

CRYSTAL STAIRS QUARTERLY

Spring 2007

Imagining something better for children.

‘Dancing Under the Stars’—Crystal Stairs’ Biennial Event to Benefit SAGE—was a Hit!



Photo by Ian Fox

On Saturday, September 30, 2006, Crystal Stairs hosted “Dancing Under the Stars,” an event to benefit its Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center. The festive evening event was held at the Wallis Annenberg Science Center in Exposition Park.

The gala event raised money for the child care center, with special thanks going

to the event’s major sponsors, Arch Angel sponsor Union Bank of California and Cherubim sponsors Cal National Bank, Disney and Foresters.

Crystal Stairs and SAGE supporters came out in full force to celebrate the center’s work and to have fun. Throughout the course of the night, dance professionals led lively dance lessons that encouraged everyone to get on the dance floor and learn some new moves, and then to put those moves to the music.

Attendees were also treated to a moving rendition of Crystal Stairs’ namesake poem, “From Mother to Son,” written by Langston Hughes, recited by famed television actor and the event’s Master of Ceremonies, Wren T. Brown. Brown talked passionately about the impact SAGE has on the lives of its families.

A live band, a record-spinning DJ, and an “experience-based” silent auction were also part of the night’s festivities, all to raise awareness and funds for SAGE. Vanessa Bell Calloway, an ardent

supporter of Crystal Stairs, served as event co-chair along with Renita Wilson, a parent and teacher at SAGE. They closed out the event by announcing the auction winners to a boogying crowd.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the event the agency’s most financially successful event ever. Crystal Stairs plans to host “Dancing Under the Stars 2” next year, so get those dancing shoes ready.

‘20/20’ TV Show Comes to Crystal Stairs

Last October, Crystal Stairs was contacted by ABC News’ 20/20 to help them profile the issue of working parents and child care. Crystal Stairs put 20/20 in contact with one of its Family Child Care Home providers, Brenda Morgan, owner and operator of Kidz Heaven Family Day Care, located in Carson.

Early in the morning, camera crews arrived to film and talk with working mothers as they dropped off their children. Most of them hurriedly talked about the difficulties of raising a child on a limited income while in jobs that don’t afford great flexibility and/or upward mobility. Brenda talked about the many times she has had to accommodate families because of life’s unexpected events.

Crystal Stairs was thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with 20/20 on helping to bring national attention to this important issue. The agency was able to make contact with a national news organization and help spread the word about working families and their needs.



Photo by Sydney Kamlager-Santner

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Diana Torres, Board Chairperson
Karen Hill-Scott, Ed.D., Board Vice-Chairperson
Carolyn Moultrie, Board Secretary
Asha Joshi ■ Jamesina E. Henderson ■ Dr. Elaine Batchlor
Lawrence M. Drake, II ■ Dr. Alice Walker Duff
Anne Gates ■ Renee D. Martinez ■ Patricia Perez
Quentin Strode ■ Robert Trujillo

Mission Statement: Improving the lives of families through child care services, research and advocacy since 1980.

KLOS's Mark & Brian Raise \$\$\$ for Families

This past Christmas, KLOS's *Mark & Brian Show* asked Crystal Stairs to nominate two families to receive a \$1000 shopping spree at K-Mart. With the help of Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) specialists Arista Davis and Patricia Umana, two needy and deserving families were nominated: Tracie Winston and Michela Balga. Listeners of KLOS and KABC radio stations heard about Crystal Stairs and the families we serve, and helped raise over \$3000 for the shopping spree.

The check was presented to Crystal Stairs December 15 at the K-Mart on 3rd St. and Fairfax Ave., the two families shopped 'til they dropped the following Saturday morning. Both were honored, shocked, surprised, appreciative and teary-eyed as they walked down the aisles, filling their baskets with toys, clothes and household necessities.

"It's opportunities like these that make our jobs so rewarding," said Tonya Burns, Manager of the CCAP program. "Our specialists could not wait to nominate a parent because they all have someone they work on behalf of who is deserving and needs some help."

Winston recounted that last holiday season, while struggling to find meaningful full-time employment, her eldest son told her that he didn't mind if they didn't get any gifts as long as they had each other. This year, K-Mart, KLOS and Crystal Stairs were able to make a difference in the gifts department.

Thank you to KLOS and the listeners of the *Mark & Brian Show*, K-Mart and its band of employee elves, and our CCAP specialists, who worked hard to identify some pretty deserving families. You all helped make some holiday dreams come true!



Photo by Dean Hopkins

COMMUNITY PARTNER PROFILE Union Bank of California

The Union Bank of California (UBOC) was an Arch Angel Sponsor for our "Dancing Under the Stars" event to benefit our Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center.



The Union Bank of California Foundation's vision is to build a charitable contributions program that positions the foundation as an innovator of partnerships and a grant-maker intent on helping to create and sustain healthy

communities. The work that the bank and the foundation have done over the years supports their focus on philanthropy—eliminating the root causes of social problems that impede the existence and growth of healthy families, homes and communities.

Its mission has been to invest in communities in which it operates and to target resources to benefit low-to-moderate income populations. This commitment to mission has resulted in a long-standing partnership with Crystal Stairs.

Over the years, UBOC has been an ardent supporter of Crystal Stairs' Early Childhood Education conferences and our Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center. The bank has also partnered with our agency on various financial literacy initiatives, designed for our parents, providers, and even our staff. UBOC is always working to help families build economic independence from the inside out.

Union Bank has a specialty focus on providing banking and investment services to nonprofit organizations such as Crystal Stairs, and also many of the capacity-building organizations that assist nonprofits, such as California Association of Nonprofits and Executive Service Corps. The website to access both the Foundation and the Nonprofit Banking Unit is nfp.uboc.com.

Over the next few years, the UBOC Foundation will be focusing on four key areas: affordable housing, community economic development, education and the environment.

The partnership between UBOC and Crystal Stairs is a perfect example of mission alignment: two agencies working together to fulfill need, to support economic independence and to build and sustain healthy communities. Thank you UBOC!

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ■ What does Crystal Stairs do? ■ Child Care Assistance Program: Helps low-income parents work or attend school by paying for the child care of their choice. ■ **CalWORKS Child Care Programs:** Supports parents moving from welfare to work by paying for their child care. ■ **Child Care Resource and Referral Service:** Helps families find and choose child care that meets their needs; offers training and resources to child care providers; and provides child care information to the community. ■ **SAGE Center:** Provides quality child care services to preschool & school-age children and families in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development. ■ **Children's Health and Wellness Program:** Helps improve the quality of child care and the health of children and adults by connecting health and safety services to child care. ■ **Advocacy:** We work to keep child care on the public agenda by: providing expert testimony; serving on commissions and advisory committees; creating coalitions with allied agencies; and conducting public information campaigns. ■ **Research:** We gather and analyze a wide range of data and share this information with other agencies, advocates, researchers and policy makers.

SAGE and Friends Light Up the Center

Here are just three of the many happenings in and around the SAGE Center.



Photo by Sydney Kamlager-Santner

■ SAGE kicked off the New Year with a concert by Shades, a multicultural a cappella choir from Yale University. The multicultural choir sang a selection of songs, and afterwards, the choir hosted a workshop, answering questions from the audience and allowing the children to “conduct” them. They talked about their experiences at school, and what it takes to stay in school and keep good grades.

The afternoon concert was a wonderful experience for SAGE. Their voices and songs hung in the air and captivated both the children and neighbors.

Crystal Stairs was pleased to partner with Shades on this event. “It is important to expose our children to all types of positive experiences”, says Holly J. Mitchell, CEO of Crystal Stairs. “Shades represents good talent and good mentors and role models. Our children need to see both.”

■ On December 16, 2006 SAGE held its annual “Day of Kindness” event. Five years ago, Cheryl Barnett and her friends decided to host an event where they could bring all of their special skills to the day to make it special. This event was called their “Day of Kindness” and they selected SAGE as the recipient. Last year, Cheryl moved to the United Kingdom. Her friends decided to continue the “Day of Kindness with Holiday Arts and Crafts” in her honor.

Cheryl's friends come to the center and help the SAGE children make arts and crafts gifts for the holidays. There is food, music,

and fun. People bring their pets, Christmas trees for the center and their love. Towards the end of the day, everyone comes together to call Cheryl to say “hello” and “thank you.” And the tradition continues.

Recently, a new face was added to this group. Cynthia Leverhart and her family adopted a SAGE parent, Shaneil Williams and her family of three children (aged 3, 4 and 14 years).

■ Early last fall, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa came to visit SAGE and other school children from Nickerson Gardens to talk about the benefits of going to school and to help pass out back-to-school supplies to the children. The event was held just outside SAGE and the mayor's staff got a chance to see the site and meet the children.

Audit Panel Gives High Marks to Crystal Stairs

Crystal Stairs' audit committee just reviewed the organization-wide audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2006. The audit was a single audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and Government Auditing Standards. In other words, we got an “A”!

Crystal Stairs has been audited by an independent auditor for each of its 26 years of existence and each year received unqualified opinions. Our current auditor, Joseph Romero of Romero and Associates, LLP, stated “I see a trend in this organization to strive from year to year to be better. Each year the accounting records are cleaner and more efficient.”

The audit and the auditor's comments mean a lot to Crystal Stairs. They mean that we are healthy, and that we have a strong fiscal foundation. They also suggest that the organization makes for a solid investment.

Crystal Stairs grows, not from the government contracts we receive, but from community support and investment. Our contracts do not allow us to expand services and respond to the changing needs of the community. **Your support** does allow for that growth and flexibility.

'Children Now' Tells How Our Families Fare

Children Now recently released its 2006-07 *California Report Card: The State of the State's Children*. The nonpartisan report identifies critical issues affecting children's well-being and assigns letter grades to individual issues, such as a "C-" in early care and education, a "C-" in K-12 education, and a "B-" in health insurance.

The report presents the most current data available on the status of California's children, who represent 27 percent of all Californians and 13 percent of the nation's kids. Overall, the report shows that we Californians are not doing as well as we should, on behalf of our children and working families:

- 760,000 California children, aged 0-18, don't have health insurance;
- One in three of California's 6- to 17-year-olds is obese or overweight;
- About 58 percent of California's 3- and 4-year-olds do not attend preschool;
- About 60 percent of California's 2nd- to 11th-graders did not meet state goals for math and reading proficiency in 2006;
- As many as 30 percent of the state's children live in an economically-struggling family, able to pay for only the most basic needs.

Significant children's policy changes need to be made in health care and education or else future generations will be compromised.



5110 West Goldleaf Circle #150
Los Angeles, California 90056

323-299-8998
www.crystalstairs.org

Crystal Stairs Unveils Refreshed Website

The Crystal Stairs website has a new, fresh look! Go to www.crystalstairs.org for a whole new web experience. There are two new exciting features of the website: the **"Donate Now"** section that allows you make quick, painless tax deductible contributions to Crystal Stairs; and the ability to sign up to receive electronic updates and newsletters. Check them both out.

Upcoming Events at Crystal Stairs

On February 22, Crystal Stairs hosted its Fifth Annual Legislative Policy Briefing. The briefing was held at Public Counsel, a child care advocate and occasional partner with Crystal Stairs on child care policy-related issues. The briefing is Crystal Stairs' opportunity to meet with the various legislative offices in whose districts Crystal Stairs services. Information on the state and federal budgets are shared and specific topics that directly impact the agency and our clients are highlighted.

Every other year, Crystal Stairs hosts its Early Education Child Care Provider Conference, which brings together child care educators and providers, child development experts, health practitioners, teachers, and policy makers. This year's conference, **"Learn, Play, Grow: the Quest for Quality Child Care,"** will take place on **June 9, 2007 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.** For more information, call 323-421-2494.