

# BASCOL

*Celebrating 25 years!*

By: Samantha Leader

**C**andace Edwards has been involved in childcare programs for most of her life, starting Little Learners near Camillus, N.Y. In 1992, a hand full of parents got together to open a before and after school childcare program location in Liverpool, N.Y. for grades k-6. Sandy Widger and Candace met with key stakeholders in the Liverpool School District to start investing in one of today's best childcare programs in Onondaga County, according to Candace. This year they celebrate 25 years of service.

"My lifelong dream was to see this program grow, and I help that happen by being the executive director for six years now," Candace said.

BASCOL now has 19 locations and eight school districts. The school districts are Liverpool, Onondaga Central, Solvay, West Genesee, Central Square, Jamesville-Dewitt, and North Syracuse. This year was the first year that North Syracuse welcomed BASCOL, which was a new endeavor for BASCOL also according to Candace because they never worked with three and four year olds. BASCOL now has 50 employees, which consist of site directors and teachers

"I want the best for the kids, which is why it is so important to me that they are happy and feel like they are in a safe environment having fun," Candace said.

The BASCOL program focuses on many core areas including Literacy, PE, health, social and environmental

development, dramatic play, fine motor skills, and art. This helps the children have a mix of fun and education, stated Candace. In addition to their programs during the school year, they also have summer programs. The children do field trips to bowling, apple picking, pumpkin patches, and Thunder Island.

Salvation Army makes baskets of food for the needy families in this area, there are 4,000 families and last year BASCOL collected 8,000 packets of Jell-O, according to Candace. They also collect new and gently used bathing suits. "Children cannot swim in public pools for parks n rec without bathing suits, we collected 506 this year," Candace said.

The application process to get into BASCOL is like many childcare programs, parents have to set up an appointment to go through the application process. The prices vary depending on how many days parents decide to bring their children and if they do both days and nights. According to Candace, In 2017 BASCOL collaborated with Solvay school district to get a grant awarded to them. For the next 5 years, 50 students can attend BASCOL free in the afternoons, 3:10 P.M. to 5:10 P.M.

Every school district varies but most districts hours are from when they finish the school day until 6:00 P.M. and open at 6:30 A.M. or 7:00 A.M. until school starts.

All families are welcomed to come and visit to see what makes BASCOL such a great place for them to enroll their children. Visitors will be able to see all of the activities that the children partake in throughout the school year and summer program.

"The more lives to touch, the better for families out there, and my goal is never ending," Candace said.



"We keep it fun and exciting, by having each school site come up with special events and projects," Candace said. A few of the different projects they did was a video wishing BASCOL happy birthday, and talent shows.

Six years ago, BASCOL started to give back to the community. The children and employees collect Jell-O for the Salvation Army Christmas Bureau. The