Dornsife College hosts a Gala to commemorate JEP’s forty-plus years of service to USC & the community

We were also privileged to have JEP alumna, actress, and activist, America Ferrera, deliver the keynote address, commenting on the importance of service and describing her involvement in JEP as “…some of the most memorable and formidable experiences in my time at USC.”

THE JOINT EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

The JEP Newsletter for Fall Semester 2013

Celebrating JEP’s Four Decades of Service

Tammy Anderson, Gala co-chair Sharon Tesoriero, Dean Steve Kay, America Ferrera, honoree Dr. Daniel Potter, and Gala co-chair Deena Lew

BY TAMMARA ANDERSON, JEP Executive Director

On Tuesday, October 29th, over 240 students, faculty, alumni, community partners, friends, and donors joined the JEP staff to celebrate and commemorate its milestone 40th Anniversary. During the event we honored two special members of the JEP Family – Cristina Garcia, Assemblywoman from the 58th Assembly District who was our first “Math Advocate” with our USC Readers’ program, and Dr. Daniel Potter, founder of the Trojan Health Volunteers Program – for exemplifying the JEP “Serve On” spirit!

The evening ended with some rousing entertainment from the always fabulous Spirit of Troy band

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As I sat at dinner, looking around at those gathered, I couldn’t help but reflect on how JEP has touched so many lives. I saw retired teacher, Donna Richardson, who in 1972 was a new teacher at Foshay Junior High School (now Foshay Learning Center) and hosted a JEP mini-team in her classroom. After all these years, Donna still has some of the papers her JEP students helped her class create. I saw Maria Calderon and Beverly Allen, both former JEP staff members in the ‘70s and ‘80s, who worked closely with JEP’s founder, Barbara Gardner, and second director, Dick Cone. I glanced over to see Melinda Johnson and Frances James, JEP coordinators at Foshay Learning Center and King Elementary, who provided oversight of the program at their respective schools. For over 15 years they each offered our students experiences that taught them more about their discipline, themselves, and the society they would soon lead.

An overwhelming feeling of appreciation came over me as I saw the members of the JEP staff, whose absolute dedication to the program cannot be overstated. Together, the eight full time professional staff members have over 100 years of JEP experience. How can it be that Brenda Pesante has given 37 years of service to JEP and still looks 29? I follow not far behind with 32 years, JEP being my first job out of college. Susan Harris came to us as a graduate student and has just celebrated her 19th anniversary. Tina Koneazny was placed at JEP through the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) National Service Program in the early ‘90s then returned a couple of years later to help establish USC’s version of President Clinton’s America Reads/Counts program – USC Readers360! Jacqueline Whitley, Emma Rendon, Jake Peters, and Alex Fairman have not been with us as long, but they have all demonstrated great dedication as members of the JEP family. Each has made unique contributions to our ever-growing JEP programs through their hard work, creativity, and commitment.

In his remarks, Dean Kay explained how “it is important for us to make human connections with each other.” His words reminded me of why JEP is so special. JEP is all about connections. JEP is built on connections – partnerships – some 40 years old! That is the reason why we continue to receive so many wonderful stories about JEP’s extensive reach. For example, a former Program Assistant returns to his hometown of Portland, OR after graduation, interviews for a job, only to find the employer is a JEP alum (Of course he got the job!). Or the parent who visits the JEP House and thanks the staff for giving her daughter the opportunity.

The 40th Gala Committee. Front row (l-r): Ashley Tesoriero, Sharon Tesoriero, Tammy Anderson, Deena Lew, and Susan Harris. Back row (l-r): Cindy Winn, Maureen Curran, Christine Ofiesh, Rushika Suriyakumar, Lisa Regan, Cynthia Kemp, Ronniee-Marie Ruggiero, Chris Fox, and Erika Crespo to get involved in the community because it helped her build self-confidence. Or the local non-profit partner, who with the help of JEP student mentors, turned a small educational program tutoring 25 foster youth into a nationally recognized program working with some eight school districts in the Southern California area. These and so many other partnerships have made JEP the beloved program it is today!

I sincerely want to thank Dean Steve Kay, our Gala Co-Chairs Deena Lew and Sharon Tesoriero, and the members of the planning committee for their tireless efforts to make the JEP 40th Anniversary Gala a success and to highlight JEP’s many achievements over the last four decades. Special thanks to JEP alumna, America Ferrera for her powerful and inspirational keynote which was a perfect conclusion to the evening. 🎉
JEP Going Digital with Two New On-line Systems

After our foray into on-line sign-ups this fall, JEP continues down other digital avenues to add value and ease to our programs.

BY ALEX FAIRMAN, JEP IT Coordinator

For more than forty years, JEP used an intricate system for processing paper applications. Students came into the JEP House to sign up for JEP; usually waiting in line to fill out applications and speak with a JEP staff member. From there, the students’ applications made their way through many hands and stages of processing at the cost of much time, energy, and paper. This fall, after six months of preparation and with the help of the incredible staff at Dornsife Technology Services, JEP launched our new online sign up system!

This new system allows students to apply for JEP from any internet capable device. Students log-in to our registration system using their existing USC credentials which authenticates and auto-populates important information, making it easy for students to sign up and ensuring data accuracy for JEP records. This new online system also allows students to see descriptions of all possible JEP service assignments and rank order their preferences, helping us to get each student the placement that best suits their needs. The fall launch was overwhelmingly successful. We encountered very few problems with the online system and look forward to expanding and refining the system for the spring semester.

Now that the on-line application system has successfully launched, JEP has begun work on developing a mobile website designed to connect students with JEP staff, fellow JEP participants, and the teachers and coordinators at JEP sites. This smartphone-friendly tool ultimately will allow students to do mobile ‘check-ins’ at their JEP sites instead of using paper attendance slips and will facilitate communication between diverse parties: professors, community partners, JEP staff, and other JEP students.

JEP volunteers will be able to log in on their smartphone to find the location of their site, the time of their assignment, and any updates to the daily schedule at the site. The tool will benefit JEP staff as well, who will be better able to communicate with groups of students placed at a specific site or on a particular day to inform them any changes to their assignment. Our hope is that this tool will bridge communication gaps that have sometimes lead to unnecessary trips to sites or difficulties in coordination between sites and volunteers.

This new tool is being developed with the help of an outstanding team of graduate computer science students enrolled in Prof. Supannika Koolmanojwong’s CSCI 577a class. This course requires student-led teams to develop technology solutions for organizations at or near USC. JEP was fortunate to be selected as one of the partners, and we are grateful to have this team of talented students developing a tool that will enhance the JEP experience for our participants and streamline coordination for staff members for many years to come.
A Win-Win Situation: the Partnership of NAI & JEP

JEP and NAI have partnered together in a variety of ways, all of them successfully adding to their missions

BY SUSAN HARRIS, JEP Associate Director

While JEP celebrated its 40th anniversary this fall, another signature USC program—the Neighborhood Academic Initiative (NAI)—turned 24 in 2013. NAI provides a college preparatory curriculum and other academic enrichment to students attending Foshay Learning Center near the UPC campus and, starting this semester, Murchison Elementary and El Sereno Middle School nearby HSC. Beginning in 6th grade, NAI students take English and math classes on USC’s campus and attend a weekly Saturday Academy. USC offers a 4.5-year full tuition scholarship to students who successfully complete the rigorous high school program and earn admission to the university. Since 1989, NAI has graduated 100% of the students in the program, an astonishing achievement when compared to LAUSD’s overall graduation rate of 66.5%. Even more remarkable, 99% of NAI graduates have gone on to pursue higher education, including 254 students who chose to attend USC.

As two programs that work hard to support local schools, children, and families, NAI and JEP share many common goals. In the last few years, we have established several partnerships that allow us to work together toward achieving those goals. In 2010, Alice Villaseñor, then-Public Humanities Director for JEP, joined NAI English teacher, Jacqueline Barrios, in developing a course in which USC freshmen and NAI seniors came together to discuss readings of texts assigned by both instructors. Together, the students attended the opening of From Prada to Nada, a modern-day film adaptation of Jane Austen’s Sense and Sensibility, and several of the NAI and USC students traveled together to attend the Dickens Project conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This fall, JEP facilitated a partnership between Ms. Barrios and Julianne Werlin, a post-doctoral fellow in the English Department and the instructor of ENGL 430: Shakespeare. Through this partnership the USC and NAI students examined soliloquies from Hamlet together, culminating in a production—that was referred to as the “HamLab.” On November

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1st, NAI students performed portions of Hamlet for the benefit of their peers, family members, and USC students, faculty, and staff.

Since 2011 I have taught a Freshman Seminar, “(W)rites of Passage,” in the class, USC freshmen and NAI seniors meet weekly to discuss the transition from high school to college. The freshmen—who have just completed the rite of passage that is applying to college—help the seniors to complete their college applications, focusing in particular on the dreaded personal statement. With generous support from instructors in USC’s Writing Program, the USC students work with the NAI students over the course of ten weeks to write, revise, and polish their college essays.

NAI students who choose to go to USC and qualify for work-study are guaranteed a job with JEP’s ReadersPlus program. ReadersPlus places USC students as math and reading tutors in seven nearby elementary schools, including Foshay Learning Center. Many USC NAI students work with ReadersPlus throughout their entire career as students at USC, finding it an excellent way to “give back” to the community in which they were raised. ReadersPlus students also support USC’s “Kinder2College” program, a precursor to NAI and designed to help kindergarten boys develop critical early literacy skills. In this program, USC students—as well as NAI high school students—serve as mentors to the boys at the program’s ‘Kinder Academy’ sessions on Saturdays.

NAI teachers and staff eagerly seek partnerships with USC faculty that will prepare NAI students for success in college. JEP staff can coordinate these partnerships when necessary or desired; we are happy to facilitate introductions as well. For more information, please contact me at sharris@usc.edu or 213-740-1830, or contact the NAI program directly at 213-740-6313.
THE GIFTING TREE OF JEP

This tree provides an opportunity to directly support JEP’s many programs: ReadersPlus, Trojan Health Volunteers, Little Yoginis, WonderKids, and the Young Scientists Program. You can be a part of JEP’s legacy by purchasing a leaf. Your gift will help JEP continue branching out into the community with its signature service-learning programs. To learn more, go to: alumni.usc.edu/jeptree/

DO YOU KNOW ANY STUDENTS WHO DESERVE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR SERVICE?

THE EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

A $1,000 award is provided to a graduating senior who offers outstanding service to the community.

THE GRACE FORD SALVATORI COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

This $5,000 scholarship is given to sophomores or juniors with majors in Dornsife College. It is based upon community service, academic performance, need, and civic leadership.

THE DESIREE BENSON AWARD

Two $750 scholarships are given to workstudy students who have performed outstanding community service.

For more information please contact JEP (jephouse@usc.edu / 213.740.1837)
Survey for Past JEP Students

Study will help document how JEP effects students during and after time at USC

We are in the process of surveying past Joint Educational Project participants to develop a greater understanding of the effect that their JEP experience had on them, both while at USC and beyond.

If you participated in JEP during your time at USC, please take a few minutes to complete our survey. We greatly appreciate your help.

To get to the survey, simply scan the QRI code on the right or go to: http://bit.ly/jepsurvey

Thank you and serve on! 🖋️
SEASON’S GREETINGS

FROM
JEP’s PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Tammara Anderson - Executive Director
Alex Fairman - IT Coordinator/Curriculum Innovation
Susan Harris - Associate Director, Research & Academic Affairs
Tina Koneazny - Associate Director, Administration & Educational Outreach
Brenda Pesante - Director of Community Partnerships
Jake Peters - Assistant Director, Research & Academic Affairs
Emma Rendón - Office Manager
Jacqueline Whitley - Director of Non-Profit Partnerships