

Staten Island Advance

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Breakfast cheers Navy school parents

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The first day of school is tough enough on most parents, but it can

be especially difficult for Navy parents, since they usually relocate every two years, and their children face new schools every

time.

But the transition to Staten Island schools was made a little easier yesterday morning for

about 25 moms and one dad who are stationed at Naval Station New York.

Shortly after the first bells announced the new school year, the parents took off for the Roy Rogers restaurant in New Dorp, where an Island tradition was inaugurated: a parents' breakfast outing on the first day of school.

Community School Board member Jerry Cammarata organized the gathering to help the Navy parents feel at ease in the sometimes daunting city school system, and to encourage their participation in school issues.

"We would like to have you as part of the Staten Island family," Cammarata said. "The school is not only made up of teachers and students, but also of parents."

Over biscuits, coffee and Danish pastry, the parents chatted, fed their toddlers and were urged to get involved in local schools.

Navy parents said it has been difficult getting used to new school systems so often, but events such as yesterday's have made the transition easier.

"You don't know what to expect," said Michelle Sirmans, originally from Nebraska. Her daughter, Salena, started kinder-

It's good news!

garten yesterday at PS 39 in Arrochar. She said she has received a great deal of support from Staten Islanders about local schools, and that has made it easier.

Dawn Forlie, an information and referral specialist for the Navy Family Services Center, said parents' greatest concerns focus on the bad reputation that has dogged New York City schools.

"We try to reassure them and see to it that the families get rid of that fear," she said.

At the conclusion of his short talk, Cammarata wished the parents well and reminded them that they'll have to maintain the opening-day breakfast tradition themselves and with new families.

"Next year, you'll know what to do," he said.

Children of Navy families attend many schools throughout the Island, but they are concentrated in schools on the Northeastern shore such as PS 39; St. Mary's School and St. Joseph's School, Rosebank; St. Peter's School, New Brighton; and Trinity Lutheran School and Dreyfus Intermediate School, Stapleton.



ADVANCE PHOTO/IRVING SILVERSTEIN

Navy parents, from left, Chris Buhrow, Louis Vasquez, Susan Aarne and Lt. Roxie Thomsen help inaugurate a first-day-of-school tradition.