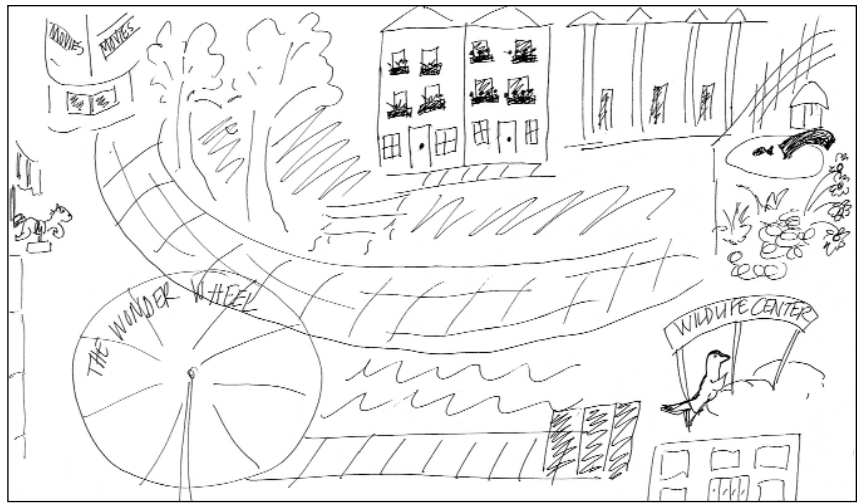


Family Maps

by Luanne McLaughlin

At PS 29 in Brooklyn, my family had the fortunate experience of participating in a City Lore parent-child workshop that focused on our neighborhoods and communities. We were introduced to wonderful ways of looking at the place where we live as a family. We discovered that each member of our family saw our neighborhood—our world—differently. We each had a perspective that revealed our priorities, interests, and treasures. We discovered what it is that we really see and also what we fail to see around us. My family developed a greater appreciation for our home and for one another's view of what our home really means. We know now that all of us in the community help to make it Home, Sweet Home! From the East River all the way to Coney Island!

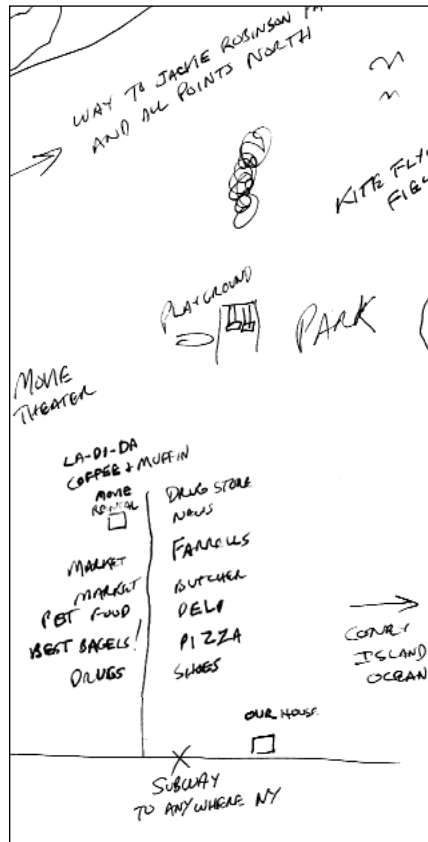
The McLaughlin family, Bill, Luanne, and Madeline, all have artistic tendencies. Bill is an actor, writer, and comedy director. Luanne is an actor, teacher, and often a clown. Madeline, who was five when she drew the map, is all these things and more. Home is Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn, New York.



Above: Luanne's map of the neighborhood and places the family visits in Brooklyn.



Below and right: Details of maps drawn by Bill and Madeline.



Mapmaking Activity

by Amanda Dargan

Mapmaking is a wonderful way to engage family members in looking closely at how each member experiences the place where they live. Family members may discover that each sees their neighborhood differently, that one family member includes a place that the others never noticed, or that certain neighborhood spaces, such as a vacant lot, are valued by one member and considered an eyesore by others. In the family mapmaking workshop at PS 29 in Brooklyn, I asked parents and children to close their eyes and think about their neighborhoods and the places that are important to them. I suggested that they start at their home and move outward, locating significant places and the people, activities, or memories associated with them. I gave them the option of looking at the neighborhood from the ground or sprouting wings and moving up to view it from an angle or from overhead (children younger than seven may not be able to do this). When they opened their eyes, I encouraged them to map the picture of the neighborhood in their minds, rather than worry about the scale or accuracy of the map. I provided them with markers and pens

and 8.5" x 14" paper, with the additional paper for those whose maps might grow as they worked. I gave families the option of working together on one map or having each member make their own map. Most chose to work individually.

The McLaughlin family were the first to present their maps to the group, and we were all amazed (as they were) at how differently each family member—Bill, Luanne, and 5-year-old Madeline—viewed their neighborhood. Luanne drew her favorite walk through the neighborhood, illustrating her map with the houses, flowers, birds, and parks along the route, as well as some of her favorite sites to visit in Brooklyn. Bill drew the neighborhood stores where he buys bagels, rents movies, and gets his morning paper, as well as the nearby park where he flies kites, and the "escape routes" that he uses when he leaves the neighborhood or the city. Madeline drew her block and the sidewalk games, such as jump-roping and hopscotch, that she and her friends play. The three maps not only showed how differently each member of the family uses the neighborhood, but also how close or far their daily activities take them from the heart of their community.