

# Yonkers EIC Publishes Beautiful *Data Book*

By Deborah Hornstra

It's a gorgeous book that wouldn't look out of place on your coffee table. Printed on high-quality paper, bound to lay flat, and bursting with dynamic graphics and colorful pictures of beautiful children and their beaming parents, the *Yonkers Early Childhood Data Book 2000* is eye candy that will bring a smile to your face. But in addition to its considerable aesthetic appeal, the book also contains every fact and figure one could want to know about the state of early childhood in New York's fourth largest city. It's designed specifically to help local service providers create better programs for children from birth to age 3, so Yonkers children's advocates will want to keep their copy in the office. But the book also provides plenty of information of value to other Westchester-based advocates, and will interest advocates from outside the area as the first book of its kind ever created for any city in the United States. It's an inspirational example of what can be done by that rarest of entities, a coalition of highly motivated and well coordinated community groups (see ordering information below).

HA II instructor Rachel Grob (HAP 1992) spearheaded the *Early Childhood Data Book* project, which was funded by a grant from the Surdna Foundation. In her usual incarnation, Rachel is director of policy analysis and planning for the Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial, the private not-for-profit children's and family services agency in Yonkers, and coordinator of its Early Childhood Initiative (ECI). But for the more than two years it took to put together the *Data Book*, Rachel found herself assuming a new role, acting as the consummate point person as she carefully gathered and sorted out the ideas and comments of more than fifty public and private

agencies and one hundred individual contributors to the final product. In addition to using quantitative data of various kinds, *Data Book* researchers spoke with over 200 Yonkers parents in focus groups and interviews, asking them what they needed to raise their children. These qualitative data add a compelling personal dimension to the book, giving real voice to what might have been a collection of faceless tables and charts.

Throughout the project, there was a

ately negative impact on children. The *Data Book* calls the severe lack of quality child care one of the top three children's issues facing Yonkers, with an incredible 80% of survey respondents reporting a shortage. Other key children's issues are very poor rates of prenatal care and high rates of low birth weight.

But the good news is more compelling, and that's what Rachel and her colleagues wisely chose to emphasize. "Something special is going on in Yonkers," she says. "Something has coalesced around the ECI and people are excited. This is a community-based, collaborative group that's been going for three years now and we are getting stronger every year."

What are people actually doing with the *Data Book*? "People are using it for background," explains Rachel. "They're using both the data and the qualitative statements of people saying what they need, which mirror the data. Groups are also using it for strategic planning, taking it to their subcommittees and on

their retreats. And it's been used to generate more interest in Yonkers and the ECI from foundations and consulting groups who want to use the book as a model for communities that wish to do this kind of assessment."

"The *Data Book* shows how far ahead of other communities Yonkers is," continues Grob, "and what a really good place it can be for families and young children. By emphasizing the positive, we are engaging the power of the self-fulfilling prophecy. People naturally have pride in their strengths. When you publicize those, their sense of pride grows stronger and their feelings of capability and ownership are augmented. This feeds back into the cycle of progress."

The publication of the *Data Book* was featured in both the local newspaper, the

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### Building on Our Strengths Meeting Our Challenges

determined effort to accentuate the positive. "It was one of our goals throughout to focus on strengths. We went through a lot of revision and rewriting to make sure we were capturing what's going well in Yonkers as well as what challenges remain," explains Rachel with justifiable pride in her team's results. "We even went so far as to reverse the subtitle of the book, which was originally 'Meeting our challenges, building on our strengths.' We thought it was important to mention the strengths first, to commend the good things that are happening, and by so doing increase the commitment, energy, and optimism of all who are working toward the ECI's vision for a healthier Yonkers."

As a large, multicultural city, Yonkers is of course not without its problems, many of which have a disproportion-

# HAP Student Placements, 2000-2001

As usual, recent student internships have reflected the full range of health advocacy roles and positions. Students have interned as patient advocates in hospital settings in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, including the following hospitals:

Massachusetts General Hospital (Barbara Winrich); Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (Carol Fleming-Huskisson); St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center (Monica Malakar); Yale New Haven Hospital (Lois Booth); Hospital for Special Surgery (Linda Twomey); White Plains Hospital (Linda Twomey); Mount Sinai Medical Center (Sheila Drogy); New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical Center (Tasha Smith)

Laura Weil, Director of Patient Representatives at Beth Israel Medical Center and part of the Health Advocacy core teaching team, is faculty advisor for all of the students interning in patient representative departments. Joining us this spring as a faculty field placement advisor is Constance Peterson, who developed and runs the patient representative program in the Emergency Department at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical Center. She is working with three students interning in emergency departments, Lucinda Watson at Greenwich Hospital, Ethlouse Banks at Lawrence Hospital and Barbara Winrich, who is working with Constance at Weill Cornell.

Rachel Grob, Jane Nusbaum and Marsha Hurst have been the faculty advisors for students interning in a wide

range of other health advocacy placements. Some have been in hospital settings but not in patient representative roles. Lee Furman interned in a new United Hospital Fund-sponsored Caregiver Institute at Mount Sinai Hospital and Medical Center. Barbara Winrich worked as a patient advocate under the supervision of the Women's Health Clinical Coordinator at the cancer center of University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center. Irene Ferko is at Westchester Medical Center working under HAP graduate Rachel Godfrey in the pet therapy program and on a project to develop the multicultural resources of the Center.

Some of our non-hospital internship settings are placements recommended by past students. Isela Chavarria is continuing our long association with the March of Dimes Resource Center. Monica Malakar is doing her last placement at FECS, a large behavioral health agency, where she is learning about quality assurance and human resources training. Betti Weimersheimer interned at the Office of the Inspector General (DHHS) where Pat Banta (HA '99) is now working. Fadya Casseus spent the summer at the Children's Defense Fund, and Rachel Grob continues to supervise interns working with the Early Childhood Initiative at Julia Dyckman Andrus Memorial. Allison Sole wrote for Managed Care Interface this past summer, following an internship that had been piloted by a Melissa Haller (HA '00).

Some internships, however, are in new settings and new advocacy arenas.

Mirsada Pasalic is continuing her interest in assisted living and care management by combining internship work in an assisted living setting with interviews with care managers who work with various agencies-as well as independently in the New York area. Two students have interned in managed care organizations, Donna Gentry at Health Source in Westchester and Monica Herrera at Regents Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oregon. Desiree McDougall and Anu Philip interned with different programs run out of the Port Chester Carver Center, which serves a large Hispanic, and heavily immigrant community.

Jane Nadel is planning health curriculum and teaching woman inmates in Connecticut. Also working in an education-related internship, Liz Masek is working with a program called GO GIRLS, which is a school-based eating disorders prevention program for early adolescent girls. Susan Slosberg did her last internship working on a resource book for Castle Connolly Medical Ltd under the supervision of HAP graduate, Arline Lane. Allison Sole is our first intern at Consumers Union, working on the early stages of a web credibility project, with her focus being on the ethics of ehealth sites. Jennifer Johnson interned last summer on a research project on AZT and pregnancy at the Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health (under the NYC Health Research Training Program), and has been interning this spring with the Director of Programs at the SLE-Lupus Foundation of New York. Finally, Jody Harris has continued her interest in cultural sensitivity in health care delivery by working on a manual for the upcoming (May 23) conference, "Who Will Decide for You?: Advance Directives, A Cross-Cultural Perspective" organized by the Greater Southern Brooklyn Health Coalition's Center for Immigrant Choice.

Being Sarah Lawrence College, there are always exceptions and individualized study. Marty Mancuso did a magnificent capstone project, a case study of legislative advocacy, for her last placement (see "Changing Social Policy" on page 13), and Cathey Bienkowski did a health field trip to Cuba which she is combining with a course at SLC and research and workshop preparation for our health advocacy Cuba trip in January 2002 (see "HAP in Cuba in 2002" on page 15). ■

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*Journal News*, and the Westchester edition of the *New York Times*. The *Journal News* called the *Data Book* a "brilliant" effort that "spells out clearly what children need and should have, and what families can do to ensure their youngsters have a proper start in life." The *New York Times* pointed out that getting so many disparate groups to work together to create the book was an accomplishment in itself, and noted that the book's "basic information dealing with children's developmental needs is easily transferable to communities across the county and across the country."

The *Data Book* was formally released last January at a special event at Andrus Memorial; SLC president Michele Myers was the keynote speaker. In attendance were various representatives of state, county and municipal government. ■

The Yonkers Early Childhood Data Book is available to policymakers and planners, parents, civil and religious leaders, academics, journalists, and the community at large. The price is \$15 per copy plus postage. For more information, call Rachel at 914-965-3700, ext. 1282, or send her an email at [jdamrng@andruschildren.org](mailto:jdamrng@andruschildren.org).