



(left to right) Jeanny Kimm, President; Ariana Chavez, Secretary; Tierra Woods; Dasha Vodrazkova; Meghan Santos; Natalie Vattuone; Gabriella Giglio; and Elizabeth Gutierrez

## Making Children First at the Welcome Back Bash and Club Fair

By Loretta Chin

The noise of the crowd at the Welcome Back Bash Party by the Student Center on Tuesday was no match for The Children First Club members who were raising their voices on behalf of children and youth everywhere.

“For the Children’s First Club, it was our first time doing the welcome Back Bash. The event was fabulous,” said club secretary, Ariana Chavez in an interview following the fair.

“There were seven members in 2010. This year, we started with 10 members, but nevertheless there are many students who are looking to join the club. So far, 69 students showed high interest in our club and we expect many more students to join,” said Chavez.

A live instrumental band turned up the music just outside of the Student Center, while students lined up down the middle of the street for free food, or just meandered about looking at what was going on by the Hot 97 van. Others looked at interesting characters go by or became a character themselves when they volunteered to have a free caricature made of themselves.

Just across the street and within the gates of the main campus, the club fair wended down and around the campus with one table after another representing many of our over 120 clubs on campus. Each one was unique in its own way, but somewhere along this path, students found themselves drawn to the Children First club table. Maybe it was the colorful posters, clean drinking water and cups, and a table full of candy that enticed students to them, but more likely it was the infectious enthusiasm of the club members themselves.

With the help of their adviser, Elise Goldberg, who works as a program coordinator in the Children and Youth Studies Program, they got their members together to generate excitement about the club. Chavez said that she and club president Jeanny Kimm, former vice president Dasha Vodrazkova, and members Tierra Woods, Meghan Santos, Natalie Vattuone, Gabriella Giglio, and Elizabeth Gutierrez worked together and spent a considerable amount of time to make their Welcome Back Bash posters. Vice President Carlyle Price and club treasurer, Tracey Chen also lent a hand.

At first glance, the drinking water and cups did not seem to be anything special, but the poster above it explained how it is something that we take for granted and that there are many children in the world who do not have access to clean water.

“Although we have a lot of new members, we get along very well and try contributing to the Club as much possible. We felt the posters would help other students at the welcome back bash to understand what we will be doing throughout the year and ways they can help us,” said Chavez.

The Children’s First Club has a Facebook page and a blog that further explain what the club is about. Some excerpts are:

- The Children First Club (CFC) serves children and youth by generating awareness through research, volunteer work, seminars and internships. The CFC provides a forum for discussion on important past, present and future issues concerning children and youth, and allows Children and Youth Studies students’ access to the Children’s Studies Center, a resource which contains a collection of useful print and electronic research materials.
- The underlying purpose of the CFC is to convey ideas into action and build a positive outlook for the future of our youth. Creativity, research, and passionate members drives the Children First Club and its success.

Chavez said, “the club started around 2006 and the purpose of the club is to raise awareness about the rights of children and youth, mainly to make a difference in our communities and around the world.”

“Dasha, Jeanny, Ariana and Tierra helped us with the poster about the Children in the Congo. We are raising money to help children buy materials for solar panels. Many of these children build their own panels to have light at night and to be able to do their homework --something which many of us take for granted,” said Chavez.

She further praised members Meghan Santos, Natalie Vattuone, Gabriella Giglio, and Elizabeth Gutierrez who helped with the mission statement and toy drive poster.

According to Chavez, past events included a dance-a-thon, bake sale, and fundraiser event for *Les Petits Okapis International*, an organization founded in 2001 to help children living on the street in countries where war and poverty have torn communities apart.

Future plans for the club will involve a toy drive for a local hospital and to continue raising money for children in the Congo. They are also looking to affiliate with other clubs to raise awareness about advocacy for children and youth.

The Children First Club can be contacted at [children1stclub@gmail.com](mailto:children1stclub@gmail.com) or visit their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/ChildrenFirstClub](http://www.facebook.com/ChildrenFirstClub)