devil in "Melvin at the Midway." **Osage Lewis** and **Robert Jimenez**

realized their dream of fame and fortune in "Buddies" by Susan Kim. In "The Other" by **Lili Taylor**, **Marcsi Mysak** portrayed an actress who faces the dark side of her personality. **Jonathan Santiago** and **Willie** sang a love song that left the audience swooning in "The Most Dangerous Play You Will See This Evening (Or Maybe Ever)." And **Charina Corbett** was typecast as the Queen of all she surveys in **Cindy Lou Johnson's** "Alexandra the Greatest."



Natalie Musteata (aka Fearless Fran) wrestles an alligator in Tyler Hill, Pa.

Wow, you say. That's enough fire to burn down the City of Chicago! Well my friend, we didn't stop there. In August we hightailed it up to Tyler Hill, Pennsylvania. **Noel Polanco** and **Michael** rewrote history and saved a few bunnies in "Revisionist History." **Jeff Williams** and **Hakim Latimore** faced the dangerous perils of friendship in "Bravest of Heroes." **Stephanie Santana** shared her love of Carvel ice cream with **Wendy vanden Heuvel** who was "Dangerous When Pregnant," written by **Alexandra Gersten**. In "A Play on Playing with Fire," **William Brown** showed us he had the power to go insane AND get the girl. **Natalie Musteata** starred in "The Fable of Fearless Fran" where she played football, walked on a plane and had the power to stand up to her dad. **Hunter Reid-Eaton** showed us all how to shake yer alien booty in "Dependence Day." **Tessa John-Connor** was "Dangerously Funny" as Veronica the cat. **Carl Moon** threw off all convention in **Jerry McGill's** Pirandellian opus "Aint no Play." **Eddie Cooper** showed off his "Cool Hair" and finally **Jaya Rosado** showed us all the immeasurable "Value of Zero." The Block Island plays featured the music of **Rusty Magee** while Tyler Hill was scored by **Kysia Bostic**.

Special thanks to **Pat Walsh** and **Dr. Christina Biaggi** and **Eric Karpeles** and **Mike Sell** for the uses of the halls and also to **David Sneddon** and **Fairway** for the pro bono chow. MB



"I could never make one of those!"

Oh, you think so? Well, take a look at page 2.

WE RAN, AND RAN HARD.

We Ordered, and Ordered Boldly. We Ate, and Ate a Lot.



Our Race for the Arts Team hunkers down after breakfast (abdominal pains?)

That pretty much sums up The Race for the Arts for the Project team. Lisa Benavides, Sally Bock, Alex Draper, Genevieve Durham, Nancy Giles, Elizabeth Keiser, Eris Migliorini, Michaela Murphy, Victor Rojas, Tom Schall, Lorraine Tobias, and Mark Wurfel all burned then re-accumulated thousands of calories within the span of an hour.

Tom Schall came in first for the Project, finishing the 3.1 miles in just 22 minutes. Explaining his success, Tom said, "I don't know, I just freaked. There were all these people around and I had to get away from them." After all those grueling miles, we needed sustenance, so off we went to the Olympic Flame Diner. The boldest post-race repast winner was, hands down, Elizabeth Keiser with her Belgian waffle sundae. Alex Draper and Victor Rojas made strong showings with their steak and eggs specials.

So, together we trimmed down, bulked up, and increased arts awareness. In the parting words of Lorraine Tobias, "Next year 52 people from the Project should run." SB

FALL CLASSES

"Hmm," you're saying to yourself. "Now that the Project has moved into the new space I hope they make sure there is something going on after school every day, even though the extra work may exhaust the already incredibly hard-working staff." My goodness, you must be psychic, because that is exactly what is happening. The Project is launching an attractive line-up of fall classes, each one taught by a dedicated Project volunteer. Here's the rundown:

Hip Hop Dance

Taro Alexander and Texas Intern Genevieve Durham

Drawing and Painting

The artists of the Mikal Glass Studio

Design

Adrienne Lobel Baker

Pizza Baking

Jenny Gersten and Willie Reale

Holiday Cookie Baking

Sally Bock

Movie Night with discussion

Joe White

Movie Day with discussion

Phyllis Kaufman

Singing Group

Robin Morse and Cynthia Sophia

If you're a kid and want to take a class call Michael at 333-5252. If you're an adult and would like to offer a class, do the same. MB

FALL PRODUCTIONS

something's missing



Nov. 8, 9, and 10th
Performances at
Naked Angel's Theater 3
311 West 43rd St., 3rd Fl.

In the Project's Playback series, a kid goes off for a weekend and writes a play. Then, an adult partner writes an "answer" play. After that, the kid and the adult perform both their plays together. **Something's Missing** will feature seven plays written by kids during a weekend in Wareham, Mass. coupled with seven plays written by adults in grimy old New York. We hope you won't be missing when these plays debut. Admission is free, but be sure to call 642-5052 for reservations, 333-5252 for information.



As you are reading this, 10 kids, all of them new to the Project, are learning how to create searing dramas and scathing satires in a Playmaking class taught by Michael Bernard. After nine grueling weeks they will be deemed masters of their craft, ready to travel to their very own writer's retreat in Tyler Hill, PA. The plays they write on their weekend away will be cast with professional actors and performed on Dec. 13, 14, and 15th at a theatre to be announced.



Home At Last

Due to the vagaries of the writing, editing, printing, and mailing process, we can't be certain that this newsletter will arrive before *Home At Last*, the open-air grand opening of our new space. It's taking place (or took place) on Sat., Oct 19 at 12 pm on the corner of 52nd and 10th. If you're reading about it before the 19th, well, come on down! If it's now after that date, well, you should have been there; it was just grand. GB

SMART PARTNERS™

Everyone who has ever worked with the Project is aware of the phenomenon known as "The Miracle on 52nd Street." For some inexplicable reason all our kids are full-blown artistic geniuses. Now we figure that this can link into their academic lives as well so we've just started a new pilot program called *Smart Partners*. We've identified 10 Project kids who we think can do a lot better in school. With the help of veteran educators and volunteers **Edith Thurber** (who gets her name mentioned in yet another piece on this page) and **Nancy Jacobs**, we've paired each of these kids with one of our experienced adult volunteers. The adults will serve as academic mentors to their young charges, doing whatever is necessary to keep their kid on the right track. This could involve homework help, tutoring, nightly phone calls, or just plain making sure there's a light bulb in the kid's desk lamp.

To help with this goal, our rehearsal studio will double as a quiet afternoon study hall. **George** knocked together some folding work tables and **Carol** donated some track lighting to make the space real cozy-like.

We'll keep you apprised of the progress of *Smart Partners*. GB

PROJECT TEENS : SAT's :: HOT KNIVES : BUTTER

What, more educational news? Yep. This is the PBS of newsletters. We wanted you to know that we don't forget our cute little tykes when they become cute big teen-agers.



STEPHANIE BERGER

Kulondi & Victor or Fivey & Twoey?

Volunteer actress **Alison Tatlock** also happens to be a professional tutor. She's been leading some Scholastic Achievement Test preparation workshops for our college-bound teens. Frankly, we wish Alison had been there when we took our own SAT's. She is chock-full of tricks and techniques that can raise scores on standardized tests.

Incidentally, the tireless Project teens have not forsaken theatre. Their foray into Shakespeare last Spring has only whetted their appetites. The next hurdle: scenes from contemporary plays. GB

BUCKS FOR BOOKS

Edith Thurber and **Kevin O' Rourke** kindly opened their home in August for the annual Project scholarship party. This year \$9,250 was raised through the party and a \$5,000 grant from the **Pforzheimer Foundation**. We also owe some extra special thanks to **Kim Bendheim** for hitting up her great aunt for the great grant. This year's \$1000 scholarship winners were **Alex Bess** (SUNY Purchase), **Dawn Jackson** (Bard College), **Joanne Ramirez** (SUNY New Paltz), and **Cara Schultz** (Fordham). Students are encouraged to buy books with the funds and resist the impulse to buy that raccoon coat. SB

Funding Update



The following foundations and corporations recently made generous grants to The 52nd Street Project:

The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation	\$2,500
Holland Lodge	1,000
The Morgan Stanley Foundation	10,000
N.Y. State Council on the Arts	4,661
The Pumpkin Foundation	5,000
Sauce Entertainment	5,000
Seth Sprague Foundation	2,500

We are grateful to these organizations for their support, as well as to the many individuals who help sustain the Project's programs.

PROJECT WISH LIST

We've had a tremendous number of great things donated to us for our new space: A refrigerator, desks, chairs, a conference table, plants, appliances, carpeting, plates, computers, and one monster of a TV set. One of our most meaningful gifts was *Rent* author Jonathan Larson's entire collection of theater books (many thanks to his family). We're pretty well furnished right now, but there are a few more things we're looking for, namely...

BOOKS

We need to beef up our kid's library. As we become a first-class homework center, we could use a recent (post 1991) encyclopedia, a good atlas, dictionaries (english and foreign), and any other reference books. We're also short of good solid kid's literature.



A VCR



Remember the big TV mentioned above? We'd like to use it to screen some quality material for our kids.

BOARD GAMES

Sometimes kids just need to hang out. On a rainy day, nothing beats a good game of Monopoly. We need a nice selection of the classics, e.g., Scrabble, Clue, Parcheesi, etc.

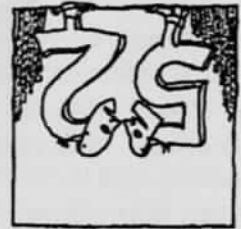


A PRINTER



Our computers are mostly Macs, but Project pal **Jim Bauer** gave us a fine IBM model for the kids to use. Now we need something to print all that homework they're doing; preferably one of those nice, quiet models.

So? Got any of these items lying around the house gathering dust? Or would you rather just buy us shiny new ones? Either way, we'd be very, very grateful. GB



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PROJECT ALUMNUS
JOSE SOTO, JR.



The 2 Joses: That's Jr. on the right

Name: Jose Edwin "Swayze" Soto Jr.

Place of birth: Here (52nd Street).

Occupation: "Actor, that's all I know how to do."

Best thing about his job: "I'm doing what I want to do, that's it." (He's a regular on *One Life to Live*).

Last book read: *Spidertown*, by Abraham Rodriguez.

Most recent accomplishment: With cast of "One Life to Live" helped raise money for inner-city kids.

Advice to the kids: "Keep it real."

Hobbies: "Play hoop, work on my music, and get a haircut once a week."

Favorite Flyer Bar: "The one with the nuts." WR

TO ORDER YOUR FLYER BARS, CALL
1-800-CANDYBAR

Tidbits...

...MY EYE! The following items are so, so big that they transcend the heading. Subsequently, this column will heretofore be called...

MEGABITS

Flash! On September 21st **Carol Ochs** (the Helen Hayes of the 52nd Street Project) and **Bruce MacVittie** (the Gabby Hayes of the 52nd Street Project) were joined in holy matrimony by the left Right Reverend **Daniel Berrigan** at sunset at the wishing spot at the Biaggi House on Block Island. The event was so intimate and beautiful that one could not help but think it to be the result of an earlier wish on an earlier sunset.

Good old **Jill Larson** went to the People's Republic of China to scoop up her new daughter **Anni Ming Larson** who is 9 months old and whose brains and beauty are rivalled only by **Anna Trott Herdrich**, the new daughter of **Peter Herdrich** and **Karen Trott** who have also recently returned from China. Anni and Anna are separated only by three months and one vowel. Anni has promised to show Anna the ropes here in the US by taking her to the hottest clubs.

Reed Birney and **Connie Shulman** left their passports in the drawer and got a son via the other method—welcome **Ephraim McDowell Birney**.

Keith Benjamin and **Annie O'Sullivan** tied the knot and are setting up house here in town. And speaking of setting up house...for those of you that are party to the **Kevin Geer** apartment saga, its over. He's got a great deal on a one-bedroom in the village and is now able to speak on subjects other than real estate. WR



DRAWING BY MIKE BELL