

What is Summer on the Hill?

Since 1994, SOH, a 501(c)3 organization housed on the campus of the Horace Mann School, has served 600 academically talented, disadvantaged children from the Bronx and upper Manhattan through after-school enrichment classes and individualized guidance. SOH recruits 2nd graders from 100 public schools for its Grade 3-8 program of a yearly summer program bridged by Saturday and Wednesday after-school programs. Graduates of the Grade 3-8 program participate in SOH's High School Program, which includes college visits, SAT prep classes, and college counseling. In 2007-2008, 114 SOH graduates were enrolled in college.



SOH juniors (Grades 3-5) with staff, faculty, and mentor interns



SOH seniors (Grades 6-8) with staff, faculty, and mentor interns

**For more information about Summer on the Hill,
Call 718-432-4117**

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Summer on the Hill

at Horace Mann

Year-round enrichment for NYC's promising public school students

Fall /Winter 2007

Welcome from Dr. John Mclvor, Executive Director



Dr. John Mclvor

Dear Friends,

We dedicate this issue of the Summer on the Hill (SOH) Newsletter to the Horace Mann School in deepest gratitude for the School's commitment to our program. Although SOH became a separate fiscal entity from HM in 2004, when it was incorporated by the NYS Board of Regents, and obtained its own tax-exempt status for the purpose of fundraising in 2005, SOH continues to be an extraordinary enrichment program because of its special relationship with Horace Mann.

A year-round, after-school, educational enrichment program for promising, low-income students from the Bronx and upper Manhattan, SOH was established in 1994 with 21 public school students. SOH has now worked with 600 students. By serving as the setting for SOH, Horace Mann makes it possible for disadvantaged students from local public schools to learn deeply in small classes taught by dedicated teachers on the faculty of Horace Mann, and local parochial and public schools. One

hundred and fourteen SOH alumni are now enrolled in college. The impact of SOH's program is acknowledged by Mabel Rodriguez (Duke, '08), who writes on page 3 about SOH teachers who:

***“see potential in students
who do not have too many opportunities,
and open doors for students to succeed
academically and socially.”***

On pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter, we salute Horace Mann faculty and staff who have worked for SOH or otherwise lent their experience and support to the program. It has been my pleasure to work with Horace Mann over the years to build the Summer on the Hill community and see our students succeed!

With sincere thanks,
John P. Mclvor, Ph.D.



SOH's Wednesday after-school program

*6th and 7th graders enjoy a period of sports
after language arts and math test prep classes*

Recruitment and Admissions at SOH, Page 4

Summer on the Hill Wins Two Major Grants at the End of 2007

The Hilda and Preston Davis Foundation has been one of SOH's strongest supporters. In spring 2007, the Davis Foundation awarded SOH a \$100,000 grant, of which \$15,000 was restricted to scholarships for high school students. In December 2007, SOH received a second, and unrestricted, grant of \$100,000. We are deeply grateful for this outstanding gift of \$200,000 to SOH.

The Pinkerton Foundation has also been a strong supporter of SOH. We would like to express our deepest thanks to The Pinkerton Foundation for its two-year, \$100,000 unrestricted grant, awarded in December 2007.

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Taylor Thomas, LaGuardia H.S. junior, wins rave review from The New York Times

During the New York fall 2007 music festival, Berlin in Lights, SOH student Taylor Thomas was one of 120 students who joined Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker for a dance performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

The New York Times singled out Taylor's performance: "Here at last was the feeling of savagery and pain that welled up through the orchestra's majestic performance. It was embodied in Ms. Thomas's small arms as she pushed to keep the hordes at bay, rooted though she was to the ground" (Dunning, Jennifer. "Children Play with Fire by Doing Riffs on Stravinsky." New York Times, 19 November 2007).

Taylor joined SOH in the 5th grade, and says the hands-on science labs and interactive math games were among the best aspects of the program. SOH helped her prepare for admission to NYC's selective high schools, and she is thrilled to be attending Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for Art and Performing Arts. "Although LaGuardia is filled with 2400 students," Taylor says, "we are all one big family."

Also a student at the Harlem School of the Arts since she was three, Taylor is now in HSA's college prep program. She has performed at the New Victory Theater with Bill T Jones and the Arnie Zane Company, and was featured in a documentary on the life of Paul Robeson - experiences, Taylor says, that inspire her to constantly push for excellence.



Taylor Thomas in The Rite of Spring
Photo credit: Hiroyuki Ito/The New York Times/Redux

Taylor further developed her strong work ethic as a volunteer in the computer lab during SOH's 2006 summer program. "The dedicated staff at SOH has always encouraged students," Taylor says. "To have been a part of a program that truly cares for young people is an unforgettable experience!"

Summer on the Hill at Horace Mann

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Mabel Rodriguez, Duke University Class of 2008



As a senior at Duke University, I am planning to pursue a career in education. During the fall 2007 semester, I worked with a 5th grade class for three hours a week. I'm excited about the spring 2008 semester, when I'll actually be student teaching this class. By the time I graduate in June, I'll be licensed to teach elementary school. I am applying for Teach for America, and after graduation, I hope to go back to NYC and teach elementary school there while working on my Masters degree. I definitely want to eventually earn a Ph.D. in education (although I'm not sure what field I'll pursue).

SOH gave me an appreciation for teachers who see potential in students who do not have too many opportunities and open doors for students to succeed academically and socially. SOH influenced my decision to go into education, especially after I began my work as a mentor. I definitely want to go back to SOH once I am licensed, and teach there myself! As a mentor, my appreciation for working with kids grew exponentially, and helped me better understand the type of people that kids can relate to. It was exactly this process of forming a relationship with so many of the kids I worked with (I still keep in touch with many of them, and some are currently high school seniors and juniors!) that has helped me decide to teach. I want to do for kids exactly what SOH did for me: it taught me to see something in myself that made me succeed, and provided all the support and love I needed to do so.

Donte Brown, junior at the In-Tech Academy HS

I first began attending SOH in the third grade. When I got there, it wasn't as nerve-racking as I expected, because friends from my regular school were also in the program. This made the transition easier. SOH was different from my public school because it gave me a chance to develop myself, along with developing my education. It was a completely different atmosphere from my everyday life. I was really being pushed to my full potential.

What I liked best about SOH was the connections that I made with peers. Attending SOH is like growing up with a group of friends, because you're with these people all year. The friendships that you create are priceless.

I am now attending In-Tech Academy High School, but I stay in touch with SOH. Since I started high school, I've taken SOH's English and math SAT classes. In the summer of 2007, I worked as a SOH mentor, which was a great experience. It was a great chance to give back to a program that did so much for me. Working with 7th graders taught me about patience and responsibility. The best part of working with the kids during the summer was creating a brotherly type of connection with them.

The SOH program has been a life-changing experience for me because of the doors that it opened. Being part of the program from 3rd to 8th grade helped me to excel in my regular school curriculum. At this point in my high school career, I'm in many extra-curricular activities. I am trying to prepare for college by taking any classes possible to work toward becoming a lawyer. I doubt I would be who I am now, if I hadn't been a part of the SOH program and experience.





4th graders dancing with teacher Joe Kolinski in SOH's performing arts class

SOH's 2007 – 2008 Grade 3-8 Academic Year Program

has an enrollment of 193 children who are enjoying their literature and language arts, math, science, performing arts and sports classes. Sixty-six 6th and 7th graders are attending SOH's Wednesday after-school high school entrance exam prep class. Attendance in both programs has been excellent!



6th graders learning math



Two 3rd Graders



7th graders in science class

Recruitment and Admissions at SOH: *How SOH Finds its Students*

Julia Baez, SOH's Assistant Director/Director of Recruitment and Admissions has been with the program since 1995 as a teacher and administrator, with responsibility for recruitment and admissions, and until 2007, placement. In 2007, SOH hired Rita Retzlaff as part-time Director of Placement, so that Ms. Baez could devote more attention to the recruitment and admission of 2nd graders and middle school students.

Ms. Baez explains the evolution of the admissions process at SOH by saying that, "Before launching a formal recruitment effort, we consulted with guidance personnel in the public school system and with the Director of Admissions at Horace Mann to develop a process that would encourage schools to enter into a partnership with SOH and allow the program to identify the most qualified and deserving students. Additional elements have been added over the years which reflect the experience of the staff, and the result is a comprehensive effort that consistently yields extraordinary applicants."

Each fall, SOH mails information packets to principals and guidance counselors at all public elementary schools in the Bronx and Manhattan above 96th St. SOH receives approximately 250 applications from 2nd graders and their families, representing 90-100 public schools. The schools are responsible for nominating students, whose families then apply by:

- Submitting teacher recommendations, graded writing samples, and report cards,
- Taking a standardized test, and
- Participating in a mock class held at SOH.

Students' families must also submit tax information and a financial statement. Students whose completed applications meet SOH criteria are invited to the office for an interview, with their families. SOH's acceptance rate is 15%.

Although the admissions process is long, we believe it is important to take the time to know our young candidates through a variety of means. The process has brought hundreds of wonderful children to SOH!



Dr. McIvor explains SOH to parents whose children are taking the 2008 admissions test.

SOH's High School Program

The High School Program expanded its offerings in 2007-2008. During the fall and winter trimesters, High School Program Director Anne Gilheany organized classes, trips, and cultural events for SOH students, including:

- **Twenty-three SAT classes** taught by a College of Mt. St. Vincent math instructor and a professional copywriter/editor.
- **College Admissions:** A two-hour workshop for parents and students, highlighting admissions criteria, academics, and student life at local public and private universities (CUNY, NYU, and Columbia).
- **Writing the College Essay:** A two-hour workshop for parents and students.
- **Six writing workshops** taught by Louise Parmis, Horace Mann English teacher.
- **Six chemistry review classes** taught by Dr. Jeffrey Weitz, Horace Mann science teacher.

College Trips. In October and in January, SOH staff chaperoned a total of 18 students on college tours of Colgate, Connecticut, Cornell, Ithaca, Trinity and the University of Connecticut. Students participated in information sessions, toured the campuses and dormitories, and met with SOH alumni enrolled at several of the colleges. This was the first time that most students visited a college outside of New York City. Their written comments included the following:

One student originally thought all good universities *“were so far from home, but after seeing Colgate, my mind was changed. It had a warm atmosphere, and the study abroad program captured my interest. Colgate had spacious dorms and many areas to eat and socialize...These were qualities that I hadn't even considered prior to the trip. I feel more prepared as I continue my search for the right college.”*

“Going on the college trip was an eye-opening experience. You get to actually feel a vibe that you don't get from looking through brochures. Of all three colleges, Trinity was my favorite. I liked the modern buildings. The library was humongous, which I absolutely loved because I love nothing more than to read in a huge quiet place. Going on the trip to Connecticut colleges made me realize that I didn't like schools that are too big, like UConn, where you have to walk long distances to get from one building to the next.”

“I realized that college is going to be a significant portion of my future and that I must consider, re-consider, only to consider again, where I would like to call four years of my life, home. Cornell had a large and expansive campus. Despite the rain and sirens, it still echoed a majestic aura, welcoming all sorts of crowds.”

Fall 2007 Cultural Event: Performance at the Dance Theatre Workshop. In December, Ms. Gilheany chaperoned 14 SOH high school and college students to their first dance performance and to dinner, where the students discussed the college admissions process and college life.



SOH students visiting the library at Colgate University



SOH attends a performance at the Dance Theatre Workshop



Camille Miller



Fiona Crombie



Heather Cahill



Dr. Jeffrey Weitz



Ellen Lewis



Kevin Nicholas



Inuise Parmis



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