



SCAN LIFE

news from SCAN NEW YORK spring 2009

With Patches, a Gift from the Heart

by JOAN MALKIN

They start with squares. They end up with a thing of beauty, a gesture of generosity, a life experience.

Once a week Barbara Jacobs, a SCAN volunteer, teaches knitting to a group of girls – and sometimes boys. Having learned to knit when she was 4, Barbara lost interest for years and then picked it up again when she was home with her young children. A skilled artisan, she became a successful knitwear designer, running her own business designing and knitting children’s clothing.

Learning Knitting and Life Lessons

For the last seven years, Barbara has been working with SCAN youth as young as 6, teaching them how to knit. Over the years her goals have evolved. Initially, teaching the kids to knit

was her principal objective, and most learn within the first half hour. But early on, Barbara realized that the class was not about her – it was about them. “Each session has a different energy. With the kids sometimes forgetting their needles or having to deal with

issues outside of the classroom, the knitting room has become as much a place to feel comfortable and talk as it is a place to learn a new skill.”

As it turns out, the class is not just about learning how to knit. Barbara has established rules and if you want to knit, then you have to play by the rules. No swearing, no grabbing, no belching, no starting a new project without finishing the first. Respect and discipline are woven into the class just as the soft and beautiful wool yarns are.

Barbara supplies the yarns and chooses both what she likes and what she believes will appeal to the kids. “I want them to use beautiful yarns because I want them to make beautiful things.”



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Editor’s Note: *Being a part of SCAN – as a staff member, donor, director, volunteer, SCAN parent or SCAN teen – means having the privilege to witness those ‘wow’ moments when extraordinary change, growth or accomplishment occurs, whether it is your own or someone else’s or a joint success. This issue celebrates some of those inspirational moments.*

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WORKING TO STAY DRUG FREE

by **JOAN MALKIN**

“SCAN came into my life, not by choice but by force.” Those were the opening words of Kay Morgan’s graduation speech in 2003 after a year of being drug-free and receiving intensive counseling services at SCAN’s Family Renewal Center in the Bronx. In a voice almost inaudible, she then described how ACS had charged her with the educational neglect of her children, had threatened to send her for drug testing and how she had been forced to attend SCAN counseling as a condition of keeping her children.

Coasting on Drugs

“I’m from Jamaica. I thought it was in me to smoke weed and I didn’t think it was wrong,” Kay explained. A single mother of four, she would leave for work early in the morning, expecting her oldest child to care for the others. But many days, none of them went to school. In the afternoons, Kay openly smoked marijuana in front of her children and would then coast along in “the world I wanted to be in.” She had a finite concept of parenting: the kids were supposed to do as she dictated. Screaming was how she communicated.

When confronted by ACS, Kay denied using drugs and defiantly insist-

ed her smoking weed was not interfering with her parenting. But she was deeply afraid that she might lose her children to foster homes, and she reluctantly agreed to go to SCAN.

Privately, she maintained that she would do what she had to do to get through the program, but “I am going to go back to smoking weed, because that’s who I am. I am going to have a smoking weed party as soon as I finish the program.”

Facing Up to Reality

Over time, and in large measure due to the strong bond forged with Donna Pierce, her Case Planner, and Carmen McDermott, her Family Educator, Kay began to see that SCAN was there “not to harm me, but to help.” She gained personal insights and a fresh ability to be honest with herself.

“I didn’t consider myself addicted, but I was. I needed to smoke even to clean the house.” She also learned parenting skills. “Now we sit and talk. Kids have to talk too. I don’t have to believe them, but I know how to listen. The veil came from over my eyes in SCAN.”

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Kay Morgan (right) with her Director, Matisse Ford

Joining a Team that Makes a Difference

At the end of Kay’s year with SCAN as her case was to be closed, Kay joked that SCAN was deserting her, “but inside I felt sad that I had to leave SCAN.” Her Case Planner promised that SCAN’s doors would still be open to her for support. “That made me feel good,” but Kay wanted more than that. A few weeks later, Kay began working with SCAN part-time, helping in the childcare room and later cooking in the ‘Breakfast Club.’ And then, in 2005, Kay became a Family Educator herself. She provides housing and food support and advice for mothers enrolled in SCAN’s preventive counseling pro-

gram and visits their children’s schools to obtain reports and feedback – just as Carmen had done for her.

SCAN’s Family Renewal Center, located at 1377 Jerome Avenue in the Bronx, provides intensive and general preventive counseling services for substance abusing parents with young children. Individual counseling sessions are provided, along with group sessions addressing issues such as relapse prevention, parenting and domestic violence. As a SCAN Family Educator, Kay Morgan works with a Case Planner on up to 10 cases. She goes on home visits, helps clients understand SCAN services, accompanies them to meetings, and visits the children’s schools to collect reports.

THE STRUGGLE TO SUCCEED — It Takes a Pos

by JEROME PARKER and JOAN MALKIN

“I try to make a difference in their life,” Kay says, recalling one of her cases, a woman who had been a client when Kay was, whose children had been taken from her and who had come back to SCAN. “I had to take her shopping when the money came in. Or there wouldn’t have been any left.” Then, with a tinge of anguish, she continued, “But everyone is different. I really did not want to lose my children. I was scared.”

Looking Back – Looking Forward

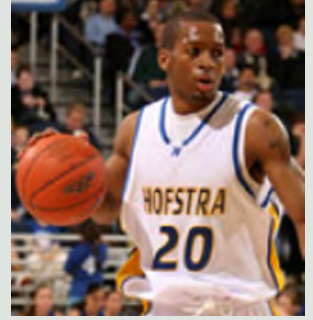
Kay views the past with perspective. With a gentle chuckle she tells how her son Kevin would remind her how much she hated it when their Family Educator had opened their refrigerator and how Kay now opens her clients’ refrigerators. “Times have really changed, Mom,” she recalls him saying. “But you got to pay your bills.” Having always lived on public assistance, Kay now proudly says, “I came from being a client to working for a paycheck. Every 15th and 30th, I’m sure of my check.”

There’s more to it, of course. Reflecting on the impact that her recovery has had on her now 26-year old daughter who has her own child, Kay says, “She’s trying to be the mother I am now, as opposed to the ‘before Mom’. I wasn’t really such a good Mom. Since SCAN I feel like I am making up for lost time.”

What’s next for Kay? “I plan to go to college. I want to push further, because I like what I do. Someday I hope to do for others what SCAN has done for me.” She laughs, then says in her unmistakable Jamaican accent, “That weed party has been knocked out of my head!”



In 1998, Gregory Johnson was in the 6th grade but barely reading at a 3rd grade level. With his grandmother’s encouragement, he teamed up with SCAN for intensive one-on-one literacy tutoring. When he entered the 7th grade, he joined SCAN’s *Reach for the Stars* program, working in the summer as a SCAN peer mentor/day camp counselor.



Gregory Johnson in action

In 9th grade, Gregory received a scholarship to attend Holderness School in New Hampshire where he led the school basketball team to two New England Prep School championships and was twice awarded MVP honors. When he graduated in 2005, Gregory was awarded the Holderness Faculty Award for his perseverance and commitment to academic success.

From Holderness, Gregory went on to Hofstra University on a full basketball scholarship. A starting point guard on Hofstra’s winning basketball team, he graduated in May 2009 with a ‘B’ average.

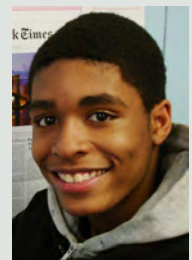
JP: When did you first team up with SCAN?

GJ: I met Lew [Zuchman] at the “Goat’s” [Earl Manigault] funeral. I saw Lew and I said “hi” and we exchanged numbers. . . Just from one ‘hi’, I can’t believe how much he helped me by helping me go away to school and providing the correct tutoring that I needed so I’d be on track.

JP: Were you involved in other SCAN activities?

GJ: At SCAN I played basketball and worked with kids. I tutored them and played basketball with them. I was also a peer mentor receiving a stipend from the City of New York.

In keeping with the tradition of SCAN students participating in the publication of SCAN Life, Jerome Parker prepared extensive interview questions and interviewed Gregory Johnson for this article. Jerome, a 15 year old sophomore at Murry Bergtraum High School, is in SCAN’s ‘Reach for the Stars’ program.



Jerome Parker

Meeting Gregory had a deep impact on Jerome. Jerome said that, although he was nervous interviewing Gregory, he felt “lucky”. Said Jerome, “Gregory is one of those people who has had it rough in life and he made it work for him. He has accomplished a lot in his life. He set the bar high. I believe that I can be successful like Gregory because everyone can be successful. You just have to put your mind to it.”

Positive Attitude and Commitment

JP: What has been your biggest challenge in life so far?

GJ: My biggest challenge in life so far is reading. My Grandma always wanted me to read. I never wanted to. Then I met Lew and he got me tutoring. The other students used to laugh at me when I read out loud. I was nervous. But, now I love to read out loud and speak in front of people.

JP: How would you describe your experience at Holderness School?

GJ: School was a little difficult . . . It was really difficult. It was a college level school. I had to adapt and study hard – a whole lot of studying. I had no choice but to read. I made sure that I did the reading because you get picked out in class and I didn't want everyone to know I hadn't done the work. I really started to read and I liked it. Holderness felt like family.

JP: You received the 2005 Holderness Faculty Award for perseverance and commitment to academic success. What did it mean to you?

GJ: It opened my eyes to the fact that the faculty and the school recognized how much hard work I'd put in to do better. I learned I can be anywhere in the world. Living in the Bronx and Harlem and New Hampshire.

JP: How does the sport of basketball make you feel?

GJ: Basketball makes me feel really good. If I did not play basketball, I don't know what I would do. It's my life, truthfully.

JP: Who or what would you credit your amazing and outstanding success to?

GJ: I would credit my success to my Grandma pushing me every day to be the best I can be. I also think it has been my demeanor for the way that I go about things. There is so much negativity around. It's easy to be negative. I stay positive.


JP: Would you consider your self a role model?

GJ: Yes, I am a leader. I'm open-minded to new things. I never act like I'm too good for people.

JP: What are your plans after graduation from Hofstra?

GJ: I want to keep playing basketball maybe overseas. Then I want to work with young kids in low-income areas. I know they are struggling. I would like to keep them on the right track as people did for me.

JP: How did you get the nickname "Playstation"?

GJ: I got it when I was 11 years old. There was a 'Back to School' basketball tournament and there were announcers. I was doing tricks. Playstation was so new at that time and I was so young so the announcers called me 'Playstation.' 

SCAN: A WIN-WIN

"I raised him from the 6th grade until now," Luvy, Gregory Johnson's grandmother, asserts with the kind of non-nonsense confidence of a person who knows how to negotiate a good deal for everyone. Unable to pay private school tuition, Luvy met with Lew Zuchman, a meeting arranged by Lew after meeting Gregory days earlier. SCAN promised to pay for Gregory's tuition and, 'in exchange', Gregory would receive intensive SCAN tutoring. And so Gregory, who had been living with his mother in the Bronx, moved to Harlem where Luvy lived so he could attend Mount Carmel Junior High School in Manhattan.



(Left to right) Luvy, Lew and Gregory

Which, in time and with great effort on Gregory's part, led to his attending Holderness in New Hampshire.

"I do not have the words to tell you how I felt at Greg's high school graduation." Luvy's excitable voice overflows with pride. "Because at one time, they thought he wouldn't even be able to graduate."

This was no one-way street, however. Luvy became involved with SCAN herself, arranging orientation sessions for the Reach for the Stars students attending Holderness.

"I got involved with SCAN because of Lew. Lew. Lew. I looove SCAN," she gushes, drawing out the word 'love' to convey her boundless affection.

ACTIVE RESISTANCE — Choosing an Alternative to Criminal Misbehavior

by JOAN MALKIN

Teenage violence often occurs due to teens' inability to deal with conflict and emotional stress and to the absence of effective self-discipline. So says Derek Schuster, SCAN Associate Executive Director and Director of SCAN's Violence Prevention Program.

Javon Davis and Chris Rivera, two 12-yr olds, were both arrested for assault. Javon was involved in 6 school brawls before he was finally escorted from school in handcuffs. After months of abuse, Chris' mother finally called the police to arrest him after he threw a chair at her. He hung his head as she related this heart-wrenching story to a group of SCAN supporters assembled in early December to honor both boys' tenacity and success in controlling their tempers.

Now 13, both boys have shown extraordinary capacity for growth and a rethinking of their priorities. Each stood before a group of curious, but supportive, adults, while they explained where they had come from and where they felt they were now.

Playfighting Takes a Dangerous Turn

Javon, referred to by the girls at school as 'CGW' or 'cutest guy walking', had good-naturedly fell into 'play fights' with his schoolmates. Those play fights inevitably turned into brawls. After his arrest, participation in SCAN's Violence Prevention Program was a condition of his probation and was critical in his turnaround. To the audience, which included his parents, he confidently said, "I learned some techniques from Derek. Leave your social life out of school and stay out of fights." Noting that "Derek's tips are hard to follow," he admitted that he has been in 1 fight since his arrest more than a year ago. But, he said, he has become a better person. With an endearing grin and a hint of honest teenage self-doubt, he said he would be willing to try and help his peers control their aggression.

Teaching Self-Discipline

Easier said than done, but SCAN's program – with its backbone of school and home visits and group counseling sessions – also requires martial arts classes for youngsters whose offenses are temper-related. "When things get out of hand, as they did for Javon, you need some help getting

back on course," says Derek. Martial arts have been a part of SCAN's program for one year. It improves discipline, allows students to channel adolescent competitive energy into a more creative and positive pursuit, and engages students in understanding how far they can take self-defensive initiatives without committing 'assault'.



Awards Ceremony: Javon Davis (left) and Chris Rivera (right) receive recognition, with Derek Schuster.

Bringing in the Police – A Mother's Last Resort

Chris Rivera's situation last summer was just as desperate. Speaking to the SCAN group, Chris' mother, Ana Hance, was visibly nervous as she described her nightmare of the past 2 years. Chris had repeatedly called her the 'b-word', told

her to shut up, spit around the house and refused to do anything she asked. When she finally called the police after the chair-throwing incident, Chris was arrested and kept at Spofford, a secure juvenile detention center, and then a group home for 8 days. Although Ana was certain that she had acted in Chris' best interests, she said they both suffered during his absence. Chris' experience, however, taught him about one's total vulnerability and the loss of freedoms while in detention. On his release, he was determined never to return to 'jail'. By his own admission, his relationships with his mother and siblings have improved. And according to his mother, he has stayed out of trouble, is more obedient, and "even washes his own clothes on Sunday".

These very young teens have experienced a painful early brush with our criminal justice system. Against the odds, but with the support of others, including SCAN, each has made a remarkable turnaround. For them, their parents and the SCAN supporters who were there to celebrate their achievement, there were many 'wow' moments.

SCAN's Violence Prevention Program, led by Derek Schuster and Brunilde Rivera, Violence Prevention Coordinator, offers a disciplined and very personal approach to counseling and delinquency prevention. SCAN's VPP program shows a reduced incidence of between 50% to 90% across the 9 categories of 'criminal misconduct' measured (such as violent incidents, arrests, anger-driven destruction of property). In an environment where despair and the resulting propensity for crime are difficult to combat, these results are remarkable. 🧑🏽

LEWIS ZUCHMAN, Executive Director



Lewis Zuchman

Life throws up innumerable challenges. For some, these challenges are more daunting than for others. Most of our SCAN youth and their parents face a depth and complexity of adversity that is almost impossible to understand, let alone overcome.

Still, I have witnessed so many 'wow' moments that I know that their struggle, and ours to provide support, is not futile.

Wow Moments

I was sitting on the subway a few months ago. Across from me was a young man reading intently and making notes in a SUNY notebook. For a moment we looked at each other and both experienced a bare glint of recognition. For my part, I thought perhaps I could have been mistaken. But he spoke up. "You're from SCAN, right?"

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WITH PATCHES, A GIFT FROM THE HEART *from p1*

And they do. This year, the girls are making multicolored scarves with pompoms. At the start, they each receive a photo of the finished item with easy-to-follow instructions. And they are off... knitting, talking and having fun. Thirteen year old Brianna LeBron finds knitting 'relaxing' and the group a great place to "have fun, talk and do knitting together."

A Special Quilting Project

Last year the class made a quilt, knitting square after square with varied colors and often difficult stitches with no idea for months where they were headed. There were mistakes, of course. Barbara assured them that even the most lopsided square would fit perfectly into the final quilt. Over the summer, Barbara

That young man was Ralph Williams. An active member of the Bloods gang, he was arrested in 2000 for assaulting another student in school. Following the arrest, he joined the SCAN Violence Prevention Program as a condition of his probation. Through the ensuing weeks and months, he gained a deeper understanding of who he was, he changed his behavior, and he started to look at his life and his future in a different light. Ralph became the first SCAN Peer Leader, and in 2002 he was honored by SCAN for dramatically improving his academics, gaining control of his temper and serving effectively as a Peer Leader.

Today Ralph is a nursing student in his sophomore year at SUNY. Seeing this dedicated and ambitious young man on the subway – well, that was surely a 'wow' moment for me and perhaps for him as well.

Fueled by hope and the support of SCAN and others, there will be many more wow moments for us all to witness, share and revel in.



stitched the patches together. Squares with holes were embroidered with flowers. One very tiny square became a pocket for an animal. In the fall, when Barbara returned to class with the finished quilt, the girls couldn't believe it. "They were totally blown away." They simply had never imagined what the quilt would look like. Or that they could have worked together to make something so beautiful.

Brianna's response to the finished quilt spoke eloquently to the generosity of spirit evoked by the team effort. "When I see homeless people on the street and I can't give them money, it makes me feel sad. We made the quilt, and we are going to give it to the homeless or to a family for free. It's very special."

Special, indeed. In fact, extraordinary.

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