

# Your Career is on Her Mind

Through networking, Pat Craddick hopes to help families

By Greg Hanlon

For Upper West Side parent Pat Craddick, the road to neighborhood involvement began on Wall Street.

As a jack-of-all trades in the finance sector, Craddick, like many working parents, sought a more flexible workload.

"I wanted to spend time with my daughter,"—who attends P.S. 87 on West 78th Street—"and to help the people around me," she said. "I came to a career crossroads and decided to harness my business management expertise to really make a contribution."

From this crossroads hatched ParentJobNet, a non-profit organization that provides an array of free job training, job hunting and career advancement services to the parents of Upper West Side public school students. Craddick, a 42-year-old native Jamaican who has lived on Central Park West since 1991, serves as executive director.

ParentJobNet began in December 2004 as an Internet-based professional networking portal, but has since turned into a multi-faceted career service organization. To date, around 3,300 parents have availed themselves of the free services. Of this group, Craddick estimates that 250 parents have landed jobs or advanced their careers with the help of her organization.

"That's what's really rewarding," she said. "We've been able to put parents in a better position to help their children financially, academically and emotionally."

Currently, ParentJobNet operates in District 3, which covers the 48 schools on the West Side roughly between 59th and 123rd streets. But Craddick wants to expand.

"What we have now is a template," she said. "We want to copy and paste it into all communities in the city, and then the tri-state area, and then eventually go nation-wide."

ParentJobNet's four components are designed to cater to the Upper West Side's often hidden diversity, which Craddick describes as resembling a checkerboard because of the alternating pockets of low-income and high-income people.

The Access Training program, described by Craddick as the organization's core component, provides basic job training (like resume writing and "dress for success" seminars) along with financial and computer literacy programs and GED classes.

The Access English program is geared toward the many parents in the district who speak Spanish primarily. The program aims at not only improving language skills, but also boosting self-esteem by enabling community interaction.

Both programs are taught by experts who either volunteer or receive a substantially reduced fee, and both meet at various public schools throughout the district which receive five percent of the money that comes in to ParentJobNet. (As a non-profit organization, the remaining 95 percent goes right back into operating costs.)

The other two programs are the Access Networking program—a series of professional networking events, many of which are held at Starbucks, one of the organization's prime corporate sponsors—and the Access Classified program, an online job posting board.

To assess the needs of parents in the district, ParentJobNet relies on a network of parent coordinators that work at each school. At P.S. 84 on West 92nd Street, where two-thirds of the parent population speaks Spanish primarily, ParentJobNet brought in an ESL program. At P.S. 149 on West 117th Street, where one-third of the parents don't have high school diplomas or GEDs, ParentJobNet implemented a GED class

that now enrolls 55 parents.

Next up are District 5 (West Harlem) and District 6 (Washington Heights), where "there is a tremendous need for GED and ESL programs," according to Craddick.

In 2008, ParentJobNet will expand to the rest of Manhattan, followed by Brooklyn in 2009, Queens in 2010, the Bronx in 2011 and Staten Island in 2012. After that, Craddick hopes to expand throughout the area and then throughout the nation.

"Finding jobs for parents is uniquely challenging," she said. "We've identified the needs of parents in this district, so we're looking to train them for jobs that allow them to work around the demands of raising children. It's tough, but it's needed, and it's very rewarding." ■



Pat Craddick wants to expand her job networking service across the five boroughs and beyond.

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