

Life



LINCOLN ASSOCIATION OF JC HOLDS ANNUAL COMMEMORATION

Lincoln Association of Jersey City will host its annual dinner in tribute to Abraham Lincoln at 6 p.m. at Casino-in-the-Park. There will be an invocation, a recitation of Lincoln's second inaugural address, a music program of patriotic songs and a welcome home to members of NJ National Guard who served in Iraq and Cuba. Pictured are members in front of Lincoln's statue at the entrance of Lincoln Park, Jersey City.

RELIGION

AFTER-SCHOOL ALTERNATIVE

Program taps into kids' talents, keeps them off streets

Faith Matters



Rev. Alexander M. Santora

First they were singing verses saying, "Higher, higher, higher."
Then, "Lower, lower, lower," followed by "Super, super, super."
And finally, "Glory, glory, glory."

Some 50 kids in the after-school center of New City Kids Church were raising the roof as sides A & B competed for the most points, so they could pick out a gift.

But the real gift was seeing the enthusiasm and camaraderie of the diverse gathering as they enjoyed the music.

"They love to be here and they love to pray," said Darnese Oliveri, 30, the after-school center and creative arts coordinator and one of the two full-time church employees.



DARNESE OLIVERI is the coordinator of the New City Kids Church after-school center in Jersey City. She claps along with kids.

She explained that one part of the after-school program consists of tutoring and completing homework. Then they have fun but it is couched in a way that they learn. Music is a main vehicle to tap the talents of the kids.

And the pastor, the Rev. Trevor Rubingh, 39, is an accomplished musician on keyboard and guitar and is learning bass and drums. Couple that with a bravissimo personality that brings out the best in these kids.

"Who can play four measures?" he hollers out to the crowd, followed by a silence as one boy climbs the stage and does just that on the keyboard. He is wildly applauded.

Rubingh believes that young people possess undeveloped art and music abilities and they can shine with the right support. New City Kids learn the Gospel message through dance, drama, worship and video and computer "ministries." And the refitted warehouse on the corner of Fairmount and Monticello avenues has high-tech projectors, sound systems and video equipment to make it feel like it's MTV. But make that stand for Messiah TV.

The words of the songs are projected on an oversize screen on a stage so it feels like it's a performance space.

And the young people rise to the occasion. Some of them are hired to work the equipment for the many programs that take place there. There's a Saturday program, Friday night youth programs at 7, summer camp and long periods called Kids Church, where the children worship in an interactive, fun-filled environment.

Dashica Jordan, 28, of Jersey City has sent her two older children to their Hallelujah nights where the children play drums and sing, as well as to summer camp and the Saturday programs for the last two years.

She said, "I think it's great that the children have a safe place for them to go."



KEENA ROSE SHAYAN JOURNAL PHOTOS

KIDS sing during an after-school program at New City Church in Jersey City.



The Rev. Trevor Rubingh, pastor of New City Church, gives a high-five to one of the kids at his after-school program.

That confidence is exactly what Rubingh and his staff have worked hard to achieve since 1996 when they founded Kids Church in the basement of the Iglesia Cristiana Reformanda Church on Summit Avenue off Five Corners in Jersey City where they remained for about six years.

Some 300 kids were showing up on Saturdays based in from all over Jersey City and meeting in three shifts. This success revealed to Rubingh that they

have to provide wholesome alternatives to the drug-dealing street corners, which rob youth of their innocence. With support from the Christian Reformed churches in northern New Jersey, Rubingh was able to raise the \$500,000 needed to buy the current site on Monticello and then refit it for about \$100,000, a lot of labor and donated services.

The large gathering space is adorned with bright banners made and donated by visiting churches as well as by the 700

IF YOU GO ...

WHAT: New City Kids Church
WHERE: 240 Fairmount Ave., Jersey City
DETAILS: (201) 915-8896 or e-mail: pc@newcitykidschurch.com
SIGN UP: The team accepts invitations to come and lead worship at area churches. They are signing up participants for their KINGDOM MAKEOVER with Special Guest: Bart Campolo on April 29 at 7:30 p.m. \$10 for adults; \$7 for 17 and under.

kids who visited the church last year.

And they make an impact. Six-year-old Dearvis Jordan, a first-grader, remembers that "the signs have Gospel words."

His older sister, Daljah, 8 and a third-grader at Schomburg Charter School, talked about "the fruits of the Spirit, fruits that God gave us."

The Jordan children are living proof that New City Kids Church gets its message across.

SANTORA is the pastor of Our Lady of Grace Church, 400 Willow Ave., Hoboken, 07030, (201) 659-0369, fax (201) 659-3833, e-mail: padreales@yahoo.com