

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

TRANSPARENT HOUSING?

EUGENE MARTIN

A tenant sees an open room down their hallway while knowing that they have a friend who has been looking for that very type of room for over a month. The friend contacts the Housing Department (Housing) and says, "I know you have an open room." Housing denies it. Rumors rise up about what's going on. Maybe a plate-load of cookies is necessary to get the room I wanted? But the truth is decent and understandable: that room is owned by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The Rockefeller University (RU) Housing Department doesn't have it on their books and couldn't rent it out to an RU employee if they wanted to. What has occurred here, and has been occurring to a lesser degree in many facets of the Housing/RU tenant relationship, is a breakdown of communication.

The breakdown of communication is unnecessary and has led to too many myths, misunderstandings, and feelings of ill-will. In order to help remedy this, members of the Housing office met with the Postdoctoral Association (PDA) to answer questions and complaints that arose during last December's Quality of Life Survey¹. We hope to elucidate some of the major issues, and to forward Housing's and the PDA's plan on how to prevent communication breakdowns in the future.

Most people's first experience with Housing occurs during the process of acquiring an apartment. The general complaints are that people want more information about what their possible choices are and want to know how long they must wait until they will be offered an apartment. The main problem is one of supply and demand. As many of us live in similar financial niches, there is an increased demand for a certain price-range of apartment (in the current economy, the desired range seems to extend from cheap to inexpensive). The problem is that there are not enough apartments in that price range, and, unless one is willing to move into a higher price range, the tenant will likely be on the waiting list for longer than desired. To help tenants at least have a sense of how long they'll need to wait, Housing has agreed to let people know what their position is on the waiting list². Although exact time frames will not be provided, this information might help people decide whether they want to raise their price range, wait it out, or start considering what a subway commute would entail.

Apartments are offered to RU employees on a rolling basis, with employees being offered the first apartment available in their price range as soon as it becomes available. The tenant must then choose one of the first

two apartments they are offered (in comparison, Sloan-Kettering employees are given only one choice of apartment), or they must find their own apartment independently. There is a lottery aspect to this; not all apartments are the same price, the same quality, or the same quality for the price, but Housing states that they do not have the inventory to provide more choices and that increasing the number of choices given to an individual decreases the efficiency of getting people off the waiting list.

With the cost of rent determining both, whether someone gets off

the waiting list, and how much disposable income they will have, it is important to know, in turn, what determines an apartment's rent. The Rockefeller University Housing works on a not-for-profit charter. Every three to five years an appraisal company determines, based on the costs of similar apartments in the area, what is the lowest price that Housing can charge without the rent being considered an employment perk. This is the rent assigned to an apartment. In the interim years between appraisals, Housing raises the rent according to the national inflation rate.

The overall cost of an apartment is the sum of rent and utilities,

and when the cost of utilities is not included in an apartment's rent, tenants do not know how much the average utility bill will be per month. To help people make a more informed decision when choosing an apartment, Housing has agreed to make the average cost of utilities, in similar apartments, available to would-be renters.

There are questions as to why some buildings include energy costs in the rent while other buildings charge tenants for their individual electrical use, with the latter varying both by the month and the price of oil. If it were possible, Housing would like to charge all tenants for their individual electrical consumption, rewarding the frugal for bundling up in the winter and having those who take hour-long showers pay their fair share. That said, only certain buildings have individual meters set up to record each apartment's usage, and hence Housing can only charge individuals for their energy consumption in those buildings. The PDA was told that Housing is willing to consider rolling energy consumption into the rent for all buildings, getting rid of the month to month fluctuations, but they warned that tenants become wasteful under these situations, and that the overall cost of the apartment would effectively increase for most people in said apartments. (This would result in even fewer of the relatively low-cost apartments that are in such high demand.) To back up this claim, Housing



stated that the cost of energy in Scholar's Residence, where energy is included in the rent, and Faculty House, where energy costs are based on the individual, is huge. Housing agreed that the tenants who are charged for their energy usage and a common charge—with the common charge accounting for the cost of running elevators, hallway lighting, etc.—should be able to see the common charge cost on their bill and Housing will consider rolling that cost into the rent.

Other concerns, such as the availability of Internet service or the form that heating takes, generally are the result of RU not owning the entire building that the tenants are renting (depending on the arrangement, an RU building can be shared with up to five institutions), or circumstances where the structure of the building would need to be renovated to address the complaints (e.g. central heating vs. individual heating in each apartment). For instance, in those buildings that do not have free Internet access, it is because the building is shared with other institutions. Rather than having a block of apartments dedicated to RU employees, the RU apartments are scattered throughout the building. Housing has asked whether the other institutions would be willing to share the expense of installing and maintaining Internet throughout the building; the other institutions did not wish to do this.

This article tried to address common grievances and Housing's responses to them, but

there remains a necessity to increase communication between Housing and the tenants. One way in which to do this is to have tenants contact Housing more often. Alex Kogan, Associate Vice President, Physical Facilities and Housing, has stated that they can do their job better when they know what people's concerns are. Do you live in the 70th Street Apartments? Are you upset that the Internet is slow? Send Housing an e-mail. If enough people do so, they will know it is a problem and work on solutions to fix it (such as increasing the bandwidth of the building's Internet connection). If they cannot solve the problem, hopefully they can express why they cannot do so.

In last month's *Natural Selections*³ we introduced the idea that Housing could better address the needs of tenants by establishing a tenant committee for each building. Each tenant committee would meet with Housing on an annual, or as needed basis, and voice their concerns. An initial attempt at this with the tenants of the 81st Street Apartments had positive results. As described in last month's *Natural Selections*, members of Housing met with tenants from the 81st Street Apartments to discuss the new security system. While neither group got everything they wanted, they reached a compromise. But, more than that, everyone seemed to leave with a clearer understanding of each other's needs and with fewer complaints. ☉

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selections.rockefeller.edu
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REFERENCES

1. Eugene Martin, "The Quality of Life," *Natural Selections*, Issue 56, February 2009. http://selections.rockefeller.edu/cms/images/stories/ns_pdf_archive/febdrft5.pdf
2. The website which provides this service is at <https://postdochohousingwaitinglist.rockefeller.edu>.
3. *Natural Selections*, Issue 56, February 2009.

The Easter Parade

AILEEN MARSHALL



We are all probably aware of the song "Easter Parade." But did you know there actually is an Easter Parade in New York City? It's not as formal a parade as the Thanksgiving or the Saint Patrick's Day parades, but an interesting sight to see, nonetheless.

If you go to Fifth Avenue the morning of Easter Sunday (on April 12, this year),

you will see many people walking up and down the avenue wearing anything from formal attire, to the latest fashion, to outlandish costumes. Some people even dress up their dogs. The city closes Fifth Avenue between 49th and 57th streets from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. that day.

The parade started as an unofficial event in the 1870s. The route includes St. Patrick's

Cathedral, Trinity Episcopal Church, and St. Thomas's Episcopal Church. After Easter services, the well-to-do had a habit of walking along the street to show off their new Easter finery. The masses would come to see the latest fashions. People also would visit the other churches to see the impressive floral displays. At that time, the custom received much criticism for the secularization of a religious holiday and the promotion of materialism. That faded, and over the years it has become a tradition not only in New York, but other cities around the country as well.

Today, it has become almost a satire of the original purpose of showing off haute couture. Now people come up with the most exaggerated outfits, especially large hats. Some have been known to include live birds.

The Easter Parade was the inspiration for the 1948 movie by the same name. The self-titled song was written by Irving Berlin. The movie starred Fred Astaire and Judy Garland as a dance team. He vows to make her a star in time for the Easter Parade. ☉

Imagine Science Film Festival: Call for 2009 Submissions

ALEXIS GAMBIS

New York City's Imagine Science Films has just opened submission for the second annual Imagine Science Film Festival. Individuals are encouraged to submit films that have a scientific or technological theme and storyline, or that have a leading character who is a scientist, engineer, or mathematician.

The festival encourages high-level dialogue between scientists and filmmakers through the art of film. The 2008 festival brought together approximately 3000 people over the course of ten days with screenings of short and feature-length films that revolved around science, a panel discussion on science and fiction, and opportunities to meet filmmakers and researchers.

The Imagine Science Films coordinators are planning to hold an opening night panel discussion focusing on science cinema as a creative process. They

are also looking to include more recently produced films, as well as films that have not premiered in any other forum. Finally, the goal is to increase the number of short films made by scientists, who take on the challenge of using visual language and storytelling to communicate their science—shout-out to RU scientists!!!

The festival will be held in various locations throughout the city during the month of October. Winning films in the categories of scientific merit and people's choice will be presented with \$2,500 from *Nature*, the festival's award sponsor.

The Imagine Science Film Festival 2009 submission deadline is July 15, 2009.

For more information on the festival, on how to submit your film, or for volunteering opportunities, please visit: <http://www.imaginesciencefilms.com>. ☉



A Call to Service

RICHARD TEMPLETON

After consuming two fifteen-hundred calorie meals every day for six weeks as a volunteer research subject in a Rockefeller Hospital food study, I came to realize a few things: 1) never again will I eat canned peaches by the half-kilo, 2) under the right conditions, generic caffeine-free diet ginger ale is a real treat, and 3) I would love to volunteer in a capacity that does not involve abdominal MRI's and insulin clamps.

So as soon as I washed down my last pound of grape yogurt with a quart of OJ, four waffles, and some Spanish omelet substitute, I searched on Craigslist for volunteer opportunities, mainly in the fields of park clean-up and elderly care: the former because I had not seen natural sunlight in 43 days, the latter because I figured the elderly could keep me company at this point.

With the help of the Volunteer Referral Center¹ I settled on Search & Care², an organization that reaches out to isolated people in Yorkville. My first client was Bill, a 65 year-old man who had recently become blind due to complications from diabetes. Bill needed me to finish building a bookcase, a project he had started before his eyesight deteriorated. My job was simple: nail on the backing, which had a faux-wood finish on one side and, well, the other side looked like grey cardboard. It was, in other words, extremely clear to see which side of the backing should face out (cardboard) and which one inside (wood).

In any event, I laid the bookcase down on its front-side, and I started hammering while Bill stabilized the frame. I raced through the nails with an atypical zeal and confidence, which

surprised me, as my carpentry skills are usually awful.

By the time I hammered in nearly all the nails, Bill muttered, "You gotta be kidding me."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Can't you see?" Bill replied as he grazed the faux-wood with his right hand. "It's on backwards!"

I said nothing. But I was sure he could hear my stifled, befuddled chuckles.

"Jesus, Rich!" blurted Bill. "What's gonna happen when we need to cross an intersection?"

Following an extended, awkward pause both of us burst into fits of laughter, as it was obvious that only the blind man could see in this room.

Bill and I have seen each other nearly every week since that day and we have become very good friends: Bill continues to test his newest blue joke on me while I try (in vain) to redeem my handyman skills.

My time with Bill encouraged me to seek out more volunteer opportunities at other NYC organizations, all of which have proved satisfying for me as an individual. Still, I wanted to hear from other people about their own volunteer experiences—whether humorous or humbling, much in the spirit of that bookcase anecdote. Moreover, I wanted to gather people together so we could volunteer as a unit and mutually encourage and support each other in our efforts. While I understood the RU community had an enormous amount of spirit and good will, I neither knew the time nor place to approach anyone about these ideas.

I sensed an opportunity, however, when I saw people's faces light up during the televised broadcast of the presidential inauguration in Weiss cafeteria. Inspired by both President Obama's "call to service" and the campus' enthusiasm displayed on inauguration day, I sent out a mass email asking whether anyone wanted to start a volunteer organization. I was expecting (hoping for) several responses, but was floored when my inbox was flooded with nearly fifty "Re: Rockefeller Service/Volunteer Organization" subject lines.

Over the next couple weeks, we had meetings where people from all corners of the university (research, human resources, development, lab-safety) expressed enthusiasm for a variety of areas: education, health, park services, cultural exchange etc. I was also impressed by the diversity of the campus' volunteer experiences: rape-hotline counselor, army medic, tutor in San Quentin prison, hospice volunteer, and many more.

Overall, people have shown the most passion for education, given the talent and resources available at RU. We have talked about summer programs, tutoring opportunities, and forming partnerships with neighboring schools so RU researchers could give some curiosity-piquing and "cool" demonstrations for students.

While the Rockefeller Volunteer Service Organization (rvso) is still in its early stages, there are some concrete plans. In early April, for example, we are organizing a "Spring Cleaning" food and goods drive where we will encourage people to bring in food on the week of April 6th ("Clean out your cupboard!") and other goods (old electronics, stationary, folders, and other stuff you will find during your "Spring Cleaning") on the week of April 13th. Our plan is to set up collection boxes throughout campus and a table in Weiss to promote some upcoming events, like Hands On New York Day³, which involves over 5,000 volun-

teers cleaning up NYC and scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 25th. In addition, we might open up future food drives to other universities in the area, perhaps making it a competition.

In the end, I hope rvso will serve three main functions: 1) to serve as a general exchange for people to share their thoughts about volunteer service, 2) to encourage and to be a resource for people on campus who would like to volunteer individually, and 3) to put together group service initiatives, like Habitat for Humanity. If you are interested in learning more about or would like to participate in volunteer service, please jump aboard. ☺

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.volunteer-referral.com>
2. <http://www.searchandcare.org>
3. <http://www.handsonnewyorkday.org/> Join team "Rockefeller University" if you are interested. We will be cleaning up Prospect Park in Brooklyn!

Life on a Roll





*This month, Natural Selections features Patrick Griffin, Manager, Faculty and Students Club
Country of Origin: Ireland*

New York State of Mind

How long have you been living in New York? 50 years.

Where do you live? The Bronx.

Which is your favorite neighborhood? Woodlawn, Bronx

What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated? Tavern on the Green Restaurant is the most overrated thing in the city. NYC Transit System is the most underrated.

What do you miss most when you are out of town? Convenience of the transportation system.

If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? Traffic congestion.

Describe a perfect weekend in NYC. Staying at the Regency Hotel; eating at top rated restaurants; visiting museums and dancing at the Regency Ballroom in the evening.

What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC? Closing a bar one summer night. My last two customers were leaving. As I got to the door to let them out, they put a pistol at each of my temples and robbed me. Before they left, they handcuffed me to a steam pipe, with regular police handcuffs. Somehow I was able to break loose and call the police.



If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? Ireland.

Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why? Yes, because I think NYC is the greatest city in the world. ☺



Aventuras en Español

MAURA GILMARTIN

Exhausted, nervous, and slightly disoriented, I arrived at my host home in Guanajuato, Mexico, under the cover of darkness. Footsteps echoed on the concrete stairs just behind the seven foot high solid steel gate; then, the rattle of a key in a lock. The opening of the gate revealed a beam of light in the form of a long-haired Mexican woman in her 60s. Incomprehensible Spanish words were exchanged between the driver and the woman, as he transferred my belongings to her. I must have had the look of fear in my eyes, because she swooped me into her arms, and offered what I could only guess, by her tone and warm laugh, were words of consolation. I felt like an orphan being dropped off by a temporary guardian to my long lost grandmother.

La señora led me into the living room and introduced herself as Carmen, to which I politely responded with the few Spanish words I knew: “Mucho gusto!” She then pointed up to a black and white

portrait, “*Ella es mi madre, Carmelita.*” She seemed pleased when I pointed to the portrait and said, “*Bonita!*” with enthusiasm.

She showed me to my room and sent me to bed with a special traditional drink. It was a sweet heated juice which was surprisingly good. Unfortunately, my jetlag-induced anxiety got the best of me, and I didn’t manage to enjoy it. There were large pieces of a mysterious substance resting at the bottom. “Fruit?” I hoped.

So began *mi aventura en español!*

The next day I found my way to school with a hand-drawn map thanks to Carmen. I managed to explain to the school advisor that no placement exam was necessary as *mi español* was virtually non-existent. I attended my first class and met my fellow students: a 30 year old from Washington D.C. studying with her boyfriend, a 70 year old retiree, who decided on a whim to escape lonely holidays in Florida, and a nineteen year old from Vermont, starting her three month Mexican sojourn for college credit.

After class, we had a 45-minute walking tour led by one of the teachers. We were shown the restaurant where we were to meet for the welcoming dinner, one of the few amenities offered to all new students. Other amenities included purified water, a rooftop where the weekly Salsa lessons took place, and free Internet, which required some patience.

My trip to Guanajuato was limited to only one week. Since then, I have experienced three more Spanish language schools in different countries: Guatemala, Ecuador, and Spain. Each school and each accommodation scenario brought with it a unique experience.

My host home in Mexico welcomed me into the family. I lunched with the extended family daily. For an exceptional dinner, my host brother played songs on his guitar while we dined over enchiladas and soda. And one afternoon, the host mother sat me down for hours showing me photographs of family and friends. In Guatemala, I stayed in a home with six other students, one of whom had a bedroom fashioned out of plywood walls in the kitchen. The family of five shared one bedroom, which included their bathroom without walls. (The students had a separate walled bathroom with a lock-able door.) In Ecuador, I had a room with cable television in a rather posh building, and luxury of luxuries: my own private bathroom! In Spain, I had no heating in an unseasonably cold winter, and couldn’t help but notice that the living room was also the host mother’s bedroom.

Alternative accommodation is available: shared student apartments, dorm rooms on campus, and/or hotels. Students might choose more private accommodation if they have certain dietary restrictions. Being a vegetarian, I found that host families tried their best to accommodate, but the definition of vegetarian seems to vary from person to person. (Eg. Soups can be made with beef/chicken stock, even rice might be steamed with a chicken carcass in the center, salads might be served with fish and eggs, etc.)

Class schedules are incredibly flexible. Morning and/or afternoon classes are available; group and/or private.

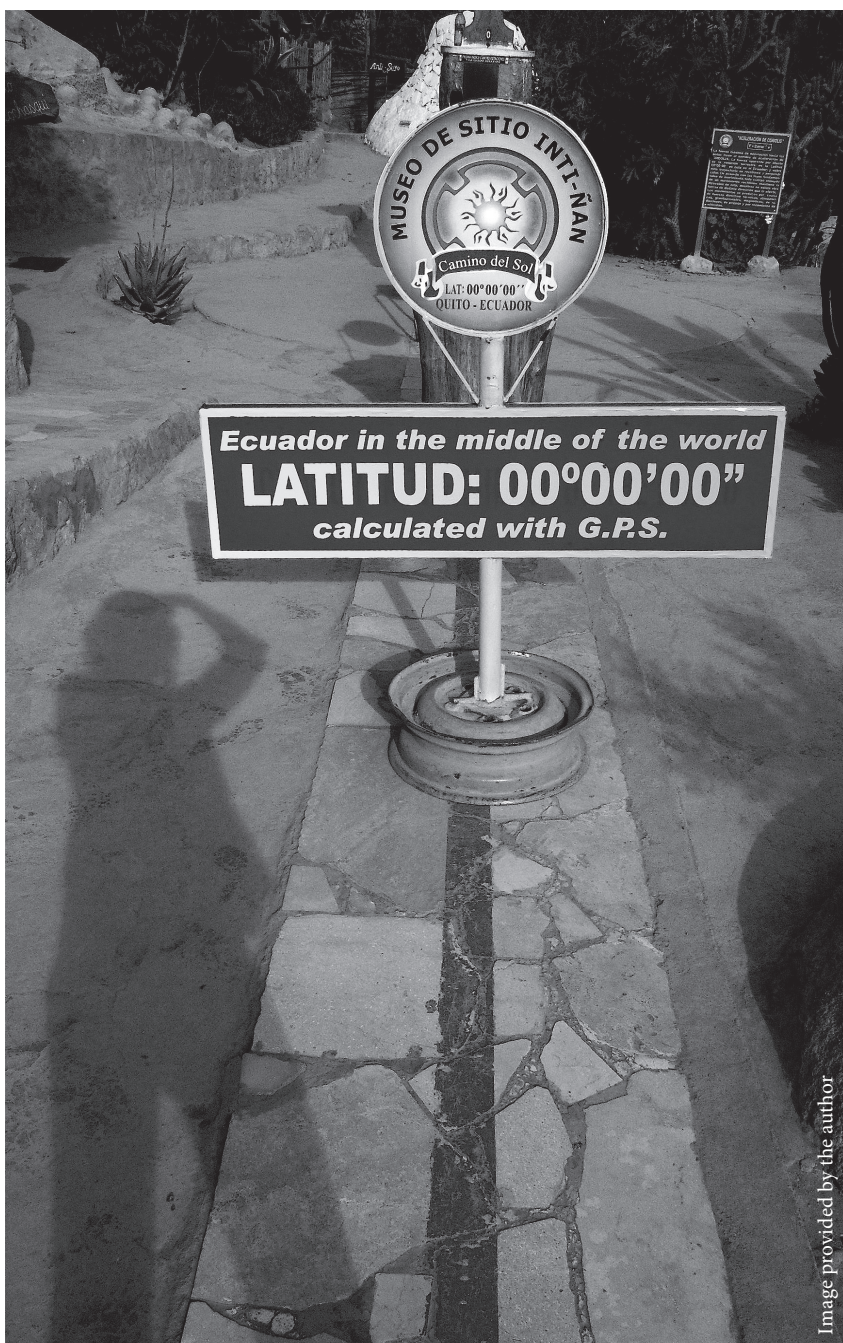


Image provided by the author

Students are able to begin courses virtually every Monday of the year (holidays excluded). From my experience, students can begin midweek as well, especially if private lessons are chosen. At the end of the course, most schools present students with a certificate of completion. Students are expected to give a brief speech upon acceptance in an informal gathering. My first experience imparted only a “*Gracias a’ todos!*” which I repeated betwixt a mix of giggles if only to add some length to my embarrassingly short speech.

The schools organize group activities of which students can opt in or out. The school in Quito, Ecuador was especially good at organizing activities in which students would practice their Spanish, learn new cultural aspects, and interact with locals and each other. During my stay, I joined a tour of the Equator, enjoyed a visit to a teacher’s home to make traditional juices, and made empanadas in the school’s kitchen alongside students and teachers.

Student ages, backgrounds, and motivations vary widely. Ages range from 18-70! Social groups didn’t break along age lines so much as mutual interests. Guatemala had a large number of Dutch students (all of those with whom I spoke were motivated by volunteer work in the region). In Ecuador, I met a doctor from England taking a break from his medical practice and “trying to get back to why [he] went into medicine in the first place;” a Chinese woman whose work with the World Bank required that she learn Spanish; and a 25 year old South African taking a three month tour in South America, each month studying at a different school. Not surprisingly, Spain had more European students compared to Latin America. A 31 year old French science researcher shared that his motivation was his simple appreciation of Spanish culture. A Dutch retiree revealed to the class that he wished to gain enough skill to read Spain’s national newspaper, *El País*. My fellow student and new German friend in his mid-twenties, was learning Spanish to complete his language requirement at his home institution.

Most students find schools online and register with them directly. In Antigua, Guatemala, Spanish language schools seem to be as prevalent as bodegas are in NYC. One can sign up with one school one day, and quickly change to another the next. All of my studies have been registered through a middle-man of sorts: donquijote.org. Don Quijote will provide a range of services. Besides organizing registration with the school, the organization can set up accommodation, travel options, and even provide taxi service to and from the airport. It is helpful to note that all services are likely cheaper if one finds such services independently.

One of the most enjoyable facets of language-learning vacations is not just what one learns about other places, but what one learns about one’s own home. With each return home to Nueva York, I find more of the Spanish-language community revealed to me. Previously, Spanish language subway signs would fade into the background; Spanish language conversation by passers-by would not even register in my ears. Now my eyes are open and my ears are perked! The



Image provided by the author

foundations formed abroad are built upon once back home. One day, I’ll be able to revisit Carmen, and say much more to her than just: “*Mucho gusto.*” Perhaps, I’ll even be able to ask her what the mysterious substance was in that special drink! ☺

NATURAL SELECTIONS



NEEDS YOU!

Narrate your story, send us your memorabilia, share with us your interests!

Enrich us by describing your country, culture and living!

Share your experiences here and bring in your unique viewpoints!

Email: naturalselections@rockefeller.edu

Children are the Big Winners of the CFC Raffle!

MARJORIE GOLDSMITH

Great thanks to all in The Rockefeller University (RU) community who purchased tickets for the Child and Family Center's (CFC) raffle this year. The money from the raffle and the Valentine's Day Bake Sale will be used to expand the children's library. Thanks to your generosity, we're going to enjoy many, many new books!

The CFC provides early care and education to Rockefeller University-affiliated children between three months and five years old, 50 weeks a year. Save for the last week in August when we are closed for staff development, we are open when RU is open.

We take a developmental-interactive approach, believing that a child's learning and growth comes from interactions with the physical surroundings and the social environment of peers and caring adults. Enjoyment through active participation is the cornerstone of our program. Among our goals is to be a safe and secure, warm, loving, educational, and physically and intellectually challenging environment for young children.

This approach assumes that a child learns best when developmentally ready for new experiences and when those new experiences are built on earlier ones. Teachers and caregivers introduce new activities based on the child's observed interests and abilities. In this atmosphere children learn at their own pace and are encouraged and supported, but not rushed, through the early years of exploration. We are fortunate to be in the city with all its offerings and on a campus with grass, trees, flowers, bushes, ducks, water fountains, sculpture, and art—all of these wonderful

surroundings are used at some point by all the children, either as part of a planned curriculum, or simply for aesthetic pleasure.

Our emphasis on developing relationships, and the careful attention we give to individual interests and abilities, help children feel safe and nurture their self-esteem. This creates an environment that encourages curiosity, problem solving, creativity and social growth.

We start reading to the children when they enter the program—at three months old and we don't ever stop! Research on literacy development shows that children learn to read and write more easily when they have been read to daily, gaining large vocabularies and an understanding of language itself. The children's library, housed in the GSR Common Rooms, is an important part of the CFC. The library provides books about projects that the children are engaged in: studying firefighters and fire engines, transportation, construction, bread, monsters and nightmares, princesses and knights in shining armor, and more. Books about art are housed in the art studio which is used by toddlers and preschoolers.

It is not unusual to go into any room at the CFC and find children reading books or being read to by adults. We read to the children several times a day as a regular part of the daily routine. During the children's activity time many will choose to look at books, ask a teacher to read to them, or listen to a book on tape/CD while looking at the book. ☉

CFC Raffle Winners' List

1) A weekend trip to Miami Beach: Joe Dougherty

- 2) A weekend in the MacInnes Cottage: Jim Gugluzza
- 3) A weekend in the Hostage Cottage: Dale Miller
- 4) One iPod Nano: M Nulty
- 5) Tiffany's crystal ornament: Ilaria Ceglia
- 6) One weekend at the Abby Hotel: Paula Estrada de Martin
- 7) Dinner for two at Barbetta: Moore
- 8) Lunch for two people at Bistro 61: Patricia (Purple Room)
- 9) Dinner for two at Felice Wine Bar: Steve Oppen
- 10) A hand-made Child's sweater: Kong XioFei
- 11) Dinner for two at East River Café: Yoli (Blue Room)
- 12) Lunch for two at the Met Museum of Art: Arun Dedra
- 13) \$50 Gift Certificate at the T-Shirt Shop: Bob Geronimo
- 14) Binoculars: John Chuang
- 15) Lunch for two at the Abby Dining Room: Ginny Hansen
- 16) Lunch for two at the Abby Dining Room: Jee Kim
- 17) American Museum of Natural History tickets: Peter Alff
- 18) Cookies and brownies from Espresso Caffè: Ryan Gobble
- 19) A Gift Certificate at Evergreen Restaurant: Ron Lieberman
- 20) Happy hour for four each at the Faculty Club: Laura Winzenread
- 21) Happy hour for four each at the Faculty Club: Francine Katz
- 22) A dozen Bagels from Bagel Works: Shamim Millah
- 23) Lunch at Lybanne Restaurant: Mabel Sung

In our good books

The reading suggestions have been kindly provided by staff members of the downtown bookstore McNally Jackson.

Revolutionary Road by Richard Yates

This is slow-cooking suspense masked by the crisp calm of suburbia. From page one you will witness a family's narrow escape from disaster, time and time again, knowing that at some point something's gotta give. A desperate, chilling masterpiece.

The Macrophenomenal Pro Basketball Almanac by Bethlehem Shoals, Dr. Lawyer IndianChief, Silverbird 5000, and Brown Recluse Esq.

This is the best book ever. It's a stats lover and basketball junkie's delight. I cried tears of joy reading through it the first time. Where have you gone, Tracy McGrady?

Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color by Philip Ball

Oh, sweet micro history! Take me behind the scenes of my very life and show me how it all came to be. With *Bright Earth*, Philip Ball adds his engaging investigation of color's role in art to the genre that brought us *Salt, Birth, Cod* and many others. Travel with Ball through the studios,

laboratories, factories and mines that brought us our current rainbow and thrill at all you didn't know you didn't know.

The Night of Your Life by Jesse Reklaw

Without question, this is the funniest book I've seen this year. So funny, and so oddly charming, that it's become my default go-to book for almost every last-minute gift—holidays, birthdays, you name it. Read one, any one—you have to see for yourself. Other people's dreams are fascinating, as long as they don't go on too long. Jesse Reklaw has found the perfect formula in his ongoing webcomic SLOW WAVE, collected here: four panels, based on the descriptions of dreams that real people send to him. The resulting stories are as surreal, hilarious, embarrassingly revealing, and completely original as you'd expect. They're also addictive. I dare you to try to read just one.

McNally Jackson independent bookstore is well worth a visit, they have a fantastic selection of books on their shelves. The store is located in NoLiTa at 52, Prince Street between Lafayette and Mulberry. Visit them on the Web at <http://mcnallyjackson.com>.

