



Phillips Brooks House Association

# SUMMER NEWSLETTER

# 2019

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## The Fluff

**Teresa Tran '21**  
Summer Programming  
Group Officer



We met on a rainy November night, minutes before the **Summer Programming Group Officer (SUP PGO)** elections. Before this moment we had only known each other as “that girl from that program.” Carmella stomped in drenched in rain and looked at me with a goofy smile as she shook rain off her umbrella and wiped her glasses dry. In signature Carmella style, she gave me a huge hug and plopped herself down to my left. After some back and forth and mini interventions from everyone walking through the room, Carmella and I were elected as SUP PGOs—together.

Four summers ago the Boston Refugee Youth Enrichment (BRYE) program became my first love. As a junior counselor in my sophomore year of high school, I deeply connected with the community I witnessed as the young people I worked with found solidarity and took pride in their community through educational enrichment, social

justice explorations, and curricula that cater to social and emotional learning. I not only saw first hand why programs like ours were so important but understood it as a constituent myself.

I entered our first meeting with directors with this mindset. The energy in the room that day was indescribable. There was something magical about being in a room filled with people who all shared the same passion. The vision was clear: six weeks of programming for 800+ students in Boston and Cambridge; 100+ college aged counselors focused on combating summer learning loss; social, emotional, and project-based learning to shift a culture of behavioral management to restorative justice, and a focus on teen programming for 100+ teens directly from the community. Add in all the logistics, communication, and planning – easy, right? We were determined: Carmella, myself, and the 35 directors who worked tirelessly to create lasting impact while building on the legacies of the directors before them.

At the Junior Leaders in Communities (JLinC) program, I witnessed rising 9th graders find their voices through poetry. I saw students being brave, vulnerable, and honest with each other. I saw them being receptive, warm, and open to each other. I watched as directors opened and closed each day with circles, providing young people with a space to reflect.

I know, now more than ever before, why it is so critical to have spaces like the ones we were creating in our camps. Spaces for students to share emotions, reflect, give appreciation, and be com-

fortable in their own skin. I admired Carmella most for this—what I call “the fluff.” Carmella seemed to always know what to say, tugging on the right strings to perfectly ground people in the work we do—because, without the fluff we wouldn’t be able to achieve anything. The fluff, at its core, was the shared passion, drive, and goals that every director had on the first day we all met. It took some work: months of planning, late nights at PBHA, emails attached with a quirky .GIF, interviews with future counselors, and weeks of training— but once you get hold of the fluff, it goes everywhere. Fluff looked like a classroom of first and second graders in Ms. Casey’s class in a circle sharing appreciations for each other to wrap up the day. It looked like the little hug and wide eyes I got from Kevin when he finally understood a math problem. It was the little dance Michael did when he had his first s’mores by the campfire. It was the joy and awe on Noah’s face when his junior counselor taught her first lesson of the summer. It is all the big moments we celebrate and all the little moments that slip through the cracks. So when I turn to Carmella at the beginning and end of every meeting to “add in some fluff,” she knows as much as I that the fluff is the most powerful and important feature in everything we do at PBHA and in SUP.

I never got to thank everyone in the room the night of elections. Thank them for believing in two girls from Dorchester to spark a movement and give back to our community beyond our imagination. Thank you for allowing me to spread the fluff.

# Summer Lessons for a Lifetime

**Maria Dominguez Gray, Ed.M. '94**  
Class of '55 Executive Director

PBHA summer service experiences have a tremendous impact on our community: Children grow socially emotionally, and academically; teens develop their own sense of leadership; adult ESL learners gain the opportunity to engage productively in their new home; and our neighbors experiencing homelessness benefit from sanctuary and a sense of hope for a pathway out of homelessness. That impact stems from high quality, intentional programming that is deeply rooted in the communities we partner with and is made possible by the dedication and creativity of college student leaders.

Time and time again, we also hear from students and alumni about the impact that these summer service experiences have on them, both anticipated and unanticipated, personal and professional. Through PBHA summer service, students collectively build a set of transferable skills and ways of understanding the world and themselves that lasts a lifetime. Here are just a few of their reflections:

***I have agency and know how to affect change.***

***My lived experience is valuable and so is others'.***

***I can coordinate food for a hundred people.***



**SUP is...**

**BRYE ■ CHAD ■ CYEP ■ FIO ■ KSP ■ MHSP  
NAYEP ■ RYI ■ RYSE ■ SBOS ■ JLinC ■ LEADERS!**



***I've learned how to build understanding among people in conflict.***

***I have a plan B, C, and D ready for when things go wrong.***

***I understand more about how people learn and how to teach.***

***I know that youth voices matter.***

***I know how to drive a van - safely - through Boston traffic.***

***I understand how to manage a budget of thousands of dollars.***

***I understand how to balance my life and the importance of self care.***

***I've learned how to apply my strengths and grow from my weaknesses.***

***I've learned how to run an effective meeting.***

***I've learned how to ask for help.***

***I've learned about the richness of the community I work in.***

***I've gained friendships.***

***I know how to confront injustice.***

***I've learned how to hire and support a staff.***

***I've gained perspective about the barriers some face to success, security and happiness.***

***I've learned to trust.***

***I can secure resources through fundraising and partnerships.***

***I understand more about the beauty in others.***

***I care more about making a difference in this world.***

***I know I will keep working for justice.***

Each of these areas of growth build a strong foundation for our student leaders that is applicable to and will strengthen their journey, whatever path they take. Hopefully this rings true to you.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership and making all we do through PBHA summer service possible.



# JLinC: Bridging Leadership

**Lizzie McCord '21**  
Director, JLinC



This past summer, SUP piloted the **Junior Leaders in Communities (JLinC)** program. JLinC aims to bridge a programming gap for rising ninth graders within SUP. For our inaugural summer, we had 16 participants from six SUP camps. Three days a week participants were on site together at the Condon School in South Boston with each oth-

er. On these days, we discussed social justice and current events issues that were important to our participants. These conversations ran the gamut from gun violence in communities to climate change to gender and sexuality. Through their work in the *Our Voices Matter* program, led by Harvard Kennedy School student Shawon Jackson, participants honed their public speaking skills, each giving a final speech on a topic of their choosing during the last week of camp.

We had less serious conversations as well. Each day began with a group circle, always including a funny but thought-provoking question such as “Is a hot dog a sandwich?” or “Would you rather always talk in rhymes or sing instead of speak?” Through those conversations, our group of 16 students from very different backgrounds and communities came to bond with each

other. The image I can’t get out of my mind is turning around on van rides to field trips to see ten participants singing at the top of their lungs and laughing together.

In addition to our time as a group, on Tuesdays and Thursdays JLinC participants worked as junior counselors in training at the SUP camps at which they had been campers. Over the course of the summer, JLinC participants helped out in classrooms, helped chaperone field trips, and even supported camp directors with their work. In the last two weeks of the summer, each JLinC participant developed their own short lesson plan to teach to their campers. I know that each JLinC participant will be a phenomenal junior counselor next summer, and I am so excited to see them bring leadership and change wherever they go.

## Building Community at HSSS

**Ji Hae Lee '20**  
Harvard Square Summer Shelter  
Director

For the **Harvard Square Summer Shelter (HSSS)**, this summer brimmed with excitement and nervous energy. HSSS operates as a transitional shelter, unlike its term-time counterpart, which functions as an emergency shelter. The summer program serves to make a different type of impact within the community, with the goal of bringing eight weeks of stability into guests’ lives. Given that we were managing the shelter with fewer resources than we do in the term, we hoped that our limited capacity would not hinder our ability to serve our guests.

This summer, we focused on creating a space that promoted a sense of community – a place where guests could look forward to returning to in the evening, an environment where they felt welcomed and heard. In addition to helping our guests achieve goals like filling in housing applications, writing a resume, applying to jobs, and getting a Massachusetts state ID, through our case management services, we also hosted community building activity nights, such as movie nights, game nights, and cupcake decorating contests. These activity nights livened up the space and encouraged close interactions between our staff and guests. The tireless work and endless commitment of our staff and volunteers to foster a space that felt like home built a stronger connection with our guests.

It was awe-inspiring to see the direct impact of what eight weeks of stability can do for our guests. Several guests were able to achieve their short term goals of filing for a Massachusetts state ID, submitting resumes and job applications, and getting connected to more resources in the Cambridge-Boston area. One guest was able to get approval for housing, and another guest was offered a job by the end of the summer.

As we continue to serve people experiencing homelessness at our shelter, we look forward to implementing the lessons we have learned from the summer and hope to ride this momentum to further improve our services for guests in the future.

# Thank you to our 2019 PBHA

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Design & Editing

Nathan Greenberg

# Restorative Justice: Circles of Trust

**Carmella Verrastro '19**  
Summer Programming Group  
Officer

This summer, my goal was to plant seeds of a counterculture in the **Summer Urban Program (SUP)** to combat oppression and the school-to-prison pipeline. I know from my experience growing up in Dorchester, where many of our SUP campers live, that Black and Latinx children, especially boys and young men, are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school. Expulsion from school increases a child's likelihood of incarceration later in life. Therefore, to help disrupt the cycle of harm and mass incarceration, this summer I led a team dedicated to training our staff for our first ever SUP-wide Restorative Justice initiative in our classrooms.

Unlike traditional disciplinary methods, Restorative Justice does not punish. Instead, it is based in relationship-building and prevents harm by building community and trust. Rather than using disciplinary methods that



exclude children from the classroom or camp, in SUP we trained senior and junior counselors on the history and use of Restorative Justice circles. Using these circles, staff helped campers work through difficult situations as a community, invited families into the process when applicable, and helped mediate conversations about how to prevent harm in the future. Restorative Justice equipped our staff with a positive alternative method to address harm in a way that empowered SUP campers to better understand their feelings, have a voice, and cultivate a community grounded in love and acceptance.

The SUP community has much to learn and improve upon as we continue Restorative Justice into next year, and I am proud that we have taken the first steps. In order to live by the values of equity and racial justice that inspire our mission, it is critical that we embrace holistic practices that prioritize growth and care. As SUP continues, Restorative Justice will become the backbone of our culture. More campers will feel heard, accepted, and loved. Together we will break down the systemic oppressive structures that confine youth rather than build them up, and set them free.

## Getting Hands-On with Summer Science

**Andrew Siyoon Ham '22**  
Summer Science Director

This summer, SUP's **Summer Science** program visited classrooms throughout all SUP camp locations in Boston, teaching engaging, interactive science lessons to campers of all ages. Our volunteers built close relationships with campers and worked to achieve the ultimate goal of inspiring youth to pursue their interests and passions in the sciences. Encouraging campers to ask questions and to think critically about why rockets fly upward, for example, our volunteers were able to foster a

vibrant, active classroom atmosphere. At the end of the summer, campers had learned basic chemistry principles by making slime and ice cream, elementary physics by building rockets and participating in an egg drop experiment, and got a taste of civil engineering as they tried to build the sturdiest and tallest towers from marshmallows and spaghetti noodles. Regardless of the experiment, campers were consistently encouraged to form and work in groups, and lessons emphasized a hands-on approach to science that can sometimes be missing in early education.



# Reflection in Representation at CHAD

**Joyce Huang '19**  
Director, Chinatown ESL &  
Citizenship

What does an Asian American curriculum look like? When executed well, **Chinatown Adventure (CHAD)** campers and junior counselors not only see their reflection in history and literature, but they also gain knowledge of the immense diversity that makes up Asian America. Far from the short paragraphs of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Japanese Internment Camps that students read in school, our campers learn about the history of Asian immigration, pan-ethnic solidarity, and challenges that the community has overcome, while increasing cultural empowerment and self-confidence. Teaching Asian American history is important. It provides a space for our students to reflect upon their community and identity as an “Asian American.” By shedding light on Asian American history, we are investing in the well-being of our students and community, and actively resisting the marginalization of a minority group.

One initiative launched in partnership

with our Asian American curricula was *Reflection in Representation*. In this initiative, Grades 1-7 read literature written by and centered on Asian American voices. Our classes designed lesson plans on the books they had received to encourage critical thinking and reflection. Furthermore, as each grade had a different set of books, many of our classes did a collaboration together. For example, Grades 1 and 7 partnered up into big and little “siblings” to read their books to one another. Our campers gained so much from these cross-grade collaborations and book discussions.

By the last week of the program, our campers in Grades 4-7 created an Asian American History Museum filled with reflections, letters, posters, educational game simulations, and models that were representative of what they had learned. Our campers were delighted to showcase their work to Josue Sakata, the assistant director of social studies and history in the Boston Public Schools. Yue Yue, a fourth-grader, wrote a letter to BPS advocating for Asian American history in school curricula and emphasized the importance of her experi-

ence this summer. Two of our seventh graders, Susan and Jessica, designed an escape-the-room stimulation, creating questions from what they had learned. Our sixth-grade class made posters and held a protest on the air pollution in Chinatown, and our fifth graders created a model to demonstrate tenant challenges in Chinatown. Throughout the summer, our campers asked challenging questions, learned about activism, social issues, their community, and most importantly, self-advocacy. It was amazing to see them not only show a persistent interest in learning, but to also show leadership and take initiative of teaching others.



# Curriculum for the Future

**Cyatharine Alias '15**  
SUP Curriculum Coordinator

SUP has come a long way since my days as a senior counselor for Chinatown Adventure (CHAD) in 2012. I remember feeling at a complete loss having to create curriculum from scratch. I spent the Saturdays during training poring over classroom curriculum at the library. Fast forward to this summer, SUP piloted a curriculum-building program with funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education ASOST-Q grant that allowed me to organize and vet seven years of curriculum. In the

process, I linked together existing curricula of related topics across camps, identified curriculum that progressed through the summer, and provided additional structure to bare bones curriculum.

During the summer, I worked with a cohort of returning SCs to prepare them to create strong, engaging curriculum. We began with training to think about the purpose of SUP for each age group – academic, social, and emotional. Then, the cohort learned about project-based learning and how linking Math and ELA to a common thread

would benefit student learning. With this training, senior counselors headed into the summer, while I coached them through observations, check-ins, and weekly curriculum feedback. Throughout the summer, counselors worked on a variety of topics – self-care, map making, neighborhood identity, and climate change. At the end of the summer, I collected the curriculum the counselors produced and re-organized them into the curriculum library. I can't wait for next summer, when counselors will have access to more than 30 lesson plans per age group to give them a head start on their journey with SUP!

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## Growing up in SUP



**Kami Ambrose**  
Director, Mission Hill Summer  
Program (MHSP)

I have been a part of the **Mission Hill Summer Program (MHSP)** for nine years, as a camper, junior counselor, senior counselor, and director. I kept returning to MHSP because of the connections and relationships I built with the entire community. I was the senior counselor for the oldest girls for three years and I view them as my little sisters. I loved returning to my group to see the growth my girls had achieved. We were able to continue where we left off the following summer and face new challenges together. MHSP traditions will live on forever with the new generation ready to lead.



**Thomas Phan**  
Director, Boston Refugee Youth  
Enrichment (BRYE)

This summer I told myself, “what I do is for the kids.” Seeing them interact with their counselors, seeing them make new friends and have fun all summer long was the only reward I wanted. Being able to direct **Boston Refugee Youth Enrichment (BRYE)** was such a great experience because I was once in their shoes. After sitting in the classroom with my peers and learning from my counselors, to now directing this camp is an honor. I hope that because of me, a camper can one day be in my shoes. BRYE will always be my family because there is nothing like it. #BRYE-LOVE



**Sammi Chen**  
Director, Chinatown Adventure  
(CHAD)

I have been involved with **Chinatown Adventure (CHAD)** for 11 years as a camper, junior and senior counselor, and director. CHAD LOVE is the reason why I’ve continued to come back every single year. I have never had any other work or classroom experience where I had the support of the people around me like I had at SUP. SUP gave me lifetime friendships and mentorships. Thanks to CHAD, I learned the importance of building community and relationships with campers, counselors, and the community. It motivated me to create an educational and enriching summer for everyone involved.

This summer, 9 SUP Directors have been a part of SUP since they were campers.