“Our quality early childhood program offers a win-win opportunity for program participants, their parents, and society as a whole. We are incredibly grateful to our staff, volunteers and donors whose support makes it all possible.”

-Judy Keefer, Board President

Dear Friends of Brooklyn Kindergarten Society,

As Brooklyn Kindergarten Society approaches its 125th anniversary year, we can look back proudly on the many thousands of lives we have changed positively over the course of our history. As we consider the coming years, we are hopeful that city and state political forces continue to focus on expanding the number of children in preschool programs but insist that quality remain the top priority.

Two major developments are beginning to take shape at BKS. We have received approval to open a new prekindergarten center in the Weeksville Gardens complex in Crown Heights, enabling us to expand our capacity for educating four-year olds by more than a third.

We have also begun moving forward with our family child care provider pilot. Designed to assist home-based providers to upgrade their early education programs through coaching and targeting financial support, this initiative will ultimately impact as many as a hundred additional young children in the next year. If it becomes as successful as we plan, this pilot could represent a new major direction for BKS programs.

Multiple studies dating back more than forty years have shown that huge differences in the course of children’s lives can be tracked to the quality of the programs they were in during the first five years of life. A high-quality program has been shown to double high school graduation rates, dramatically decrease teen pregnancies, reduce by half the number of children who are classified as “special needs,” and increase the likelihood of college graduation by nearly four to one.

Two-thirds of the children who arrive in our centers test below their age group norms and are at-risk, but by the time they head off to kindergarten, more than 90% of them are functioning at or above age group norms. These are the children who will do well in their school years and go on to live happy and productive lives. It’s why we do what we do.

One highlight of 2014 was the announcement that BKS was being awarded the Robin Hood Foundation Heroes award. We need to express our gratitude to the board of directors and all the employees, volunteers, foundations and individual donors who have supported the high-quality educational program at BKS for so many years. You should take great pride in this achievement and in BKS’ ongoing record of success.

Sincerely,

Judy Keefer  James Matison
Board President  Executive Director

MISSION
Brooklyn Kindergarten Society provides high-quality early childhood education and family support services for children from low-income communities, ensuring that children develop the social, emotional, physical and cognitive skills they need to succeed.

HISTORY
BKS was founded in 1891 with major funding from oil magnate Charles Pratt, and with leadership and support from one of the pioneer women’s clubs in the country, the Brooklyn Woman’s Club.

Over the next 122 years – through major wars, multiple recessions and depressions, a tripling of the borough’s population, and changing perceptions of the need for early childhood education – BKS remained steadfast in its mission.

Today BKS is thriving with five top-quality, nationally recognized preschools serving the communities of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights and Brownsville – three of Brooklyn’s poorest neighborhoods. BKS is poised in the coming years to expand its capacity and expand its reach into the low-income neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

In November 2014 Brooklyn Kindergarten Society was named one of three 2014 Heroes by the Robin Hood Foundation. Robin Hood Board Member, civil rights activist and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, Marian Wright Edelman, presented BKS with the award and a $50,000 check for their tireless work to improve the lives of many of Brooklyn’s most vulnerable children through its high-quality early education program.

BKS Executive Director James Matison, Marian Wright Edelman, and former BKS student Davida David.
BS served 377 children (ages 2 to 5) in 21 separate classrooms located in five preschools housed in New York City Housing projects. Almost all of our children come from families of the working poor — 90% earn less than $20,499 a year — and a growing concentration come from first generation immigrant parents. With poverty and a lack of English speaking proficiency at home, BKS toddlers and preschoolers face severe risks for low academic performance and school failure. BKS strives to stop the cycle of poverty where it does the most damage—in early childhood. The earliest years of life are the most critical in determining a child’s future. A growing body of research shows that childhood poverty can cause lasting changes in the brain unless quality intervention efforts begin early.

The BKS program has a profound and tangible effect on the at-risk children it serves. While two-thirds of children entering BKS centers exhibit signs of developmental and language delays, more than 90% complete the BKS program on par with their peers in literacy and math.

The BKS program is strategically designed to provide academic and social enrichment that are rooted in best practices and are the hallmarks of high-quality preschools everywhere. Professional teachers, developmentally appropriate curricula, strong parental involvement, and links to the public schools the children will later attend, are essential to making a true difference. In fact, longitudinal studies show that early childhood programs that combine high-quality childcare with a strong family support component continue to make a difference in the lives of participants 20 and 30 years later.
3. **Family stability is supported.** By itself, early education is not enough. To succeed children need the support of economically secure and physically and mentally healthy parents, which is why BKS has a family services team to provide support systems and make referrals to community resources. The BKS Family Services Team supports parents by developing trust and rapport with families and building and sustaining relationships with community resources to provide referrals based on the specific needs of the families in each center.

**Evidence of Success.** This year, BKS engaged 458 parents with one-on-one counseling and offered more than 120 workshops. Workshops conducted during this program year include: Achievement Gap, Child Development, Parenting Skills, Positive Discipline, Family Routines, Health Management (Child Safety/ Well Baby Care, Men’s Health, Women’s Health, Dental Health, Breast Cancer Awareness, HIV/AIDS Education and Reproductive Health) WIC, Literacy, Domestic Violence, Transitions, Mental Health, Reducing Screen time, Asthma. We have streamlined the role of nutrition and mental health consultants in our program, so that they are reviewing all family records as they relate to their functions, providing written reports, meeting with staff to give feedback and training, and meeting with families to make a plan of action.

4. **Families are proactive and engaged.** Family members are critical partners and fully involved in all aspects of the BKS program, including parent meetings, classroom participation, training sessions, parent-teacher conferences, weekly communication with other families, and informal gatherings. Special emphasis is placed on literacy to encourage parents to read with their children. BKS families obviously want their children to succeed. Therefore, BKS ensures that parents can take advantage of services and programs by providing them with information about opportunities and choices that are available for their children.

**Evidence of Success.** As part of the transition to kindergarten, BKS ensures that children have up-to-date knowledge of the opportunities for BKS graduates. Family services staff meet one-on-one with parents to ensure the children take advantage of the full range of educational options. This year BKS parents have been proactive and engaged in applying to charter and public schools well beyond their local elementary school which may not be the best fit for their child. By actively engaging in the charter school process parents are empowered to realize they have an important voice in their children’s education.

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**THE BKS PROGRAM IS DRIVEN BY FOUR KEY PRINCIPLES:**

1. **Children are exposed to intellectually stimulating environments so they learn the skills they need to succeed.** BKS teachers understand how young children learn and develop. They see their role as facilitating the growth of each child in math, literacy, science and social and emotional development. BKS utilizes a research-based curriculum (the Creative Curriculum) with emphasis on language and literacy, using a multidisciplinary and individualized approach. Classrooms are well equipped with appropriate materials and supplies, making them inviting places for children to engage in active learning.

**Evidence of Success.** BKS is recognized as one of the top seven school readiness programs in New York City. We utilize the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™) to assess the quality of teacher-child interactions and score high in all three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. BKS is pleased to report that our mean scores are far higher than averages in other large-scale studies of early childhood programs.

2. **Special emphasis is placed on accelerating children’s language, literacy and cognitive skills to allow BKS children to be on equal footing with children raised with more advantages.** One of the greatest tools we can give students for success, both in school and in life, is a large rich vocabulary. In fact, vocabulary size correlates positively with greater reading comprehension and general academic success.

**Evidence of Success.** 100% of BKS four-year olds meet or exceed age expectations in Literacy and 97% met or exceeded expectations in Math. Children in BKS programs have caught up and are on par, or better, than their peer groups as evidenced by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

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When low-income parents have been involved in their children’s preschool program, students at age 19 are:

- **40% MORE likely to graduate from high school**
- **35% MORE likely to be employed**
- **55% LESS likely to be on welfare**
- **40% LESS likely to have been arrested**

**Sources:** The Abecedarian Project, High/Scope Perry Preschool Project & Chicago Parent-Child Centers
By the time black and Hispanic children reach kindergarten, they are on average already far behind their more advantaged peers in reading and math readiness. Such disparities in achievement persist or even increase during the school years. Educational programs for parents and preschool education programs for children have the potential to narrow these disparities by at least half.

—Ron Haskins (co-director of the Initiative on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution) and Cecilia Rouse (professor of economics and public affairs Princeton University); Heckman and Masterov, The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children, October 2004.

Case Study No. 1

“Kylie” had a very difficult time transitioning into the classroom. She was prone to tantrums, screaming, throwing objects, and putting just about everything she could into her mouth. We noticed that her mother seemed very frustrated and often lost her temper with Kylie. Since our main concern was Kylie, we began making adjustments for her in the room. We assigned a student teacher to “shadow” her during most of choice time to better support transitions and manage social situations. We started each morning talking about our feelings as a class, and encouraged Kylie to use more language to describe how she was feeling when she was upset. In the meantime, the teacher regularly reached out to Kylie’s mom highlighting her successes and giving suggestions for home. After an evaluation, Kylie began receiving services including a Special Education Itinerant Teacher and Occupational Therapy. Kylie began to thrive – she participated more in lessons and stories; she controlled her strong emotions in an age-appropriate way. Her mother thanked us many times and told us she saw similar changes at home.

Case Study No. 2

When 3 year old “Adam” first came into our class his favorite, and only, word was “NO” which he would scream while throwing himself on the floor. Adam was having difficulty following directions, was unable to express himself and had extreme difficulty with transitions. After a few short weeks, the teaching team met to strategize on how to help Adam. The Center Director, teacher and family worker met with Adam’s mother and discussed his tantrums and language delays. Adam’s mother agreed to have him evaluated. The teaching team worked with the mother on strategies for both home and in the classroom. We began giving him visual cues like the clock and arrows to help with understanding what was coming next. Adam began receiving services including both a Special Educational Itinerant Teacher and a speech therapist. Adam quickly started to develop language. Transitioning became smoother and his tantrums decreased. Adam is doing great!

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Root Cause – Strategic Impact Research declared BKS as one of the top seven school readiness programs in New York City, after examining more than 1,700 programs in the city.
YULETIDE BALL 2014

Since 1920, our annual ‘Yuletide Ball’ has been a symbol of the spirit of the holiday season, inspiring good cheer and doing good. Over the course of the past 94 years, the Ball has evolved as our beloved borough grows, in size and popularity while maintaining a community spirit. Our pre-Ball dinner parties, graciously hosted by the Yuletide Committee Members and Friends of Yuletide, continues to drive the success of the Ball by helping keep expenses down and maximizing the amount of money raised to support our programs.

Our sincerest thanks to co-chairs, Amerika Williamson and Amelia Wilson and the Yuletide Committee and Friends of Yuletide for a truly remarkable 94th Yuletide Ball. Yuletide 2014 was another banner year – record number of dinner parties, record attendance at the Casino and a record number of tickets sold. This year’s Ball was the most photographed thanks to one of our lead underwriters, One John St. Not only did One John St help underwrite the cost of the Ball through their sponsorship, but they also underwrote the cost of sending photographers to over 29 dinner parties to document the pre-Ball dinners. We are so grateful for the support of our lead sponsors – One John St., Sweet ‘n Low and TD Bank as well as many community businesses and organizations.

YULETIDE 2014

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Heights Chateau

Each year individuals and community partners contribute to BKS through in-kind goods and discounted services and by supporting our programs and special events as well as volunteering their time and talents. Without their generous support, BKS would have to spend its limited operating funds to cover many of these expenses. BKS is proud to recognize these generous donors and volunteers who have contributed time, materials, and services to help offset costs associated with running the Yuletide Ball and providing critical supports to our families. BKS wouldn’t be here without their support!

Yuletide Hosts 2014

Our deepest appreciation and thanks to the following Yuletide Committee Members and Friends of Yuletide for hosting a dinner before the Ball.

Marissa Alperin* & John Lowe
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Amelia* & James Wilson
Anne & Ted Wolf III

*Indicates member of the Yuletide Committee

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$250,000+

Donor

DONORS

$150,000+

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In economic terms, high-quality preschool has returned up to $17 on every $1 invested.

—Perry Preschool Longitudinal Study

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Edwards L. Cleaveland Children’s Center – Crown Heights
Sumner Children’s Center – Bedford-Stuyvesant
Tompkins Children’s Center – Bedford-Stuyvesant

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