



CRYSTAL STAIRS

Summer 2007

QUARTERLY

Imagining something better for children.



Alfonso Jackson (left) Janae Oliver, the late Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald and Cathy Tate engaged in conversation at SAGE.

Remembering Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald

Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald was a stalwart champion for her community, of which Crystal Stairs and our Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center were a part. Her recent passing was both a shock and a surprise to us.

During one of her last visits to her district, she toured SAGE. Janae Oliver worked at Crystal Stairs in our Children's Health and Wellness Department. She then moved on to become a Field Representative with the late Congresswoman Millender-McDonald. Like many, she has a "special thing" for SAGE. So, while arranging for a high-visibility visit to Nickerson Gardens by Alfonso Jackson, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Janae put SAGE on the tour list.

As a result, Jackson, accompanied by Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, Rudy Monteil (Director of the L.A. Housing Authority) and about 30 other power-suited folks descended on SAGE on a sunny morning last February.

They were met by Cathy Tate, who guided the group into one of the classrooms to talk about SAGE—who we serve, what we do, and why it's important. The overflow crowd clustered near the door and onto the patio, where happy preschoolers drew chalk lines between their feet and ran over a few toes on their trikes.

After a generous half-hour of their time and careful attention, with a muffled thumping of wingtips and high heels they were gone, on their way to meet with the mayor and other L.A. dignitaries at the Recreation Center.

Congresswoman Millender-McDonald's dedication to Sage and our work will be missed.

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



Your Contributions at Work

Crystal Stairs is a large non-profit organization that has been rooted in the community for over 27 years. As a result, many wonder why we fundraise.

Much of our funding comes from state and county government contracts. Those funds support our core programs—helping parents find and pay for child care. However, that is not all that we do. We support preventative health care and offer access to resources that support healthy lifestyles. We work with providers to enhance the quality of their care. We work hands-on with parents and caregivers on leadership development and community organizing and advocacy. We also operate the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center. None of these programs and services is funded through our government contracts.

Families and providers need information on health care and they need access to low-cost, no-cost preventative care. Child care providers need help professionalizing. The better their business and the more educated their staff, the better care they can provide, the more the competitive their business can become, and the better off our children will be.

CS Welcomes Three New Board Members

Crystal Stairs recently elected three new members to our Board of Directors—Eleanor E. Beasley, W. Michael Greene and Melissa G. Meono.

- Eleanor E. Beasley is a Senior Vice President at Cal National Bank and dedicates her civic time to education and mentoring activities.
- W. Michael Greene is the Universe Division Public Engagement Manager for Jet Propulsion Laboratory and has a strong background in marketing, media and public relations.
- Melissa G. Meono is an Audit Senior Manager at Deloitte & Touche, LLP and supports breast cancer awareness, children and family welfare and certain animal rights causes.

We are happy to have them on board (pun intended) and are excited about the skills and enthusiasm they bring.

Welcome Eleanor, Michael, and Melissa!

Sign up to Get E-News

Crystal Stairs has a refreshed website that is user-friendly, informative and interactive. We hope you enjoy it and visit it often. You are also welcome to sign up to receive our E-Newsletter and other action alerts from Crystal Stairs. **Visit www.crystalstairs.org for more information.**



Linda Moore, VP of Treasury Management Sales at Wells Fargo, stops by Crystal Stairs to present Holly J. Mitchell a check for \$2,500. Wells Fargo has been a long-time civic partner and a committed supporter of Crystal Stairs. Thank you, Wells Fargo.

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.

A Story of Survival: 'I feel like I am by myself in a world full of people'

Who is the face of the waiting list? What do those families look like? They are among us every day.

Brinda Weaver is a beautiful, mature, composed 19-year-old woman who is the parent of a bubbly three-year-old son. She is a single parent. She works full-time and goes to school at night. A recent family situation resulted in her getting custody of her five-year-old sister. This has meant another mouth to feed, another body to clothe and shelter and another child care cost to worry about. Even though she brings home less than \$2000 a month, she is income-ineligible for child care assistance. So she is on the waiting list. She is also a Crystal Stairs employee!

Crystal Stairs administers many programs, including the Child Care Alternative Payment Program which helps working families pay for child care. It is for income-eligible families who have never been on welfare. The lower your income relative to the number of children you have, the more priority you are given. Since 1997, CCAP has not received funding priority from the government. As a result, waiting lists (in L.A., the state, the nation) of working families have developed, with thousands hoping funding is made available to help them pay for child care.

Brinda had her son while she was a dependent. Her mother received child care assistance for her daughter as well as for Brinda's son. When Brinda became guardian of her sister, that stopped and she was placed on the waiting list. Never mind that all of a sudden she had an additional mouth to feed.

"How can that be," she said, "that I am taking care of two children and can't get any help?"

What are her options? "Could she re-budget?" she was asked. "I have nothing to re-budget. I don't bring home a lot and now many of my expenses have doubled. I put my son in one school and my sister in another. Then I found out that my son's care was only for three hours. Well, that won't work when you work full-time, so I had to find another school for him. Now I learn that my sister will be getting out at 2:15 p.m. So I have to find someone to pick her up and find an after-school program. I know I will have to pay for that additional care. At first I thought I had solved the problem, but as soon as I did, another one arose. It just don't ever stop. Goodness."

Becoming a parent at 15, she said most people didn't have any faith that she would make it. But Brinda is a survivor.

Like most of the families on the waiting list, the system seems unfair to Brinda. And that's when the questions come. "Why doesn't the government give equal priority to people who are working? How can it be that you work hard and you



need child care and you can't get it? All the money that I am working to earn goes to the child care provider. Why am I less important than someone on cash-aid? This system seems so unfair. Sometimes I have crazy thoughts about quitting my job and getting on cash-aid," she said, "but I don't want to do that because this is my first real job and I have big goals for myself. So I just have to see where this all takes me."

She, like Crystal Stairs, is hoping that the government will recognize that the number of struggling working families is growing—and that they need help too!

Crystal Stairs Gets AA Rating from BBB

Crystal Stairs received an AA rating (out of AAA) from the Better Business Bureau (BBB). An organization has to be 30 years old in order to be eligible for the AAA rating. The BBB assigns ratings based on factors such as the type of business, length of time in business, complaint volume and history, and a company's response to complaints. This rating resource is used by individuals and companies looking for sound charities in which to invest. Looks like we're it.

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California Child Care by the Numbers

Crystal Stairs is one of many agencies across the state working to help families achieve economic self-sufficiency; to help providers enhance the quality of care they offer; and to make sure children are in child care settings that are appropriate, safe, stimulating, and full of love. We all have more work to do for our children. Did you know that in California:

- 1,714,720 (18.6 percent) children are poor;
- 1,515,000 (15.2 percent) children have NO health insurance;
- 202,000 children are served by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG—funding for quality and for non-CalWORKs families);
- 206,000 children are on the waiting list;
- \$679 is the average monthly TANF cash assistance for a family of three;
- Average annual cost of child care: Infant/Toddler: \$10,745 (center), \$7069 (family home). Pre-school age: \$7477 (center), \$6504 (family home);
- \$6,314 is the amount spent per pupil in public school;
- \$33,581 is the average yearly cost to house an inmate.



R&R Goes Washington

Holly Mitchell and Yuovene Whistler recently returned from the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) 20th Annual Symposium in Washington, D.C.

Hot topics included provider quality rating systems and training outcomes; and standards for facility licensing and oversight.

The "Day at the Capitol" was highlighted by visits to the offices of Congressmembers Hilda Solis, Maxine Waters, Diane Watson, and the late Juanita Millender-McDonald.



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