

SUMMER 2015

THE DORNSIFE CONNECTOR

LEARNING



TOGETHER

EDITOR'S WELCOME

Dear friends and neighbors,

We hope you are enjoying a happy and healthy summer.

If you've been to the Dornsife Center lately you've seen that we're busy with FOUR summer camps brought to us by the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, Drexel's School of Education, Triskeles, and West Philadelphia Financial Services Institution. We're excited to expand our program offerings for young people, and are working hard on a new slate of classes and workshops for the fall. Kids and families should stay tuned for some great opportunities in dance and music along with the career exploration programs brought to us by Triskeles and the Lindy Center. And several of Philadelphia's great cultural institutions are jumping on board as partners, bringing what they do right to our neighborhoods.

We can't wait. See you at the Dornsife Center!

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STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Jen Britton
Job: Launch Director
Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Current residence: The Fairmount neighborhood of Philadelphia
Favorite TV Shows: All of the Star Trek series
Favorite Food: My mom's holiday poppyseed sweet rolls

What is your job?

I've been coordinating the efforts of Drexel's University and Community Partnerships team as we get this project off the ground. I convene the Dornsife Community Advisory Council, and I work with Drexel's faculty members to help them bring their teaching and research work to the Dornsife Center. I also meet with prospective nonprofit partners to hear about what they do, and of course I have the honor of supervising the most talented and enthusiastic crew I've ever worked with.

Where will we find you at the Dornsife Center?

If I'm not in my office on the third floor of the Lindy House, you might see me on my bike, riding to or from a meeting on campus.

What is your favorite thing about the Dornsife Center?

The family atmosphere at our monthly community dinner is really something special.

What do you do when you're not at work?

I do photography - wildlife and astrophotography mostly - and I compete in ultramarathons. I spent a couple of years rebuilding a tiny vintage travel trailer, and I love camping in wild places with it. Back at home, I might be checking on my rooftop beehive, or binge-watching Star Trek episodes. Next time you see me, let me know who your favorite Star Trek captain is!

JOB TRAINING WITH SODEXO MAGIC

This summer, 25 West Philadelphians are participating in the Dornsife Center's first on-site job training program. As part of its strategy to foster economic development in West Philadelphia, Drexel has incorporated local hiring and purchasing goals into many of its vendor contracts, asking vendors to commit to our community. One of those vendor contracts is with SodexoMAGIC, Drexel's food service provider. Drexel paired SodexoMAGIC with University City District's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, a premiere workforce development-training provider in West Philadelphia. WPSI's mission is to connect unemployed residents to the many opportunities available through the major employers in West Philadelphia. A training curriculum was developed to specifically prepare the participants to be successful in the SodexoMAGIC and Drexel environments.

Competition for the opportunities was stiff - 350 applications came in and over 80 people were interviewed. 25 participants were selected to participate in the 5 week paid program that will include ServSafe classes with a Drexel faculty member. Successful students will have an opportunity for permanent employment at The Summit at University City when it opens at 34th and Lancaster Avenue in late summer.



Yasmine Sawyer talks to the SodexoMAGIC training class about her experience with a past job pipeline program.

PSPCA CARES FOR PETS

At the Dornsife Center, we think of pets as part of the family. As we begin to build our programming around health and wellness, we are keeping the health care needs of companion animals in mind. And if you think about it, pets in the home can be a real paradox: they are soothing, comforting companions....who can also fire up our allergies. They can be our reason to get outside everyday and walk, but the stress of having to meet their health needs on a limited income can be considerable. And so to address some of these concerns, we are proud to partner with the Pennsylvania SPCA to bring services for pets right to the Dornsife Center.

On July 13, the Pennsylvania SPCA offered their sixth low-cost veterinary clinic of the year here at the Dornsife Center. Through this ongoing partnership, the PSPCA has provided medical care, life-saving vaccinations, and microchips for close to 50 community pets so far. The Pennsylvania SPCA's goal is to engage the neighborhood through grassroots organizing efforts in order to build relationships and access to animal care and education. The next low-cost veterinary clinic is August 3rd from 2-4 pm. Please stay tuned for future PSPCA events and educational programming at the Dornsife Center!.



"Fran" gets her vaccinations updated at the Dornsife Center, with veterinarian Dr. Jeffrey Stupine and vet tech Cara Bianchi.

SUCCESS STORY WITH MARQUETTA BENNETT

Marquetta Bennett is an active and committed member of her West Philadelphia neighborhood. As a resident of Haverford Homes, she helps out at community events, volunteers at the West Philadelphia Community Center, where her daughter attends Pre-K, and supports neighborhood activities. With all the time she spends helping others, she recently realized that she needed some help for herself. That's when she discovered Drexel's Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships. Bennett participated in the Dornsife Center's workforce development workshops and received assistance with resume writing, job development and referrals from Sarah Steltz, Drexel's Associate Director for Economic Development. Steltz referred Marquetta to the Dornsife's KEYSPOt open access computer lab, where she received free computer training and access to online job opportunities.

Through the Dornsife Center, Bennett was recruited as a Parent Ambassador with Drexel's Action For Early Learning (AFEL), formerly known as the West Philadelphia Early Childhood Education Initiative, a program to improve the quality of childcare and increase awareness around the importance of quality early childhood education in West Philadelphia. As a AFEL Parent Ambassador, Bennett received free trainings on child development, kindergarten registration, early learning literacy and identifying quality childcare – all of which made her eligible for Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS) credits required by childcare workers. AFEL provided Bennett with free background checks and child abuse clearances as well as assistance with completing the three-hour online Mandated Reporter training, required by the state. As a result of her involvement with AFEL, she is now employed full-time with



Divine Toddler Town, a North Philadelphia childcare center, and she continues to receive a stipend through her work as a Parent Ambassador. AFEL was able to provide her new employer with her completed clearances and training paperwork, PQAS credit status as well as a positive letter of reference.

She and her daughter, Sidora, continue to participate in Dornsife activities: her daughter takes Saturday dance class, which Bennett said she would not be able to provide on her own, and they both regularly attend the monthly Dornsife Community Dinner. At this past dinner, Drexel students from the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement conducted a variety of STEM activities for the local children. Sidora ran to each exhibit and made sure she completed every one while her mother attended an early intervention focus group through AFEL upstairs.

"Dornsife has helped me out with a lot of things," Bennett said. "I wanted to learn more and do more for my daughter and I am able thanks to Dornsife."

For more information on Action For Early Learning, contact Project Manager Maria Walker at mjwalker@drexel.edu or 215-895-6904.

