



POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE, INC.

The best friend a kid can have

PAL News

Spring 2017



For 103 years the Police Athletic League has been serving New York City's youth with safe, structured programming designed to engage boys and girls in positive activities. The children who attend quality after-school programs achieve academic success and have better socialization skills than children who spend time after school without supervision. Also, participants have shown increased self-esteem, improved engagement in school and increased physical activity. This work allows our staff to help students realize their full potential.

WE ASKED **GRISELIRIS CONCEPCION**

Griseliris Concepcion was born in the Inwood section of Manhattan to Dominican parents who always instilled the importance of education. Although the odds were against her, Griseliris excelled in school and dreamed of helping other children being raised below the poverty level. With her passion for education and support from her family, she went on to college, eventually obtaining her M. A. in Education. During this time Griseliris split her time with a part time position at PAL. At the time, she couldn't see her own potential until a conversation with a Director at PAL propelled her to see the importance of her role. "He believed in me" she remembers.

That conversation was 11 years ago. Today, Griseliris holds a title at PAL of Education Specialist. With her M. A. in Education, she has devoted all her time to helping our children realize their full potential by creating academic curriculums for PAL kids that are engaging and fun.

Griseliris recalls a site visit at a PAL center. Her purpose was to evaluate how PAL Group Leaders are using the curriculum and how the lessons resonate with our children. Afterward, she spoke to students individually for feedback.

During her conversation with one particular student, she remembers being challenged for referring to the math lesson as school work.

"This isn't school work! School work could never be this fun. This is a game."

It was then that everything came full circle for Ms. Concepcion. If that conversation 11 years ago never happened, she would have never been able to pay it forward to our students. "Education is the bridge to success," Griseliris said. "Providing a safe and positive environment for these children to have fun while learning is what will create the productive individuals our society needs."

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PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE AT PAL

Dear PAL Supporter,

When you head an organization like the Police Athletic League and your phone rings, it could be almost anything. Among my favorite calls are those from PAL alumni, who follow our great work with today's kids, and contact us to catch up. Recently, an 85-year-old former PAL kid got in touch with me just to talk about what PAL is doing today. We were delighted to tell him a bit about the work you have supported.

The first question I am usually asked is about PAL's relationship with the NYPD. The police are an integral part of PAL today just as they have been for over 100 years. We simply would not be PAL without the involvement of law enforcement. Through the great work of, PAL's Sports and Recreation Director -- Danielle Madden-Buck -- we involved over 500 police officers last year in organized sports with PAL kids. Additionally, police officers like Officer Gabriel Cruz from the 41st Precinct in the Bronx, volunteer their time in PAL Centers. We owe a great deal to these officers for the time they give to PAL kids.

This is only a part of what we do at PAL today. Each year 3,000 elementary and middle school students participate in our after-school programs. The goal of this educational program is two-fold: to provide a safe place for kids once they leave school, and to provide additional education resources and support to PAL kids. Our dedicated staff of Education Specialists design curricula for PAL's after-school programming. This supplements and builds on the work the kids do in their classrooms during the day.

PAL has always tried to create programs designed to meet specialized needs of kids. Our GirlTalk program works with middle school girls in the Bronx and Queens. The program works with girls on self-image, peer pressures, and academic challenges. We have a wonderful group of volunteers that we call "Women of Inspiration" who volunteer their time to meet with and mentor these young women. It is a wonderful program, and we are very proud of all of the work it does.

These are just a few of the ways that PAL touches the lives of New York City youth. Your support and that of corporations and foundations are what gives us the resources we need to continue to inspire young people to do their very best.

I am confident that together we are creating a lasting impact on the lives of New York City's youth. Do you have a PAL story? If so, please share it at www.palnyc.org.

Again, thank you for your support of PAL, and I hope you enjoy our spring newsletter.

Sincerely,



Frederick J. Watts
Executive Director

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ONCE A PAL KID ALWAYS A PAL KID

At PAL we are lucky to have thousands of alumni across the country who support PAL in large and small ways. One of those alumni is William (Bill), Blando. Bill, as he asked us to call him, was a member of the 1950 PAL Tompkins Square Park softball team. Being on that team shaped Bill and his teammates in numerous ways. Their coach was a man they called Augie. Bill didn't remember his last name, but he stated that Augie was a hero to most of the boys. He single handedly ran the team.

When we asked Bill about his teammates, he told us great stories about guys like Joel Cavalier who was Bill's best friend since First Grade. The other guys that he remembered included: Joe Dramko who joined the NYPD; Joe Cangemi who vowed to not only never watch the Dodgers after they abandoned Brooklyn but not even mention their name; or Sid Heitzler who became a taxi driver.

As for Bill, he tells us the following about himself – Bill Blando, served as team captain for 10 games, went three semesters to NY State University in Plattsburgh, earned a BA at CCNY; two years of Army (serving 18 months in France) before going full throttle to fulfilling his dream of becoming a newspaperman. He worked for several publications before retiring in 2004. He was married to Betty with whom he did a good deal of traveling and volunteer work. Betty passed a few weeks short of their 47th wedding anniversary. Bill stays busy volunteering several days a week.

He also told us this about his relationship with the police which he credits partially to his time in PAL.



"I have always had good relations with the police going back to silly times on 10th Street when, for example, several of us urchins took water-filled balloons on a hot summer day and tossed them into the street from a rooftop. The police officers, answering neighbor complaints, hauled us into the street, threatened to take us to the station and eventually jail. But when they started smiling and even laughing, we knew none of that would happen. They warned us not to do that antic again, or they would "lock us up." We never did – not that one, but others.

Also, part of my career was spent being a crime reporter, and I had to rely on the police to provide reports that would or would not become news stories. Reading the police

blotter, I'd sometimes be asked to hold off on a report for various reasons, and when I felt it was a good reason, I complied -- which was almost all the time such a request was made. I have considered the police as friends, and that dates back to my admiration for Augie."

As a staunch supporter of PAL, we appreciate all Mr. Blando does for PAL kids today. We enjoy hearing from PAL Alumni and hope that if you have a story, you would like to share you will send it to us at 34 ½ East 12th Street, New York, NY 10003, email it to us at advancement@palnyc.org or call us at 1-800-PAL-4Kids. We look forward to hearing from you and learning your story. ●

OFFICER GABRIEL CRUZ "THE BEST FRIEND A KID CAN HAVE"

The Police Athletic League has an array of programs and activities that help bridge an often perceived divide between the NYPD and the neighborhood residents they serve. PAL's connection with the NYPD allows police officers to work closely with PAL youth throughout the city, serving as role models, mentors, and positive influences.

PAL's Cops and Kids Program proves just how vital these interactions are. Here is where officers such as Gabriel Cruz are able to bond with our kids all year round; playing basketball, flag football, baseball, and so much more. Officer Cruz has been a Patrol Officer with the NYPD for 3 and a half years and volunteering at PAL for 2.

Born and raised in the Bronx, Officer Cruz knows the struggles of growing up underprivileged. "I'm just giving back to my community because this is what helped me as a child" Cruz remembers. Cruz himself was a PAL kid. He spent his summers at PAL Playstreets and even attended our New South Bronx Center. There is where he cultivated a positive relationship with officers and decided to become one himself.

At just 26 years old Officer Cruz not only mentors but also coaches PAL kids in organized basketball and football games. These games allow

for positive competition and the development of meaningful relationships. Every Wednesday, Cruz meets his team for games against other students and officers but also spends Tuesday and Thursday evenings practicing with them during PAL's open gym time. "Working with the same kids year round allows you to follow their progression and help them recover when they fall."

"I'm fulfilled just knowing I have earned their trust and made a connection with them."

- Officer Gabriel Cruz

Time after time, Officer Cruz shows us the positive impact police and communities have when they work together. Not only does he volunteer his time, on occasion he's provided t-shirts, food, and transportation for his team on game days. When asked about the best part of volunteering with PAL Kids, he states, "I'm fulfilled just knowing I have earned their trust and made a connection with them." ●



PAL SPORTS AND RECREATION CREATING UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

The Police Athletic League provides organized sports and recreational experiences for the youth of New York City primarily through a collaborative effort between PAL staff, Police Officers and dedicated believers such as yourself.

Danielle Madden-Buck, PAL's Director of Sports and Recreation, is invested in providing a sports curriculum that will keep young people engaged in positive youth development activities and provide new opportunities for all of the students, for free. She oversees a team of four during the school year that expands to 120 during the Summer.. Mrs. Madden-Buck is a former History teacher of 13 years and played five sports at college level. With a M.A. in History and a lifetime of coaching and playing organized sports, Danielle uses her passion for sports and children to continue creating experiences our kids will never forget.

Q: In your role as Director of Sports and Recreation, what has been one of the most fulfilling moments?

A: One of the most fulfilling moments happened when someone donated 10 pairs of sneakers from the sneaker line of LeBron James. The team and I decided we would create an essay contest for the students and the top 10 essays would be our winners. In the essay students told us about their favorite athlete and the contributions these athletes made to society. It was fulfilling for us to see the amount of pride the winners had in themselves and their hard work. This is the purpose of our passion.

Q: How is student participation for Sports and Recreation?

A: Student participation is amazing! At PAL, we organize and facilitate leagues, tournaments and special events for over 13,000 youth annually. And just last year we received a generous donation from NY JETS which allowed us to provide uniforms for 1,200 additional kids between the ages of 9 and 14.

Q: Among all of the resources provided to our kids, could you spotlight one program and its importance?

A: When I think of the overall importance of the Police Athletic League in the lives of NYC kids, I must speak on PAL's Cop & Kids League. Here we create teams made up of PAL students and NYPD officers who volunteer their free time. These officers are committed to making a difference in these communities. Once a week for 8 weeks they face off in tournaments with our students, cultivate strong relationships and create safe environments for them to be themselves. ●



Robert M. Morgenthau Award presented to "TWO SINGULAR SENSATIONS"

Steven M. Cohen and Robert B. Fiske Jr. received The Robert M. Morgenthau Award on March 23, 2017, at PAL's 19th Annual Legal Profession Luncheon. It was our honor to pay tribute to Messrs. Cohen and Fiske, two gentlemen who epitomize the finest traditions of and are a credit to, the Legal Profession.

This elegant and warm event, sponsored by MacAndrews and Forbes Incorporated, Co-Chaired by Mathew L. Biben and Stephen E. Kaufman, and buttressed by an eminent committee of law firms and attorneys was a celebration in many ways. Not only have the honorees attained the highest degree of peer recognition and professional achievement, they raised over \$725,000 - making the event an outstanding financial success. By all accounts, it was a grand afternoon for PAL and the children it serves.

The awards were presented by Robert Morgenthau, PAL's driving force for 54 years. His enduring commitment to the children of New York City, impelled by his vision and intelligence, continue to channel new directions and triumphs for PAL.

To all our supporters, thank you for sharing in this very special and memorable afternoon. ●



OUR EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM BRINGS READING TO THE WHOLE FAMILY

For over forty years the Early Education Department at PAL has provided care for children ages 2-5 throughout New York City. Our 6 early childhood education centers reach over 550 children and families, with programs like Head Start, Day Care, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Parent involvement is vital to all Early Childhood Programs at PAL. Parent-teacher partnerships allow for a solid pathway for children to have a strong educational and socioemotional foundation for school and beyond.

One PAL Early Education Department initiative is the "Bridging the Achievement Gap" literacy program, which focuses on developing and improving literacy skills for children and families. Each child is required to read a minimum of 15 books per year from the PAL center's lending library. With the 'Book of the Month' assignment, each child gets a copy of a book to take home to read with his or her family.

Some of PAL's bilingual parents have expressed that they have also benefited from the program. They increased their own literacy skills by using this program as a tool to learn English. One success story we are especially proud of is Rose's. Her first language was not English, and she did not finish high school. Rose struggled with her English, and she told her child's PAL teacher that she used the time she spent reading with her child to work on her own language skills. Rose soon enrolled in the GED/TASC program and obtained her high school equivalency and is now enrolled in college. She feels that her achievements all began with her child's PAL literacy program.

We at PAL couldn't be prouder of our children and families. Programs like the "Bridging the Achievement Gap" literacy initiatives which have lasting educational impacts and bring families closer together. We appreciate your support that helps make stories like these possible. ●



MY NAME IS TONY DANZA AND I AM A PAL KID

I found PAL when I was 12, after an officer from the neighborhood strongly suggested that I give the Police Athletic League a try. It was a simple storefront on Fulton and Chestnut streets. They provided a pool table, ping-pong games, other kids, and most importantly, it was a place to go to interact with adults. Adults who seemed to care. And you know how I knew they cared? Because they were there, day in and day out. I boxed for PAL in the NYC Golden Gloves for two years. Although I didn't win, I got much more out of it than a championship. I had this incredible relationship with my coach; a police officer named Sergeant James Mahoney. Sarge! He was tough, and we did it his way. A by the book cop's cop. Nervously, I walked into his office, and told him I wanted to fight. He looked at me and said, "okay we'll see what you got," but then he asked me about myself. "What's your situation?" he asked. I tried to give him a short answer, but he wouldn't let me. He kept asking more and more questions. He wanted to know about my family and where I saw myself in 5 years. He was interested in me. From that moment, he was in my corner both literally and figuratively. I knew it, and I counted on it.

That's what PAL has done for me and continues to do today for over 35,000 kids in our city. There are so many reasons why PAL is important, such as its sports programs, PAL Playstreets, Youth link, Pre-school and after-school programs which bring troubled kids back into the mainstream. Among PAL's resources, there is also a youth development through performance acting program, plus much more. These programs work because what PAL does is supply good role models. People who, through caring and persistence, give kids an idea of what being a productive, caring adult looks like. Kids today don't have the surfeit of good role models that we had growing up. When I was young, everywhere I looked there were good models. I had my parents, the people in the neighborhood who looked out for me, the police, even the programming I saw on TV.

I so believe in PAL, and it's importance to our city, but it's the potential to change our city for the better that excites me the most. We need help to do that, and with your help we can also change, for the better, the lives of many of New York's children. It's where the kids should meet cops before they're in trouble. Your support of PAL is helping make sure that PAL can continue to be the best friend a kid can have. It certainly was mine. ●

PAL's GirlTalk Empowering Young Women to Achieve

Just because
I am Quiet...

Doesn't mean I don't
believe in things

Doesn't mean I won't
speak up

Doesn't mean I don't
have a lot to say

I am Quietly
Thinking
What to Say

At the annual Girl Talk retreat, Amour of PAL Edward Byrne Center in Jamaica, Queens, reflects on what self-esteem means to her. It is also a reflection of the self-confidence she built over the course of a year as a PAL Girl Talk participant. The program was launched to give our middle-school girls – like Amour - a safe space to share what it means to be an adolescent. It is a strange time in our lives - that we all remember - when we are neither innocent as children nor free like adults to do as we please.

Our PAL Girl Talk participants find that the program is an opportunity to navigate the angsts of growing up, such as body image and relationships as well as concerns about what the future holds.

This program is a success because of Women of Inspiration, who come from diverse backgrounds such as law, finance, health services, and small business. For the Women of Inspiration, Girl Talk is where they can share their hard-won wisdom on being a woman in a modern workplace.

Woman of Inspiration Lucy Lang, an Assistant District Attorney with the New York District Attorney's Office, recalls how her Girl Talk workshop at a PAL center in the Bronx became a real-life example of balancing family and career goals.

"I was going to speak on the topic of professionalism. As it so happened, my childcare arrange-

ments didn't work out and I brought my infant daughter with me. So we ended up talking about professional decision-making while incorporating our family and career aspirations."

Ms. Lang was amazed that the middle-school girls were remarkably thoughtful about the challenges in balancing these goals. "I am also impressed and inspired that these girls are so excited by the huge range of futures that they have imagined for themselves."

"As a volunteer opportunity, this is such an easy way to engage with PAL, an organization that has a meaningful impact on local young people," Ms. Lang added.

PAL Girl Talk is primarily supported by individual supporters like you and the program's founding corporate partner – AIG. In particular, AIG's support is used to host a retreat in upstate New York for 75 Girl Talk participants as a culminating event for the nine-month mentoring program. At the retreat, our girls like Amour reflect on what they have learned during the year and thank the mentors who encouraged them.

We thank you for supporting an exciting program like PAL Girl Talk where a "quiet girl" like Amour can likely say "That's OK – I am strong to be who I am." ●



Who says Legacies are for the rich?

Yes, it is possible for you to leave a legacy!

How? By making a Legacy Gift to PAL.

You can make a Legacy Gift by adding PAL to your will, by making PAL the beneficiary of a Life Insurance Policy or by setting up a Gift Annuity. With a Gift Annuity, you are paid a fixed rate of income for the rest of your life depending on your age. You even receive a tax deduction for your gift. By making a Legacy Gift you become a RMM Society Member, a group of New Yorkers committed our city's children.

"Why would you not take advantage of an opportunity to make a difference in the world?"

*- Bertino Marro, PAL donor since 1989
& Proud RMM Society Member*