

Caroline House

An Educational Center for Women & Their Children

574 Stillman Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608

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Caroline House Mission Statement

To enable women and children to reach the fullness of their potential through education in English language and life skills



Caroline House

Founded and sponsored
by the School Sisters
of Notre Dame

Serves the women of
the Bridgeport area
by teaching classes in
English, basic computer,
and life skills

Offers programs for
preschool children
while their mothers are
in class

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Beyond Our Dreams

In 1994 Caroline House opened its doors to the first group of 15 women desiring to learn English. It was a new experience with everyone wondering and questioning how it would work. For the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it was their faith and trust in God and the intercession of Mother Caroline Friese that gave Caroline House a firm foundation.

With some construction and refurbishing of rooms, we now have the capacity to provide instruction for 50-60 women and 25 children. The women we teach have a variety of educational and social backgrounds. Most have only primary education while a few have college degrees. Some women come to sharpen their skills to go on to the profession they were trained for, but not speaking English well is a hindrance to furthering their education and seeking employment.

In December Betsabe graduated from Caroline House. She was one woman among 40 men graduating with a degree in Electronic Engineering in her own country. Betsabe worked for two years as an engineer. She is continuing her English studies at Bridgeport Housatonic College.

Women have different motivations when they arrive at Caroline House. All find a family of caring women here. Bahia graduated with a Bachelors Degree in English Literature plus credits in teaching English in her country and came to Caroline House to lose her "British" accent. Mutlu who gave her witness at our fund raiser in April, has her degree in Early Childhood Education from her country and helps in our children's program.

Amparo came with a degree in marketing, accounting and administration and worked as an administrator in a University for eight years. She is studying diligently to learn English. Nevien with her two-year college education is a Social Worker trying to master English as her second language. She says, "Caroline House has changed my whole life."

All the women at Caroline House realize that studying English will gain employment for them and enable them to communicate with their children and help them with their school work. Speaking and learning English grammar is a way for them to better their lives.

The Staff and Volunteers at Caroline House are fully committed to helping these women develop the talents and skills they already possess in order to become productive as parents and citizens. The fruits of our labors at Caroline House are "Beyond our expectations and Dreams."



S. Lorraine welcomes Bahia with Natalie and Mutlu with Melissa.

from the desk of the Executive Director, S. Ann Moles, SSND

Actions for Our Times

Aware of today's economic crisis facing, we are

- looking at more ways to tighten our already lean budget

- doing what we can to help our women and children, especially with regard to nutrition

- more grateful than ever for any positive response you can make to our Needs List.

If you can help in any way, please call Mary Ellen Gavin at (203) 334-0640 or e-mail her at maryellen.gavin@snet.net

Dear Friends of Caroline House,

Caroline House survived the winter with a few days off because of the weather, although we did have to cancel some of our promotion AND our famous student-prepared international Christmas pot-luck lunch.

Our house has 64 women and about 25 little ones enrolled this semester. The house is busy with all sorts of daily classes as well as the after-school tutoring of local public school children twice a week. Our Pre-Level One class members are speaking a little English and even learned what an "Easter Egg Hunt" was thanks to one of our volunteer teachers, Jane Colihan. The mothers tried this event with their children Easter morning.

Mary Ellen Gavin, Development Director, and Cecelia Campbell, Chairperson, hosted a very successful and fun "Martinis and Mingle" evening on April 2 at the Brooklawn Country Club in Fairfield. Their talented committee produced an event worth remembering. Even in these unstable financial times, we did well.

We recently had a serious problem with our sewer, which had to be replaced. However, since this house was built in 1903, I guess we can expect a few break-downs. Fortunately though, we have been granted money to pay for it.

We continue to be amazed at the generosity of so many of you... our donors and grantors. Please be assured of our appreciation and know that the Caroline House staff and I wish you peace and joy in this beautiful season.



Some needs on our list:

- Grocery cards - \$50
- Books for adult students - \$30
- Heat for a week - \$100
- Emergency funds - \$50
- Birthday party for children - \$60
- Diapers - \$20
- Ink cartridges - \$40
- Printer paper - \$30
- Electric bill for a month - \$250
- Snow removal - \$30

Coming This Fall

Authors Luncheon

Guest Speaker:

Adriana Trigiani

Caroline House

Fundraising

Walk-A-Thon

To be held at

Fairfield University

Details and dates to be announced

Call Mary Ellen Gavin, (203) 334-0640
or maryellen.gavin@snet.net

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Martinis & Mingle



Mary Ellen Gavin chuckles as Fr. Allen raises the bidding.

On Friday night, April 3, I could feel the excitement in the air. Once I stepped into the beautiful setting of the Brooklawn Country Club with my husband, I completely forgot the dismal rainy day. The bright green and hot pink decorations brought the event to life. Spirits were high as the guests toasted the evening with their festive martinis and listened to the marvelous "jazz trio" from Fairfield University. They mingled and bid on the many fun auction items, knowing the great cause their money would support. A Caroline House wish list board highlighted many items that are needed to help run and maintain the house. Guests' donations will offset some of these expenses.

Seated at an international food dinner, one could not help but feel moved as Sister Ann Moles spoke about what Caroline House does for the many women who have become part of this community. What a great inspiration and tribute to the School Sisters of Notre Dame who have dedicated their lives to this very worthy ministry! Not only are they teaching English and offering life skills to their students, but they are also giving every woman that is connected to Caroline House a true sense of dignity. The extent of the influence this has on the women and their families is immeasurable.

Mutlu Dural, a former student, spoke about what Caroline House has meant in her life. Her words were met with resounding applause as she closed saying, "God bless Caroline House, and God bless America!"

Father Charles Allen S.J. graced the guests with his gift of humor as he performed the role of auctioneer. The generosity of the guests and the dedication of the committee who organized the event were the perfect combination to ensure a successful evening.

With the uncertainty that our world contains right now, it is apparent, when surrounded by these incredible selfless women who run and volunteer at Caroline House, that God's love surmounts all of life's struggles.

by Monica McInerney, attendee



from the Children's Corner

This past year has been a very active and fun-filled one. We started with 23 children and most days have 17 to 19 of them attending class. Academics have been stressed but always in a fun, play way. It is really exciting to watch the children grow. Several can name all the colors, letters, and shapes. Most of them can identify their names and things around the room that start with that letter. They are so proud and happy when they learn something new.

Tuesdays rock because Miss Lyndy joins us for part of Mommy and Me, everyone is learning new songs and finger games as well as dancing to her rocking guitar. The rest of the time is spent on crafts or reading. Our books on tape travel home and are often enjoyed by the whole family. Being able to follow the tape and see the words in the books is a great reading aid for many of the women.

We are so grateful for all of our interns, work-study students, and volunteers; our program would not have the successes we are so proud of without their help.



Francisco plans his shot.

Something new is always in the air here, and we are now looking forward to a new look in the children's rooms. A professional organizer and decorator will join with parishioners from St. Mary's in Ridgefield to streamline and help make our space more efficient. We are also looking forward to having an Eagle Scout build a tiered garden in the backyard. In preparation for our famous zoo trip, planned for May 14, the children have been learning all about the animals and are eager to meet them in person.

Lunches have been upscale with Msgr. Andy's kid-friendly casseroles and Barbara O'Brien's gourmet macaroni and cheese and ziti dishes. Many thanks to my visiting chefs for the break they have given me this year.

I can't begin to name all the people who have given so generously to the children this year; please know how deeply you are appreciated. A mass in thanksgiving for your kindnesses will be offered at St. Luke's later this spring.

Tutors, Teachers, and Students...We Need Each other



Sandra shows Mexico to Amelia and tutor, Iliana Foisie.

We are indeed blessed with and grateful to the many women and students who volunteer their time and talents by tutoring at Caroline House. They provide much needed support in furthering our mission with the women and children we are privileged to serve.

Each semester we encounter several women who are not ready for Level One. Therefore four days a week, two hours a day some tutors work and bond with these women to prepare them to enter Level One with confidence.

We also have women who need one-on-one attention to maintain their class level. They are able to receive that help. It is a joy to see how students and tutors have gifted one another. We thank them



Children rock with Miss Lyndy.



Students enjoy an article with tutor, Jane Coliban.