Dignity of Children Spotlight, QSA Guide, & Conference Awards!
February 2019

Spotlight
Sonia Toledo, Founder of Dignity of Children

Sonia Toledo, Founder of Dignity of Children, has worked in afterschool and summer programs since high school. She was a youth counselor all through high school and got her first afterschool coordinator position at just nineteen years old. Sonia told us, "I declared myself as an afterschool professional in my late twenties when I was a multi-site manager at the West Side YMCA where I was responsible for five afterschool programs in the Upper West Side of Manhattan." Sonia's career began to flourish when she got a position at Child Care Inc, a resource and referral agency, and was put in charge of educating other directors throughout New York City about the OCFS SACC 414 regulations. Sonia has been training and educating afterschool professional for over 25 years now.

Sonia knew when she first decided to enter this field. She recalled, "I remember going to a three day afterschool director's institute when I was working for the westside YMCA in 1993, totally fell in love with the training conducted by the National Institute of Out-of-School Time (NOIST), and declared that I was going to be a trainer of afterschool someday." Shortly after the NIOST training, Sonia enrolled in a master's program where her thesis focused on the need to expand afterschool programs in urban cities.

Since the establishment of Dignity of Children in 2008, Sonia has focused her attention on creating training that builds the fundamental skills needed to work in a classroom with children and youth. Sonia says she "felt strongly that all adults working with children in an afterschool and summer program must understand the social and emotional needs of children and youth before they step into the classroom." All of the services at Dignity of Children now help directors and front line staff meet the OCFS training requirements and build on the fundamentals of working with groups of children.

Sonia told us that those at Dignity of Children are very excited to introduce the STORM Program, which aims to create an environment to build on the social and emotional skills of children and youth. The Special Team Of Roles Models (STORM) Program provides games and activities for front line staff to conduct with their children in the program. Sonia told us that the STORM Program was designed by "a group of educators and community leaders in Sacramento, CA to promote high energy, teach children how to be responsible for their emotions and reactions to others, and build on children's self-confidence and goals." STORM also provides coaching support for afterschool or school personnel in order to promote a positive and inclusive culture building on six characteristics: trustworthiness, responsibility, fairness, caring, respect, and citizenship.
Sonia added that Dignity of Children "believes that all children are born with inherent dignity. They have a right to be loved, nurtured, and valued. Children and youth deserve to be kept safe. They are entitled to a proper education." She noted that children will thrive and do their best when adults recognize and support their strengths, capacities, and inherent worth.

When asked what her favorite part of her job is, Sonia replied, "When I witness an adult shift their mind-set and recognize that they are responsible to build their own personal and professional growth for the sake of our children's futures."

Using the QSA Tool: A Step-By-Step Guide

Wondering how to improve quality in your afterschool or summer program efficiently and effectively? The Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool, Third Edition was designed to do just that - and it's free! Check out the all-new User's Guide here to learn how to use the tool in your program. The step-by-step guide will help you determine who will lead the work, how stakeholders will be involved, how discussions will be facilitated, when to start the process, and what to focus on to make the best improvements for your program. Once you've read through the guide, be sure to take a look at the appendices for templates to help you organize your work along the way.

For even more tips on using the QSA, watch the Network's webinar recordings here.
Nominate a School-Age Professional, Program, or Champion!
May 10 - 11, 2019 in Saratoga Springs, NY

School’s Out, Make it Count!
2019 Annual Conference

The Network for Youth Success will be hosting our First Annual Awards Ceremony during the closing session of our Annual Conference!

The awards available are:

- The Quality Leadership Award
- The Exemplary Award of Professionalism
- The Program Award of Excellence and Innovation
- The Champion Award

Submit a nomination and view award descriptions here!

Nomination deadline is March 1, 2019

All award finalists will be selected by an independent panel of judges. Once finalists have been selected, additional information may be requested. Finalists and their nominators will be notified by email. If additional information is needed, the Network will contact the nominator.

The winner and honorees will be announced at the School's Out, Make It Count! Conference on May 11, 2019. Awards will be presented during the closing ceremony at the Embassy Suites.

By submitting a nomination or supporting document (such as a letter of support), participating individuals grant the Network permission to use the any of the submitted materials, not protected by copyright, in advertisements and/or promotions without compensation or notification. Such advertisements or promotions may include internet/social media announcements of the awards or the conference, as well as print materials distributed at, or in promotion of, the events. Self-nominations are not prohibited for these awards.

And don't forget to register for the Conference here!

Interested in advancing in the school-age field? Need the qualifications to become a Site Director?

EARN YOUR SCHOOL-AGE CREDENTIAL TODAY

Upcoming Events

2/14-2/15: Anti-Discrimination Clinic, New York, New York
Steelcase WorkLife Center and Project Reach are hosting a two day, city-wide Intensive Anti-Discrimination Clinic from 8:30am - 4:30pm. This 12-hour training will bring together a diverse community of 30-40 educators, service providers, social workers, administrators, and
parents/guardians from schools and community-based organizations in all 5 boroughs of NYC. All adults who work with young people and are committed to ending discrimination and fighting for social justice are encouraged to attend. Register by February 11, 2019 to attend. For more information, contact the trainers Don Kao (dkao@cpc-nyc.org) or Katherine Chambers (kchambers@cpc-nyc.org).

2/19: GRASA February Summit – Create, Make and Play!, Rochester, NY
This Summit will focus on creativity, making, free play, and sharing ideas and insights that will help everyone bring more of the things that delight and ignite us to the children with whom we work. You don't have to be the world's greatest dancer, a professional singer, or actor – you just need a little confidence and a willingness to try. Sessions include workshops like: Beyond the Book, Nature Club, and Embracing Your Creativity! Contact Carla Stough Huffman at cstough-huffman@raf.org for more details and how to register. Registration closes February 15.

2/23: Girls in STEM Fair at RIT, Rochester, NY
Girls in grades 5 through 12 are invited to experience hands-on demonstrations presented by RIT's female students and faculty. Come to explore. Come to engage. Come to see all the possibilities of STEM! Free and open to the public! Register by February 8th at: https://bit.ly/2RDqGX2

3/5-3/18: National AfterSchool Association Convention, New York, New York
Join our community for four days of networking, learning, and inspiration. For more information, follow this link.

3/6: Mindfulness + Stress Reduction for AfterSchool Staff, New York, NY
Working with youth can be incredibly rewarding, but also stress inducing. Without the tools to effectively manage challenges, there is high risk of burnout. Research shows that mindfulness practices support youth workers in various ways, such as improving interpersonal relationships, and reducing stress and burnout. Registration opens on Tuesday, February 19 at 9:00 am.

3/12-3/14: Challenging Behavior in Preschool Children Train-the-Trainer, Hartford, CT
This train-the-trainer session is designed specifically for professionals working with teachers to better support preschool children with challenging behavior. During this professional development experience, trainers will participate in an intensive, interactive session delving more deeply into the understanding of, prevention of and planned responses to challenging behaviors in young children. It highlights the Devereux Center for Resilient Children DVD resource, Facing the Challenge, as well as the best-selling book by Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar-Rasminksy, Challenging Behavior in Young Children, 4th Edition. This session is a MUST for trainers who want to enhance their training sessions on the difficult and important topic of working with children with challenging behaviors. Click here to register. (Registration closes March 1st).

3/16: Terra Science and Engineering Fair
Whether you want to explore Cassini's adventures around Saturn, test water quality in a local creek, or design an app to prep for your next exam, the Terra Northeast Regional Science & Engineering Fair (TNRSEF) enables you to ask questions and find answers! Students in grades 6-12 can come to SUNY Geneseo in March to celebrate all s/he has learned and perhaps even earn an award. More information can be found here.

3/18: Multiplying Good with Students In Action, New York, NY
Currently active in 13 communities across the U.S., Students In Action (SIA) is a unique youth volunteer leadership training and recognition program that supports, trains, and empowers today's youth to be leaders, problem solvers, entrepreneurs, and impactful global citizens. Registration opens on Monday, March 4 at 9:00 am.

4/4-4/6: NYAEYC Annual Conference, Verona, NY
This conference will host two full days of workshops, exhibitors, and key notes speakers all at the Turning Stone Resort and Conference Center. Visit their website for more information and how to register.
5/10-5/11: Network for Youth Success Annual Conference, Saratoga Springs
Back by popular demand for one more year in Saratoga Springs! The New York State Network for Youth Success is holding its Annual Conference May 10 & 11! Come attend New York's only statewide conference for Afterschool, Summer, and Expanded Learning Professionals. This conference brings together over 200 professionals to participate in two full days of workshops on topics ranging from SEL to Leadership. Follow this link to register today!

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Address postal inquiries to:
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