

Ex-resident promotes education, reading, children

By GREGORY COX
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COMMUNITY VOICE

Cynthia Sulzberger spent three years living in Palm Beach before moving to Wellington to be close to her five horses, but the Manhattan native still has strong ties to the island. Her daughter attends Palm Beach Day Academy and her work as a trustee at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens keeps her close by.

Sulzberger recently answered some questions about her involvement in the community and what brought her here, while on a patio at the sculpture gardens surrounded by trees, flowers and fountains.

What drew you to the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens?
I've always loved art and collecting art, but what really drew me here was the first time I came to Literacy Days. I think I was just a volunteer, but that's what totally drew me in.

How to have this garden, this oasis in the middle of West Palm Beach. But to see these kids come here and say, "Oh my, god." They're so inspired by the presenters but they're also inspired by being in the setting.

How else do you promote reading in the community?
I do some private tutoring, but we also just set up a program, a partnership with Palm

Beach Day Academy. We bring seventh, eighth- and ninth-graders to the YMCA on Forest Hill and the kids tutor the children in the aftercare program.

They work with those kids for an hour. It's incredible. The Palm Beach Day students are so engaged. The kids are so cute and the kids are so happy to have that kind of attention. A lot of kids in that program come from homes where they are probably are not read to a lot or don't have a lot of books.

You've talked about your own struggles with reading as a child. Can you elaborate on that?
When I was little I had a lazy eye. So they had to patch my good eye to make my weak eye get stronger. But they also discovered on top of that, that I had dyslexia. I really did struggle, and I think that really gave me a huge sense of empathy for kids that are strugg-



Melanie Bell / Daily News

Cynthia Sulzberger is a trustee at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. She also helped set up a partnership with Palm Beach Day Academy in which seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders visit a YMCA and tutor the children in aftercare.

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Talk about this new certification you're working on.
It's something called guardian ad litem. I'm not sure, but it's a court-appointed position. Every time a child enters the foster care system, they are assigned attorneys

and lawyers but they are also assigned a guardian ad litem and my sole responsibility is to be like an impartial advocate for that child, to be their voice.

What are your favorite restaurants on the island?
Palm Beach Grill. We

also love sitting outside at Bico and Pizza Al Fresco.
Do you have a favorite bookstore on the island?
I always go to Classic Bookshop. They always give me good recommendations.

What did you read growing up?
The Doll books, James and the Giant Peach, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Trumpet of the Swan, My Friend Flicka, The Black Stallion.

What are your favorite books right now?
I usually read a lot of historical fiction. I just read a great thriller called In a Dark, Dark Wood. Very well written, fast paced. I'm usually a thriller person but I could not put this down. That and The Girls. It's a fictionalized account of some of the girls that got caught up in the whole Charles Manson case.

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YMCA

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er, who helped create the program and has a daughter at the Day Academy.

"The Palm Beach Day students are so engaged," said Sulzberger, who earned a master's degree as a reading specialist. "The kids are so happy to have that kind of attention. A lot of kids in this program come from homes where they are probably not read to a lot."

Sulzberger started the program in the fall with Cynthia Kanai, development director at the school.

Every other Monday, between 15 and 25 stu-

dents in seventh, eighth and ninth grades from Palm Beach Day spend about three hours at the YMCA helping elementary-age students with their homework and reading aloud to them, Kanai said.

"The connections they've made have really compelled them to keep going," she said. "It's a great way to plant seeds and have them sprout."

Now, the students are looking to grow those sprouts — and help the YMCA kids more consistently, Kanai said. They'd like to buy a doz-

en noise-canceling headphones and iPads, then load them with recordings of themselves reading popular books and short stories.

To help pay for the equipment, the students pitched their proposal to the Palm Beach Philanthropy Tank, a group that offers money to students in seventh grade and beyond with ideas for community-betterment projects.

"We started talking about how we could make something more consistent," Kanai said. Two students worked on the 10-page proposal — which

explains the budget, inspiration and goals — over Thanksgiving break.

Resident Bill Meyer is one of four "philanthropist-investors" involved with the philanthropy tank. He has looked over these students' proposal, as well as others submitted to the group.

"We've got a lot of good proposals this year," Meyer said, adding that it's great to see students in Palm Beach get involved in giving back at such a young age. "I think that many of them see the activities of their parents, who are really philanthropic, and think, 'How can I get involved and give back?'"

The students will find out if they move onto the next round in the philanthropy tank competition later this week. The final event will be March 8 at the Maltz Jupiter Theatre.



Courtesy of Cynthia Kanai

This sort of giving back is part of the culture at the Day School, Kanai said. Helping others, she said, "that's really a part of who we are and how we want our students to go forth in their lives."

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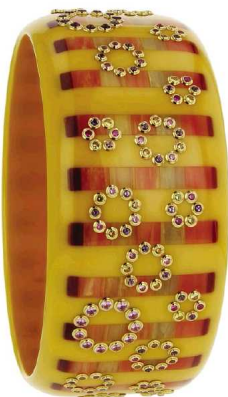
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