Honoring the 2013 Parent Literacy Champion
—Alrick Robinson

Alrick Robinson, a parent graduate from the SCO Family of Services’ Parent-Child Home Program in Brooklyn, NY, was selected from among many wonderful nominees to receive the Parent Literacy Champion Award presented at PCHP’s Literacy Champions Gala on November 19, 2013. Alrick’s home visitor, Merl Chavis, introduced her to the over 250 guests and she then delivered these inspiring remarks:

It gives me great pride to be honored tonight as the Parent Literacy Champion for 2013. Never did I imagine that signing up for the Parent-Child Home Program would have brought me here.

I was born on the small island of Jamaica and like many other immigrants I came to the United States to pursue my dreams. Two years after my arrival, I gave birth to my beautiful daughter Serenyidy. Little did I know then, how challenging it would be to raise a child in the Big Apple with my supporting family several hundred miles away, but with God as my guide I met my substitute family at SCO’s Parent-Child Home Program.

The Parent-Child Home Program was the best choice I could have made for myself and my child. The program gave me the support and confidence I lacked as a first time parent. It taught me the importance of early literacy and showed me how giving my child my undivided attention thirty minutes twice a week could make a difference in her cognitive development. As a result my daughter was well prepared when she started the Head Start program. She could count one through ten, she knew the letters of the alphabet, she knew all the basic colors and most of the nursery rhymes and songs. And most significantly she was more advanced than the other children in her class because what they had just started learning she had already learned at home through the Parent-Child Home Program.

(continued on page 3)
Letter from the CEO

The Parent-Child Home Program has had much to celebrate in 2013. We are thankful for all the generosity and support that PCHP has received throughout the year as we strive to prepare more children to enter school ready to succeed and to provide more parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources to be their children's first and most important teachers.

PCHP was fortunate to participate in two unique media opportunities this fall. The Giving Library, a project of the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, produced a wonderful video about PCHP. Additionally, PCHP was featured on PBS's American Graduate Day, a national public media initiative to help communities address the high school dropout crisis (page 3). Alrick Robinson, a young mother who recently completed the PCHP with her daughter, Serenity, was featured on the program. Her story was so inspiring that we selected her as our 2nd Annual Parent Literacy Champion and honored her at our Annual Literacy Champions Gala in November (page 1). We also honored Amor Towles, bestselling author of Rules of Civility published by Viking/Penguin in 2011, at the Gala. His commitment to literacy, the written word, and reading made him the ideal PCHP Literacy Champion (page 5).

PCHP was pleased to welcome seven new sites this year: two in Tampa; a site serving over 150 families in Riverside County, CA; a site in Jefferson County, CO that received PCHP’s first seed fund grant; and sites in GA, Albany, NY, and the Bronx. We are delighted that PCHP sites in MN, Pittsburgh, western MA, NYC, LI, Ireland, and King County, WA, where PCHP is reaching over 1,000 families this year, have all expanded so successfully this year.

As we approach the end of yet another year of good fortune, we look back knowing that PCHP successfully worked with more than 7,000 families this year, but also knowing that there are many more families that we have yet to reach. PCHP’s expansion is both a sign of the growing number of young low-income families in need of support, and an indicator of the growing awareness that intensive home visiting is a powerful and cost effective way to close the achievement gap.

Most importantly, as this year comes to a close, I would like to thank all the PCHP parents, like Alrick Robinson, who, in the midst of many challenges, welcome the Program into their homes, embrace their new-found roles as their children’s most important teachers, and set new goals for their own and their children’s educational and life success. They are doing the most difficult work and PCHP is committed to continuing to support them.

Thank you so much for your support!

Sarah E. Walzer, CEO

PCHP at the NY Mets

The New York Mets donated 300 tickets to the Parent-Child Home Program to bring families from PCHP sites in Queens and Brooklyn, NY to the Mets vs. Brewers game on Friday, September 27th. The families had a great time, including lots of cheering when they were featured on the jumbotron at Citi Field, and enjoying the bilingual Toy Story sticker books that every child received.

PCHP families cheer as they’re featured on Citi Field’s jumbotron.
Honoring the 2013 Parent Literacy Champion (continued from page 1)

The Parent-Child Home Program also provided me with educational books and toys which I could not afford on my own, a “Cool Culture” card that allows my daughter and me to visit museums, zoos, and botanical gardens free of cost across NYC, and a social group through the Baby and Me program.

So I stand here tonight as a proud parent saying thank you to the Parent-Child Home Program for giving me an experience that was rewarding and inspiring. Thank you to my home visitor Merl Chavis for being a kind and understanding person and for her constant encouragement. You have made me a confident parent. Thanks to Quincy Adams, my PCHP site coordinator, for being such an outgoing person. Thanks to all the other employees, directors, supervisors, and home visitors for making it possible for the Program to reach families like mine. And most importantly, thanks to the sponsors for their kind donations, my family, and other families who have successfully finished the Program. They are living proof that your investments are worthwhile. Thank you.

Alrick received a standing ovation from the PCHP supporters and their friends and colleagues for her powerful telling of her own story and her commitment to building a bright future for her young daughter. Alrick is currently a home health aide, and is applying to nursing school. She is planning to use her Parent Literacy Scholarship to help advance her career and provide a better life for herself and her daughter.

PCHP in the Media

PCHP is honored to have been selected to participate in two noteworthy media initiatives this fall: PBS’s American Graduate Day and The Giving Library.

PBS’s American Graduate Day is a national public media initiative to help communities address the high school dropout crisis. During a live broadcast on September 28th, Wes Moore, the author of The Other Wes Moore, moderated a wonderful conversation with three PCHP representatives: Julian Gomez, J.D., current member of the PCHP Board of Directors and a Program graduate; Merl Chavis, a PCHP home visitor who has been with the Program for eight years; and Alrick Robinson, the 2013 Parent Literacy Champion who recently completed the Program with her daughter, Serenidy. We are so proud of Julian, Merl, Alrick, and Serenidy for their successful TV debut, and grateful to Wes Moore for facilitating such an informative conversation. The video and information about PCHP are posted on PBS’s American Graduate Day website: www.americangraduate.org/grad-day-champions/904, or on the PCHP website’s homepage (www.parent-child.org).

The Giving Library, a project of the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, was established to help philanthropists give wisely. PCHP is proud to have been selected as one of the charities featured on the website, and is grateful to all at the Foundation who helped to produce such a wonderful video. Please visit our website’s homepage (www.parent-child.org) to watch The Giving Library video featuring CEO Sarah Walzer discussing the importance and effectiveness of PCHP for low-income families across the country.
With the cold weather approaching in many parts of the country, it’s important to have activities on hand that are educational, engaging, and appropriate for indoor play. Although children have enjoyed playing with blocks for decades, experts have recently highlighted both the early literacy and numeracy skills that block play can help to build:

**Math/Problem Solving Skills:** Children develop math skills during block play because they are learning about shapes, numbers, weight, counting, patterns, tallest/shortest, and similarities and differences. They also practice balancing and stacking.

**Social-Emotional Skills:** Playing with blocks requires children to practice self-regulation skills and develop the ability to tolerate new emotions like frustration, pride, excitement, etc. Children also practice sharing and appropriate behaviors for interacting with others.

**Fine Motor Skills:** Children practice hand-eye coordination and regulate the use of their hands when building block towers, a precursor to writing and keyboarding skills.

**Creative Thinking Skills:** Block play encourages imagination, self-expression and creativity. Children are able to build whatever they want by experimenting with the order, color, and shapes of the blocks. As they develop their own narratives around the block play, children are practicing story telling, a key element of early literacy.

Traditional wood blocks are great for both preschoolers and school-age children, but all sorts of other types of blocks enhance the fun, from foam blocks to bristle blocks. Here are some ideas for making homemade blocks:

**Pool Noodle Blocks:**
*Supplies:* You’ll need a pool noodle and a scissor.
*Directions:* Simply cut the pool noodle into different sized circles, and give the cut noodle pieces to your little one to stack and sort. To encourage color recognition, you can cut up different colored pool noodles. These blocks are even bath-friendly!

**Upcycled Blocks:**
*Supplies:* You’ll need various sizes of square and rectangle-shaped recycled food/home supply containers (egg carton, tissue box, plastic baby food containers, etc); construction paper or newspaper; clear packing tape; and scissors.
*Directions:* Simply wrap the boxes as you would normally wrap a gift (make sure to use clear packing tape to secure the edges of the paper to the box). Be creative when finding boxes or containers to wrap—the boxes can be large or small, and don’t necessarily need to be square or rectangular. You can use a Pringles container to create a cylindrical block or plastic baby food containers to create several smaller symmetrical building blocks.

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**The Parent-Child Home Program Recommends**

- **The First Years Stack N Count Cups**
- **Bright Starts Grab and Stack Blocks**
- **Green Toys My First Blocks**
- **PlanToys 50 Construction Set**
- **Melissa & Doug Beginner Pattern Blocks**
Fourth Annual Literacy Champions Gala

On Tuesday, November 19, 2013, more than 250 guests joined the Parent-Child Home Program for the Fourth Annual Literacy Champions Gala at the New York Athletic Club in Manhattan. The evening began with a cocktail reception and silent auction, featuring over 60 items, a diverse array of art, jewelry, sports items, and, of course, books, generously donated by sponsors. During the dinner, guests watched the premiere of PCHP’s new Giving Library video (page 3), and listened to PCHP parent graduate, Alnick Robinson, the 2013 Parent Literacy Champion, deliver an inspiring speech that brought guests to their feet for a standing ovation (page 1).

Later in the evening, Eric Hess, President of PCHP’s Board of Directors, introduced PCHP’s 2013 Literacy Champion, New York Times Bestselling Author of Rules of Civility, Amor Towles. Mr. Towles’ commitment to the craft of writing, the joy of reading, and the importance of ensuring access to great American writing is evident in his own beautiful writing, his participation on the boards of Library of America, the Yale Art Gallery and The Wallace Foundation, and his Literacy Champions’ speech—truly making him a champion of literacy.

Gala Co-Chairs Marlene Motyka and David Franasiak, who have ably chaired the event for the past two years, opened and closed the event, noting what a wonderful gathering of PCHP supporters it was and how pleased they were to celebrate the continued expansion of the Program. The Parent-Child Home Program would like to extend a warm thanks to all guests and donors, with a special thank you to this year’s Literacy Hero and lead sponsor, Deutsche Bank. All of the funds raised at the Literacy Champions Gala support PCHP’s expansion to reach more families in need across the country.

Amor Towles, the 2013 PCHP Literacy Champion, discussing the importance of fiction.

Thank You To Our Recent Supporters

Thank you to all those who have supported The Parent-Child Home Program’s national center. Your support enables the Program to reach out to new families in new communities, as we strive to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn.

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The Parent-Child Home Program is closing the achievement gap by giving low-income parents the tools and skills to prepare their preschoolers to be successful students. Trained home visitors model reading, play, conversation, and positive parent-child interaction using books and educational toys that are gifts to the family. Research proves that the Program increases participants school readiness, improves school performance, and increases high school graduation rates by 30%—to the same level as their middle class peers.

Where to Find The Parent-Child Home Program

**CALIFORNIA:** Fresno; Riverside County  **COLORADO:** Jefferson County  **FLORIDA:** Miami Beach; Monticello; Palm Beach County-Boys Town; Palm Beach County-Guatemalan-Maya Center; Palm Beach County-NOAH, Inc.; Tampa-Tampa Housing Authority; Tampa-Metropolitan Ministries  **GEORGIA:** Thomasville  **MASSACHUSETTS:** Barre; Boston/Dorchester; Brookline; Cambridge; Central Berkshire; Clinton/Nashoba; Fall River; Framingham; Greenfield; Lawrence; Leominster; Lowell; Lynn; Medford; New Bedford; Newton/Needham/Wellesley; Northern Berkshire; Northampton; Pittsfield; Plymouth; Quincy; Saalem; Shirley; Somerville; Springfield; Stoughton; Taunton; Waltham; Ware; Wareham; Watertown; Worcester  **MICHIGAN:** Pontiac/Oakland County  **MINNESOTA:** Hemnipir/Cass Counties  **NEW JERSEY:** Central New Jersey United Way  **NEW YORK:** Albany; Bronx-Leak & Watts; Bronx-MAA, Inc.; Brooklyn-Excellence Early Learning Academy; Brooklyn-University Settlement; Brooklyn-Lutheran Family Health Centers; Brooklyn-SCO; Buffalo-Jericho Road Ministries; Buffalo-King Urban Life Center; Center Moriches; Centereach; East Ramapo; Great Neck/Manhasset; Manhattan-The Educational Alliance, Nanuet; Nassau BOCES; North Rockland; Oyster Bay; Port Washington; Queens-SCO; Roslyn; Southhold; Westchester County; William Floyd School District  **PENNSYLVANIA:** Armstrong County; Easton/Northampton County; Juniata/Mifflin Counties; Indiana County; Lycoming/Clinton/Union Counties; Milton/Northumberland County; Pittsburgh  **SOUTH CAROLINA:** Charleston County School District; Dorchester School District #2; Dorchester School District #4; Florence School District #1; Florence School District #3; Florence School District #4; Florence School District #5; Georgetown; Horry County Schools; Richland School District #1; Williamsburg County Schools  **WASHINGTON:** Burien-New Futures; Bellevue-Kindering Center; North Bend-Encompas; Seattle-Chinese Information & Service Center; Seattle-El Centro de la Raza; Seattle-Children’s Home Society of WA/North Seattle; Seattle-Children’s Home Society of WA/South King County; Seattle-YWCA of Seattle/Central Seattle; Seattle-Southwest Youth and Family Services; Seattle-Neighborhood House/New Holly Area; Seattle-Neighborhood House/Rainier Area; Seattle-Atlantic Street/Rainier Beach Center; Yakima-West Valley School District  **BERMUDA:** Hamilton  **CANADA:** Brandon/Manitoba  **IRELAND:** Dublin; Inchicore.

Young Professionals Committee

PCHP is proud to announce the formation of the PCHP Young Professionals Committee (YPC). The YPC’s mission is to raise awareness and increase support for PCHP through volunteer opportunities, social media outreach, and networking events. Currently the committee has fifteen creative, enthusiastic, and entrepreneurial young professionals who are passionate about the Program and increasing its visibility.

On October 25, 2013, the Young Professional Committee members hosted a Fall Family Harvest Festival for PCHP families at Lutheran Family Health Centers’ PCHP site in Sunset Park, NY. Fifty families started their 2013-2014 Program year with a day of fall-themed arts and crafts projects and music with PCHP staff, YPC members, friends, and supporters.

For more information about PCHP’s YPC, please contact Jennifer Rosenthal at jrosenthal@parent-child.org