

## Farewell to Marni

Dear Friend of PIC:

Marni Sweet is retiring. Hard to say; harder still to imagine. She has been the driving force behind The Parent-Infant Center in West Philadelphia since shortly after its founding nearly 30 years ago, and she has been a passionate advocate for children and early childhood education throughout her long and distinguished career.

At a time when PIC is at the beginning of yet another growth spurt, led by Marni's vision, superb negotiating skills, and simple perseverance, the prospect of her retirement was on the horizon – but still in the distance – six months ago. That horizon has come abruptly closer in the past three months as she has struggled first with troubling neurological symptoms and then an emerging diagnosis and aggressive treatment for an inoperable brain tumor. The cancer has sapped her energy, but not her spirit; scrambled her speech at times, but never her thoughts.

Marni has thought a lot about her predicament, which for her is much less about a terminal illness than about work unfinished and plans yet to be fulfilled. She is probably the last person in the world who would talk about her legacy, but in her inimitable, matter-of-fact way, Marni has acknowledged the uncertainty of her own future even as she has expressed a desire to use her retirement to help ensure PIC's future.

Anyone who knows Marni Sweet knows



that she doesn't wait for opportunities to appear; she creates them. On the evening of September 27 at Abbraccio Restaurant in West Philadelphia, she will celebrate her retirement with hundreds of friends – we hope you will plan to be there. She will use that occasion also to kick off PIC's most ambitious campaign ever – to raise \$1 million for an expansion of the Center that will allow PIC to serve a minimum of 50 more children while also increasing opportunities to support parents and young families throughout our community.

As a tribute to Marni and in recognition of her lifelong drive to better the lives of children, her good friends Rebecca and Arthur Samberg have committed a \$300,000 challenge grant to PIC's expansion campaign. And Marni feels so strongly about meeting the neighborhood's need for more child care that she is personally underwriting her own retirement party so that every gift and pledge will be completely tax-deductible and matched dollar-for-dollar.

Expanding PIC's capacity to meet the needs of young children and their families for quality care and early learning has been the only legacy Marni ever desired. When you receive your invitation to celebrate the magnificent achievements of Marni Sweet's life and career, we hope that you will generously support a goal that reflects with absolute clarity her core ideals and values.

Throughout her career, Marni has been the source and inspiration for many bold and innovative initiatives that have helped others achieve their dreams. We have a singular opportunity now to honor her and help make her dream a reality. Please join us.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Inglis  
President, PIC Board of Directors

# Marni Sweet: an appreciation

Mary A. Sweet was born in 1941 to a family of social activists in Columbus, Ohio. Her strong-willed mother Marilla actually wanted to name the baby Marni, but she thought no one would take the name seriously – which only goes to show that mothers aren't always right.

Some of Marni's earliest memories are of child care – in her case, a day care center in Detroit where she and her twin siblings played while their father was away at war and their mother worked as a secretary to support the family. Marni has always described herself as a late bloomer – shy and chubby as a child, but hitting her stride at the University of Cincinnati where she was a campus leader. As a graduate student at the University of Michigan she was elected national president of the Student YWCA, and at the national convention she convinced delegates from all over the country to hold a civil rights demonstration. Following the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., she successfully urged the National Board of the Girl Scouts of the USA to commit to ending racism.

After graduating from Michigan with a master's degree in social work, Marni moved to St. Louis, where she worked for the local Girl Scout Council, and then to Chicago, where she worked for Head Start at the Windy City's infamous Cabrini Green housing project. Jobs with the Chicago Girl Scouts and several nursery schools followed, and in 1977 Marni came to Philadelphia to earn another master's degree, this one in early childhood education at Temple University. She taught at Restoration Preschool, was director of the East Mt. Airy Neighbors Center and Assistant Director of the Temple Univer-



sity Day Care Center. She came home to PIC as Director in 1982.

Her tenure at The Parent-Infant Center spanned the most influential, the most political and the most exciting years of the early childhood movement in Pennsylvania and the nation. Under her leadership, PIC quadrupled in size, maintained a commitment to retaining an experienced, well-trained staff, developed new programs, significantly increased the number of low-income children served, and achieved national accreditation of both its early childhood and school-age programs. Throughout her career, Marni's leadership style was one of inclusion; her door was forever open to innovation and change. In fact, she was honored in 2002

as an Agent of Change by Women's Way and profiled in the Philadelphia Inquirer's Sunday Magazine.

Marni's enthusiasm and encouragement for parents and children has never wavered. She not only provided vision and educational leadership for PIC, but also shared her talents with her professional colleagues, serving as president of the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, chair of the Philadelphia Early Childhood Collaborative, and as a board member of the Delaware Valley Child Care Council, the West Philadelphia Child Care Network, and Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth. Statewide, she served on the membership committee of the Pennsylvania Child Care Association.

### **The savvy advocate**

As an advocate for the child care community, Marni was peerless. Philadelphia's first Worthy Wage event grew out of a potluck supper she threw for potential leaders of this ongoing effort to raise consciousness about the low pay scales associated with careers in early childhood education. In her zeal to illustrate paycheck inequities, Marni often demonstrated a flair for public relations. Back in 1995 she invited Lynne Yeakel, then Regional Secretary of Health and Human Services, to work as a classroom assistant for 90 minutes one morning – earning a paycheck of \$10 and national recognition of the Worthy Wage Campaign. During another Worthy Wage event, Marni ignited controversy when some of PIC's children left dolls around the University of Pennsylvania campus with messages such as "My teacher works weekends at McDonald's so that she can afford to be a child care teacher."

When Maine Senator Olympia Snowe proposed an increase in federal funding for child care, Marni brought scissors and paper to PIC

and other board meetings and exhorted her fellow board members to fold and cut paper snowflakes. Early childhood advocates around the nation mailed thousands of "Snowe-flakes" to Washington in a blizzard of support for the bill. She also arranged for a group of preschoolers to visit Philadelphia's mayoral candidates in the last election and deliver "One Percent for Kids" messages that urged earmarking 1% of the city's budget to improve the lives of children.

Marni was always inviting parents to join in statewide and national campaigns to improve child care, raise standards and support children. She organized campaigns close to home, too. When it appeared that PIC might be evicted from its location of 20 years by the construction of the Penn Alexander Partnership School in 1999, Marni skillfully and successfully organized parents, Penn faculty and staff to stand firm on the continuing need for neighborhood child care "in the neighborhood."



### **Commitment to quality and community**

In a job sector with traditionally high turnover rates and low professional expectations, Marni built a center with a reputation for well-trained teachers and impressive staff retention. Half of the staff hold tenure of more than five years and three staff members recently celebrated 20 years of service at PIC. Marni accomplished this through smart management practices, fighting to preserve decent wages, and exhorting staff to take advantage of every possible professional development opportunity. In honor of her 60th birthday, sixty of Marni's close friends made donations to establish the Marni Sweet Fund at the Philadelphia Foundation. Parents at PIC also donated to a fund supporting scholarships for staff members pursuing degrees in early childhood education.

As a center director, Marni believed in building a community of care around our children – involving parents, teachers, professionals and volunteers in creating a strong foundation to support families and give each child a loving, secure environment for learning. She initiated the Parent Participation Program, increasing the center’s social and human capital and helping families bond with one another and other staff. Like a true family, when a member of the PIC community was in need, Marni was the first to reach out. In the past couple of years she marshaled an impressive array of resources for a PIC teacher dying of cancer, rallied support for a parent suffering a complicated financial crisis, and collected food, clothing and furniture for a teacher who lost all her family’s possessions in a house fire.

Marni created a child care center that values diversity in all its forms. A parent group that met regularly to discuss issues of diversity was the impetus for PIC’s first major fundraising tradition, the spring plant sale. Proceeds from the sale helped to establish the PIC Scholarship Fund for families whose income exceeds limits for state subsidies and who want a quality early childhood education for their children. As the center grew, Marni worked with parents to establish ArtStart, a fall silent auction fundraiser to increase available scholarship funds and support arts education for all PIC children. She constantly stitched together small grants to support drop-in parenting playgroups for neighborhood families and offered meeting space and guidance to a coalition of family day care providers serving low-income families in West Philadelphia.

### **Legacy of caring**

The life of a PIC child is one that is rich in traditions – this is a precious gift that

Marni has given to several thousand children throughout her 25-year tenure. At Halloween, she was the Cat in the Hat or a “sweet” piece of candy corn. She donned stars and stripes for the July 4th parade to campus and brandished her family’s vintage ice cream scoop at the “Spoil-Your-Supper” Ice Cream Social. No Pajama Breakfast was complete without the executive director in her jammies and fuzzy slippers. PIC kids of the ‘80s and ‘90s recall Marni toasting s’mores on summer camping trips, and autumn days when the entire center went apple picking. Such traditions touch grownups, too. Many a friend of PIC has received handmade Valentines decorated by toddlers and mailed by Marni.

And so now, after 25 years, Marni has retired from staff trainings and parent conferences and budget worries and board meetings. But her life’s work is embodied in values recently affirmed by the entire PIC community: a belief in high-quality child care; partnerships between parents and teachers; diversity of all kinds; affordable, accessible child care for families who need it; and building a community that nurtures families, staff and friends of PIC. Every toddler who happily dabbles in finger paint, every teacher who gently pats a child to sleep at naptime, every parent who says “Good job!” to the preschooler printing letters on a blank page – they all are honoring the legacy of the remarkable teacher, friend, mentor, advocate and visionary that we have in Marni Sweet.



# Planning PIC's Future

The PIC Board of Directors has been working diligently in the past few months since Marni's initial diagnosis to ensure that the center continues to thrive and provide quality care for our children. The Board has asked Cynthia Roberts, PIC's Assistant Director, to serve as Acting Director. We are truly grateful to Cindy, the administrative staff, and teachers for their leadership, hard work, and inspiration during these past few months.

Because PIC's staff is so strong, the Board has been afforded the time to be thoughtful in planning for the future. In a January strategic planning retreat with board and key PIC staff, it was decided that an organizational assessment would be a good next step to prepare for the coming years.

We have hired the LaSalle Nonprofit Center to conduct the assessment and the William Penn Foundation has generously underwritten 90 percent of the cost. The Nonprofit Center is known for its expertise in nonprofit management, succession planning, and board development. When the assessment is completed in October, we will communicate the results and next steps with the broader PIC community. The Board and staff are excited about this opportunity to guide PIC into the future!



## Come to ArtStart 2007!

Join us on Thursday evening, October 18, for wine & cheese, delicious appetizers & desserts, plus a great silent auction for a great cause – PIC's Scholarship Fund and arts education at the Center.

Contact ArtStart Chair, Jung Kang (Kirsten & Daniel's mom) to volunteer or to learn more (jkang@gse.upenn.edu)



# Welcome new board members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to PIC's Board of Directors, elected in May 2007: **Jonathan Cass**, father to Max and "Peanut" Ben, is an attorney with the firm of Cohen Seglias, PC, who has served on the boards of the Manayunk Development Corporation and the Garden Court Community Association. **Pam Holland** was a PIC staff member for 15 years as a teacher, program director and assistant director before joining the faculty at The Philadelphia School, where she is a pre-k teacher and admissions officer. **Kathy Howard** is an assistant professor at Penn's Graduate School of Education and her current research investigates family engagement in children's early learning in a Mexican immigrant community. She is the mother of 2 1/2-year-old twins who are at home with their dad. **Molly Roth** is Director of Development for OIC International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income, disadvantaged individuals. Molly's older daughter Elinor attends PIC's After School Center. **Karen Wolfe**, mother of Gwendolyn in Roadrunners, is a staff attorney for the Defender Association of Philadelphia and co-chair of PIC's Facilities Committee.

## PIC Board of Directors

### Board President

Anne Marie Inglis, GlaxoSmithKline \*

### Directors

Jonathan Cass, Cohen Seglias, PC \*

Clara Flores, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia \*

Chris Gradel, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia

Jon Hoffman, contractor \*

Pam Holland, The Philadelphia School \*\*

Kathryn Howard, UPenn Graduate School of Education

Mimi Iijima, PA Humanities Council \*

Jung Kang, UPenn Graduate School of Education \*

Phyllis Martino, Impact Services

Mike McGrath, actor/artist \*

Hedra Packman, Free Library of Philadelphia \*\*

Leslie Roesler, Pennsylvania Key

Allener Rogers, Arcadia University

Molly Roth, OIC International \*

Serena Spearman, family child care provider

Mailee Walker, Wachovia Regional Foundation \*

Karen Wolfe, Defender Association of Philadelphia \*

\* Current parent \*\* Alumni parent

---

## We are very grateful for the support of our generous friends whose contributions we received from March – August 2007

### Individual Contributors:

Judith and Daniel Aguiar  
Patricia Allred  
Sonia Barbosa-Ruiz  
Omar Blaik and Hazami Sayed  
Daniel P. Brennan  
Mark Brown  
Carol F. Buegel  
Craig R. Carnaroli  
Bill Chodoff and Louise Barteau  
Patrick Connelly  
Esther Cristol  
E. Bryan Crenshaw  
Francis X. Crowley  
Margreta De Grazia  
Cyrus Dezfuli-Arjomandi  
Gerri and Mario DiLisi  
Ira Elliott  
Anne and William Ewing  
C. Casey Flavin  
Linda Frank  
Gregg Fromell and Beth Rezet  
Denise Furey  
Diaie Garthwaite  
Christine Gradel  
Abby and Jacob Gray  
Mary Goldman  
Marcella E. Handy  
Ann M. Hanson  
Bob and Colleen Hauser  
Ken Hua  
Rhoda Kanevsky  
Amy Kaplan  
Damien Keane  
Lucy Kerman  
Elaine Kihara and David Sweet  
Ian Krantz and Nancy Spinner  
Lois Kreidle  
David Lefkowitz  
Tara and Bob Levine  
Allison Lightwire  
Dona Love-Sullivan  
Harriet Luria  
Elizabeth Mallonee  
Phyllis Martino  
Donna Masini  
Evelyn Merrick

Jeffrey Miller  
Josephine Park  
Janet Parrish  
John Pieklik  
Elizabeth Pokempner  
M. Jon Posner  
Jamison Preston  
Shirley A. Preston  
Dave Rizzio and Katie Brady  
Libby Rosof and Murray Dubin  
Arthur and Rebecca P. Samberg  
Nur Selamoghu and Fevzi Daldal  
Sherri Shields  
John W. Shigeoka  
David and Patricia Schogel  
Sally A. Simmons & Charles A. Thrall  
Carolyn and Erik Simpson  
Seetha Srinivasan  
Llana & Jordan Stanger-Ross  
Don Stevens and Judy Silver  
Sandra and Edward Swenson  
Wallis Urmenyhazi  
Jan Verhage  
Mailee and David Walker  
Jason D. Watkins  
Charles Weeks  
Carol and Charles Weeks  
Marlene Weinstein  
Andrea Weiss and John Green  
Christopher Wells  
Liz Werthan and Bob Brand  
Frances White  
Nelson and Beth Wicas  
Roy Yaffe  
Dennis Zimmerman

Donna Masini; Josephine Park;  
John Pieklik; Katie and Dave Rizzio  
and Katie Brady; Carolyn and Erik  
Simpson; Seetha Srinivasan; Llana  
and Jordan Stanger-Ross; Jason D.  
Watkins; Charles Weeks; Carol and  
Charles Weeks; Christopher Wells;  
Dennis Zimmerman  
In honor of True William Hanson:  
Ann M. Hanson  
In memory of Barabara Hirshkowitz:  
Esther Cristol  
In honor of Christopher and  
Michael O'Neill: John W. Shigeoka  
In memory of Sheryl Preston Johnson  
Shirley A. Preston  
In honor of Marni Sweet:  
Rhoda Kanevsky; Elaine Kihara  
and David Sweet; Janet Parrish;  
M. Jon Posner; Sandra and Edward  
Swenson; Wallis Urmenyhazi; Jan  
Verhage; Andrea Weiss and John  
Green; Roy Yaffe  
In honor of the Wonderful Wild  
Things Teachers: Ian Krantz and  
Nancy Spinner

### Corporate and other Support

Clemets & Sweet, PC  
Connelly Foundation  
Gould Yaffe and Golden  
The Knight Foundation  
Lindsay Insurance Group  
Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care  
Foundation  
Monarch Hardware  
Pasqually's Pizza  
Pennsylvania Department  
of Public Welfare  
The Philadelphia Foundation  
Philadelphia Safe and Sound  
United Way of Southeastern  
Pennsylvania  
Wachovia Foundation  
West Philadelphia Locksmith  
William Penn Foundation

### To Honor and Remember:

In memory of Jasper Aguiar Allred:  
Judith & Daniel Aguiar; Patricia  
Allred; Daniel P. Brennan; Carol F.  
Buegel; Margreta De Grazia; Ira  
Elliott; C. Casey Flavin; Diaie  
Garthwaite; Bob and Colleen Hauser;  
Amy Kaplan; Damien Keane; Tara  
and Bob Levine; Allison Lightwire;  
Dona Love-Sullivan; Harriet Luria;

---

**Please remember PIC when you contribute to this year's United Way campaign.  
Our number is 02671; in the Penn's Way campaign, our number is 55-2671. Thank you!**

*We intend to recognize all of our donors. If we have accidentally omitted your name, please accept our apology and let us know of our mistake.*



**The Parent Infant Center** Excellence in early childhood education since 1978  
4205 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19104 215/898-4180 Fax 215/573-3900 [www.parentinfantcenter.org](http://www.parentinfantcenter.org)