

# KPMG Today - Human Resources

Announcements

## Family for Literacy Helps Make a DREAM

8:45 AM ET, June 27, 2011

For the children of DREAM Charter School, in Harlem, New York, the end of another year represents another year of successful strides toward the future.

Guided by a strong belief in educating “the whole child,” the school’s staff and faculty work together to host an annual year-end celebration called DREAM Day. Similar to the traditional field day, DREAM Day features different activity stations for the students. This year’s DREAM Day, held June 9, added a twist—a Literacy Station manned by some very special guests.

The gymnasium buzzed with excitement as students filed in at 8 a.m. After joining her 200 students in a welcome song, Principal Eve Colavito introduced the group of smiling “special guests” lining the back wall, including KPMG’s Chairman and CEO **John Veihmeyer** and Deputy Chairman and COO **Henry Keizer**, accompanied by their wives, **Beth** and **Wendy**; Vice Chair, HR and Communications, **Bruce Pfau** and his wife, **Amy**; **Kathy Hannan**, national managing partner, Diversity and Corporate Responsibility; and 21 members of the Chairman’s 25 (C25). They came together for DREAM Day in support of KPMG’s Family for Literacy (KFFL), and to celebrate the C25’s final meeting—as part of their “graduation” from the program, they braved the 100 degree weather to give back to the kids through KFFL.



Beth and John Veihmeyer reading to children at DREAM Charter School.



Wendy and Henry Keizer at the Literacy Station.

### If You Made a Million

The day’s activities focused on team building and fun. The groups of children rotated around the stations where they interacted with pairs of the C25, their teachers, and family volunteers as they participated in a variety of activities, including juggling, face painting, water relays, and dancing.

At the Literacy Station, KPMG’s executives and their spouses sat with small groups of children ranging from grades K-3 to read *If You Made a Million* by David Schwartz. As the volunteers read to the students, they asked questions, listened, and helped them draw pictures, depicting what the students would do if they made a million dollars. At the end of the day, each student was surprised with a gift bag from KFFL, which included a KPMG drawstring bag, water bottle, wristband, bookmark, and the most exciting surprise, three new books of their very own.

### Fighting Illiteracy, One Book at a Time

Illiteracy is a social crisis that many people are unaware of—and that’s what motivated **Susan Flynn** and **Beth Veihmeyer** to found KPMG’s Family for Literacy in 2007. The program is now co-led by Beth and **Wendy Keizer**. Beth explains: “The scope of the illiteracy challenge is bigger and meaner than you’d think. These statistics compel us to act, and the KFFL program is designed to address the problem of illiteracy in a very proactive way. Our hope and dream for these children is that their reading skills will be such that they can do whatever they want to.”

“Through this program, we know we’re putting books in the hands of children who need them most,” adds John Veihmeyer. “And by involving the entire KPMG family in Family for Literacy, we bring together everything we have—the skills, commitment, and passion of our employees, partners, alumni, and all their families—to fight illiteracy.”



High fives from Frank Mattei at DREAM School

“Family for Literacy takes the initiative to address this important social issue head on,” says Henry Keizer. “By partnering with First Book and creating KFFL, KPMG has joined in this important fight against illiteracy, one book at a time. It’s immensely rewarding for our people to have the opportunity to make such a positive impact in our communities.”

C25 participant, **Frank Mattei**, a Tax partner based in Philadelphia, also is a firm believer in the cause and commends all of KFFL’s efforts. He says, “It is a great program that starts motivating children at an early age, an age when those individuals are most impressionable. The best part of programs like KFFL is seeing the smiles on the faces of the children you’re working with.”



A group of volunteers spent the day sharing the love of reading.

## Laying a Foundation

The children at DREAM Charter School know that reading and writing are important skills to master. Principal Colavito says this is part of the curriculum’s foundation. “We drive home the importance of reading and writing, because this is what we do in the real world. The literacy station today allows the children to have conversations with successful adults about ideas and the book they read. It provides context, perspective and a purpose to reading and writing.”

“We have a responsibility to improve the communities we live and work in,” says Kathy Hannan. “KFFL is helping create a diverse pool of future talent by working to help children acquire skills they’ll need to be successful employees some day.”

Bruce Pfau agrees, adding that the firm also sees an immediate benefit. “Programs like KFFL also help us attract and retain the best people while creating an extended KPMG network of people who are making a difference. We find that the best people are the ones who want to give back to others. And the best students in college are looking for an employer with a commitment to service. So KFFL also helps us attract the best employees while enabling us to serve our communities.”

## Priceless Moments

As for the children, the efforts of KPMG’s volunteers definitely made an impact. Six-year-old Arturo read a sign perfectly and turned to say, “I love to read. We read lots of books. It is my favorite part of school.” For

students like Arturo, the new books they received at the end of DREAM Day, provided by KPMG's Family for Literacy, are a precious gift.

Seeing the children open the gift bags containing their own new books was a priceless moment, says Wendy Keizer. And it's those moments that reinforce her commitment to KFFL. "When you give them a book, they'll grab and hold it like it's gold. They can't believe they get to keep it."

But the joy the children experience is nothing in comparison to the perspective gained by the volunteers. "I think about KFFL's impact on my own life. I think that I'm giving the kids this great experience, but actually, they're giving me one," Wendy adds. "I wish everyone would read to kids. It fills your heart with joy. Just come to an event like this once and you're going to be hooked."

To date, KPMG's Family for Literacy has provided over 1.5 million books to students across the United States.

To learn more about KFFL, and how you can get involved, visit [KPMG's Family for Literacy website](#).

Approved By Bruce Pfau



Tom Lamoureux and Penny Mavridis Sales have fun with the students.