



Imagining something better for children.

## EDITORIAL

### California and the State Budget

California is one of only three states in the nation that requires a two-thirds majority vote by the state legislature in order to pass a budget. The other two states are Rhode Island and Arkansas. This means that a very small number of legislators have the power to hold up the budget process. If you are a supporter of Crystal Stairs, this is a very important fact.

We receive the bulk of our funding from federal and state funds. These dollars allow us to administer child care payments to those child care providers who provide care for the thousands of families who qualify for child care assistance. This funding is not a given. Each state budget season, the legislature reviews funding needs for the state and for hundreds of programs that allow many of its residents to function.

We need state budgets that a) do not cut funding for child care programs, and b) are signed on time. The state budget is supposed to be signed by June 30 of every year, because the new state fiscal year begins on July 1. Every time a budget is not signed by July 1, we have to find other ways to reimburse our providers and administer our programs.

The recent state budget impasse held up \$1 billion in payments to California's 785 state-funded child-care agencies (including Crystal Stairs), putting at risk 500,000 low-income children who were on the verge of losing services. **Thousands of licensed childcare programs served by the agencies were on the brink of closing**, with many issuing IOUs to employees or taking out costly lines of credit that meant future reductions in services. The ripple effect if programs cannot weather budget delays is devastating, putting in jeopardy the jobs of parents who depend on child care as well as the state's 24,000 childcare workers. In L.A. alone, about 78,000 children are at risk when this happens.

**Getting educated about your state's budget and legislative process is one way you can advocate for Crystal Stairs, and our families.** Find out who your state legislator is and learn their voting history. Find out how they feel about child care and other social services programs. After all, knowledge is power.

### Provider Evelyn Porter Says Breast Self-Exams Are Key

Evelyn Porter has been a child care provider for four years. She and her husband run Porter Family Child Care. She has a family history clear of cancer, so it seemed perfectly reasonable to forego the free mammogram screenings that were being offered at Crystal Stairs 2005 Child Care Conference.



After all, she was healthy, busy taking care of her business and others, and wanted to get to as many workshops as possible that day.

And then Barbara, her sister-in-law, died of breast cancer. Evelyn was with her when she passed away. Shortly thereafter she and her husband took a

trip to visit his remaining relatives. One night after that evening out, as she lay in bed trying to sleep, she kept hearing an inner voice telling her to "check your breast." In retrospect, she now believes her inner voice was Barbara. After a half hour of this "nagging," she got up and did a self-exam. She felt a lump. The next day she had a mammogram and then a biopsy. She started chemotherapy in 2006.

Six chemotherapy treatments, a "hair-cutting" party, one surgery and one year later, Evelyn has a relatively clean bill of health. Her lump has gone down to three centimeters and she is now undergoing radiation. She had to drop out of school (chemotherapy can cause memory loss and confusion), but has maintained her work with Crystal Stairs' Support Provider Accreditation Now (SPAN) project. Her message: Get your breasts checked. Administer a self-exam every month, take advantage of Crystal Stairs' free mammogram screening program (and others like it), and get a yearly exam when you turn 50.

"Many women shy away from mammograms because they are painful," Evelyn said, "but I would rather be in pain than be dead. My doctor told me the lump would have been smaller if I had been checked sooner. I realize now that I should have been focusing on my health."

Free mammogram screenings will take place October 27, November 30 and December 21 at Forum Medical Group, 3831 Stocker St., Los Angeles, Calif. 90008.

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



## Crystal Stairs at World Forum in Malaysia

Agency staff members were invited to the 2007 World Forum on Early Care and Education to present on parent advocacy. Over 750 attendees from 73 countries gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for five days in May to talk about child development, child and parent advocacy and all things related to upholding UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This was an exciting opportunity for the world to learn about our work around parent advocacy and how we address issues of child care quality, community engagement and civic responsibility to child care issues. Lessons learned from the experience: the world is small (when dedicated people all over the world commit to child care, great things can happen), and the world is big (famine, poverty, warfare, genocide, corruption and racism continue to compromise the success of children everywhere).

Excerpts of some stories that were shared at the conference:

■ In Johannesburg shantytowns, centers struggle with involving parents, who either work too many jobs or who are ill from HIV/AIDS. In many instances, the children in their care are orphans.

■ Parents in parts of Tanzania don't send their children to the limited child care centers because of the long walk and the fact that lions have attacked and eaten children.

While the U.S. has the resources to stay off the child development "worst" lists, countries in Africa and Southeast Asia, far from meeting world standards, are moving more aggressively than most towards meeting those goals.



## Steps to Excellence Project Comes to L.A.

The Los Angeles County Office of Child Care is launching STEP, a voluntary child care quality rating system for child care providers. Participants will be eligible to receive: 1) a small quality improvement grant to meet STEP quality standards; 2) prioritized enrollment in no-cost training sessions and 3) a free on-site observation to assess program quality. STEP will be piloted in the following communities: Florence/Firestone, Inglewood, Long Beach, Pacoima/Arleta, Palmdale, Pasadena, Pomona, Santa Monica and Wilmington.

This is an exciting opportunity for Los Angeles area providers who are invested in improving the quality of their care. For more info or for an application, contact Helen Chavez at 213-893-0505. The application can also be downloaded from the Office of Child Care website at [www.childcare.lacounty.gov](http://www.childcare.lacounty.gov).

## Ways to Give to Crystal Stairs

Giving to Crystal Stairs is important. It makes a difference. No matter the size of our building, no matter the size of our government contracts, your contributions make a difference. There are a number of ways to give:

- **Bequests.** Gifting to Crystal Stairs through your will can be an effective and powerful way to support our work and efforts. Planned giving also offers significant advantages including tax breaks and a potential income increase.
- **Give generously** and affordably by making a monthly pledge.
- **Sponsor a project or program.** What is your passion? Our resource lending library? Our mobile campaigns? Our monthly mammogram screening project? SAGE. Find your passion through sponsoring one of our many projects.
- **Employee match contributions.** Many employers match their employees' gifts to charitable donations. Find out if your company has a matching gifts program.

As we move closer to the end of the year:

- **Be smart.** Gifts of stock may offer more tax benefits than cash.
- **If you had a good year,** consider opening a donor-advised fund before December 31.
- **Planning your holiday gifts already?** Know someone who has everything? Consider holiday tribute gifts.

For more information about giving, please contact 323-421-2631.

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 and school-age children and families in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development. ■ Children's Health and Wellness Program: Connects the quality of child care to the health and wellness of children and adults. ■ Advocacy: Keep child care on the public policy agenda by providing expert testimony; serving on commissions and advisory committees; creating coalitions with allied agencies; and conducting public information campaigns. ■ Research: Gather and analyze a wide range of data to share with other agencies, advocates, researchers and policy makers.

5-9-07

To: Whom it may concern;

I April Thompson the parent of Destin Thompson & Jaelin Thompson would like to give notice, that as of June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007 I will no longer be needing child care services due to relocation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at the SAGE program for all their support. I just wish upon my relocation I could take the facility with me as well. The staff has done an excellent job in help molding my two sons. And I thank you all.

Sincerely,  
April Thompson

## Parents Love SAGE Center at Nickerson

Letters like these from SAGE parents emphasize how important the Nickerson Gardens center is for parents. For many families in the area, SAGE is the only refuge they have when looking for a child care center that focuses on quality care and stimulating environments for children.

We wish we could replicate SAGE all over the city as well. We know that the programs and staff at SAGE are stellar. And that staff goes above and beyond everyday. Parents like April remind us of the great work at SAGE and the fact that it is a much-needed program in Nickerson Gardens.

Thank you, April, for your kind words. And thank you, SAGE funders and contributors, who help us keep SAGE's doors open. As you can see, your support makes a difference.

## Over 500 Make Our Conference a Success

On Saturday, June 9 Crystal Stairs presented our Early Care and Education Conference at the Los Angeles Convention Center.



Our theme was Play, Learn, Grow:

The Quest for Quality Child Care. Over 500 people in attendance participated in over 25 educational workshops. Crystal Stairs was fortunate to receive corporate sponsorship from Washington Mutual (WaMu), one of the nation's leading consumer and small business banks. WaMu, along with 28 other businesses supporting childcare offered services and advice to our providers in our busy and exciting exhibit hall.

## New Study on Family Poverty Reveals Truths



Crystal Stairs recently commissioned *A Step Up, But Not Out*, a report that tracks and studies the poverty and income impacts of child care subsidies. The study reveals some interesting and rather sobering facts:

- Child care subsidies can be the difference that allows families to survive above the poverty line.

- Child care subsidies alone cannot increase the real wages of families.

The study was commissioned to shine a light on the issue of poverty and to put it in perspective. More data needs to be collected on this issue so that policy makers and advocates can strategically find ways to reduce poverty. Poverty is also an issue of priority for United Way, a Crystal Stairs partner. The agency has partnered with United Way's Pathways Out of Poverty campaign to help identify ad support ways to alleviate poverty.

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## Two Crystal Stairs Executives Gain Appointments to Boards



Holly J. Mitchell, CEO of Crystal Stairs, was recently appointed to the Child Care Nutrition Advisory Group for the California Health & Human Services Agency. Crystal Stairs, although it had to close its food program, has been a committed advocate for child nutrition, combating child obesity and encouraging opportunities for preventative health in our communities.



Ruth Simeon, VP of Programs, was recently nominated to join the Los Angeles City Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Her nomination was approved by the Mayor and the City Council. Her role is to represent the child care sector within the WIB as they explore the economic impact of the child care industry and career pathways for child care personnel. The

WIB is comprised of representatives from numerous private and public employers, governmental agencies and unions, and is focused on improving employment (training, compensation, opportunities, etc.) for Los Angeles.

## Community Voices in the News

Crystal Stairs is the lead agency in a county-wide project, Community Voices. The project is designed to help develop parents and caregivers into effective child care advocates. This stems from the reality that close to 30,000 income-eligible families wait on a Centralized Eligibility List (CEL) for child care assistance funding to become available.

Community Voices and Crystal Stairs were profiled in the July 19, 2007 issue of the Los Angeles Sentinel in an article entitled "Child Care a Quagmire for Working Poor."



### Crystal Stairs, Inc.

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## Supporters: Thank You!

A million thanks to these donors who have contributed during the last quarter. You make our hearts smile.

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