

Organizations That Make a Difference

BY JANICE LLANES FABRY

Carver Center

Since 1943, the Carver Center has provided the Port Chester community with services and programs that empower vulnerable families to achieve self-sufficiency in a safe and nurturing environment. The nonprofit organization offers a range of resources thanks to the support of friends and neighbors.

“The Rye community responded to the great need in Port Chester during the pandemic and their commitment has not wavered,” said Executive Director Anne Bradner, who took the reins in 2018.

To address soaring food insecurity, the Carver Market has expanded

its hours and is currently on its way to doubling its square footage. While last year there were over 10,000 family visits, during this October alone 1,152 families came in for groceries. Many newcomers are arriving at Carver’s doors as the result of a precarious economy and the impact of inflation on food prices. Moreover, an estimated 130 migrant families have recently moved to Port Chester.

The market expansion made possible by Carver’s winning a Hunger Relief competition grant, will include more space for shoppers and decrease wait times. The installation of new refrigeration and

additional shelves will increase the volume of groceries to serve more families.

“The whole purpose of our grant application is to restore the dignity of the Carver Market by making it easier and more pleasant for clients. A dignified, respectful experience has always been our hallmark. By definition, self-choice shopping is just that,” explained Bradner.

The nonprofit organization is also the recipient of a Retail Recovery grant, which has enabled them to acquire more food from grocery stores, along with an additional truck and driver.

Carver continues to forge its community partnerships, working alongside Meals on Main Street by Caritas, Feeding Westchester, 914 Cares, the Town of Rye, and the Port Chester School District to provide food and supplies.

The Center’s Food Services provides snacks and meals to After School students at the Port Chester Elementary and Middle schools, where 151,911 meals were served last year.

Another development that focuses on the community’s youth is a Middle School Tween Center. Although Carver has a robust summer camp experience for this age group, a new afterschool program for sixth and seventh graders will enable them to enjoy a safe gathering place during the school year.



Food Service Programs Chef Peter Cregan giving Port Chester Middle School children a tour of the Carver Market

Bradner sees it as an opportunity to provide services for these children earlier, offering homework support with volunteer tutors, along with access to a STEAM makerspace and swimming lessons. Transportation from school will be provided by Carver.

For the older youth, the Teen Center is fully equipped with computers, test prep materials, recreation, a music studio, and a STEAM makerspace. A recently donated school bus will allow teens to take more field trips, more college tours, as well as provide more Homebound Delivery and Midnight Run community service opportunities in New York City.

Carver is also the home of the

Head Start Program for early childhood education. This initiative supports the development of its youngest learners.

Continuing to honor the diversity of its residents, the Center offers immigrants pursuing American citizenship assistance with the complex naturalization process. Coordinator Fabiola Montoya provides them with access to transportation and immigration lawyers.

“We have lots of momentum right now,” added Bradner. “As the needs in Port Chester become greater, our dedicated and creative team figures out how to respond, and the community in turn supports us to make it happen.”



Executive Director Anne Bradner

Don Bosco Community Center

Since its inception 95 years ago, Don Bosco Community Center has played a significant role in meeting the needs of immigrant groups settling in Port Chester. The nonprofit organization’s mission has always been to enable all people to realize their fullest potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.

“We foster our mission by advancing economic development

through education and by addressing food insecurity,” noted Executive Director Jerry Rodriguez. “Don Bosco is a truly beautiful ecosystem that has been created through time. There’s a lot of legacy here.”

To address food deficiencies and basic human needs, the Center runs a Soup Kitchen Monday through Friday, serving an average of 400 hot lunches every week. In addition, a food pantry provides 80-90 families per week with nutritious groceries on Tuesdays and Saturdays, along with an Open Closet that provides clients with clothing.

During the last five years, Don Bosco has expanded its focus on education. An After Schools Enrichment Program marries education and food insecurity by ensuring students get the attention they need to be successful at school as well as snacks and a hot meal. Participants have access to a computer lab, STEAM classes in a Makerspace, a dance studio, and a lounge where they can gather with their peers.

Rodriguez remarked, “We try to spark their curiosity with 3D design, coding, robotics, creative writing, clay art, painting, and photography.”

Counselors, many of whom partook in the program as kids, provide 85 second through eighth graders with academic support every weekday by helping them with homework and offering literacy tutoring. On Saturdays, 50 kindergarteners through third graders benefit from this initiative as well.

Don Bosco’s Early Childhood Bilingual Program prepares 3- and 4-year-old Hispanic children with early childhood development. They practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in both Spanish and English. In addition to school readiness, parents benefit from workshops as well.

“We foster the social, emotional, and cognitive development of these children,” said Rodriguez, who immigrated from El Salvador in 2009 and refers to his role here as a vocation. “We are also able to address learning issues early by providing a speech pathologist for kids



Don Bosco Executive Director Jerry Rodriguez

with speech delay, for example, so they don’t fall behind.”

For high school students, the Center offers a Scholars Program, headed by Michael Keating, that harnesses their potential and, as Rodriguez noted, “propels them to the next step.” Mentors guide juniors through every step of the college admission process, from compiling lists of college choices and college essays to financial aid applications.

“Higher education is an equalizer that can change the trajectory of a young person’s life and this program promotes education equity,” explained Carol Pouchie, a Rye resident and one of many mentors. “These kids have so much potential, but families often don’t know how to navigate the complex American college application process.”

Don Bosco’s Dreams gala and annual fundraiser last month celebrated these students, along with outstanding individuals who make the mission of the center a reality with their spirit of volunteerism, generosity, and stewardship to the local community.

About the resources required to sustain the Center, Rodriguez noted, “We are grateful to our parish church for allowing us to utilize their space and to our private donors, who are responsible for funding a vast majority of our programs.”

He added, “Every single person who donates is truly a philanthropist. I’ve only encountered good stewards here who dedicate their time, talent, and treasure. This place wouldn’t survive without them.”



Children in Don Bosco’s Makerspace