

Crystal Stairs

[2007-08 Annual Report]

What is Accreditation?

A PRIMER

INTRODUCTION: *High quality child care is a moniker that is often questioned, challenged and redefined, especially when dealing with diverse audiences. What is high quality child care? How does Crystal Stairs address the issue in our service area?*

This page offers a primer on the definition and benefits of accreditation, followed by a look at how Crystal Stairs has worked to transform its communities of families, children and child care providers. We believe that high quality child care is a right.

Accreditation represents the mark of quality in child care. To achieve this status, child care centers and homes must volunteer to be measured against robust and rigorous national standards on education, health and safety (NAEYC, 2008). The National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation is the accrediting body for child care centers and the National Association for Family Child Care accreditation is the accrediting body for family child care homes.

Programs that have been awarded national accreditation have gone beyond minimum licensing standards and have made a commitment to provide the type of care, attention and stimulating activities that children require (AAP, 2008). Caregivers in accredited programs participate in on-going child development training and are able to better understand children's needs at different ages, plan appropriate activities, interact with children in warm and stimulating ways and are more likely to provide positive guidance than harsh discipline (AAP, 2008).

Accreditation is a demanding, time-consuming process that can take a minimum of 9-12 months to complete. It involves three steps: Self-Study, Validation, and the Accreditation Decision. Self-Study is the step in which a program's administrators, staff and parents conduct a careful review of the program to determine how well that program meets the Criteria for quality. Program personnel detail and report their findings, make improvements and make a formal request for an Observer/Validator Visit. The accrediting agency then conducts a site visit to verify the accuracy of the findings and report submitted. The information

is then passed on to an independent commission of child care experts that meets to review the results of the self-study process and the Visit. The commission then makes recommendations to the accrediting agency on whether to defer or award accreditation.

The child care industry is lacking in sufficient resources, finances, adequate providers or teachers, and quality facilities which more often than not, equate to poor quality child care.

Accreditation is good for parents. It gives them a moniker to help guide them in their search for high quality programs and assures them that their children are receiving the best possible care while they are at work or in school. This is important as numerous studies substantiate the fact that working parents have a great deal of stress connected with child care issues, much of which can be eliminated when parents know that their children are in a high quality, accredited child care program.

Accreditation is good for programs. The process serves as a professional development exercise for providers/programs, helping staff to increase their knowledge of quality and overall perspective on child care.

Ultimately, Accreditation is most beneficial to children. The process helps programs create an environment for children that includes higher quality interactions between children and their caregivers; increased access to well-planned, developmentally appropriate activities; and improved physical environments. These characteristics are important as they are conducive to a child's ability to learn and play; activities that directly impact children's social and emotional well-being as well as their school readiness.



[How We Address Quality through Accreditation]

Betty Luckett Mentor

As a SPAN mentor, Betty enjoyed interacting with other providers that had different experiences and served different



parts of the community. While giving pointers to providers through her mentorship, Betty found the process to be educational for her as well. She developed more

exciting ways to engage her children.

Prior to becoming a mentor, Betty went through the accreditation process making her preschool the first accredited facility in Inglewood, California. Betty has mentored six facilities and has seen the schools she assisted use television less, create gardens and introduce cultural arts to their children. Betty also mentored providers in effective business practices, which includes business filing systems, portfolios for children, and suggestion boxes.

"I find joy in helping someone else and refining the way they run their center."

Accreditation is an incredibly important element in the quest for quality in child care. Nationally, there are 8,124 child care centers and 2,048 (as of June 2008) family child care homes that are accredited. This means that out of the available spots for children, roughly 25% of them are accredited facilities. That is a risky gamble to make when faced with the decision of where to place your child when you are away at, or looking for, work.

These statistics were worse for the Crystal Stairs service area. In 2003, there were only seven accredited child care programs in the Crystal Stairs service area. Crystal Stairs hoped to increase that number to 45.

To have neighborhoods where demand for child care is high, but where quality is low, is unacceptable. Crystal Stairs recognized this contradiction in values and equity, and pledged to combat that disparity head on. In 2003, we successfully applied for and received a grant from First 5 LA to help us increase the number of accredited child care centers and family child care homes in our service area.

The goals of Crystal Stairs' accreditation project were simple:

- to increase child care providers' awareness of what constitutes quality child care,
- to improve the quality of child care services offered by the participating child care programs, and
- to increase the number of accredited child care programs in the target area.

In essence, we hoped to develop "Olympians for Quality," an elite but growing group of child care professionals who can offer quality, high standard child care and can serve as mentors and role models for child care professionals entering the field.

Crystal Stairs' proposed Child Care Support Provider Accreditation Now Project (SPAN) would impact children up to age five, their families, and child care providers/programs in the target area—an area hit hardest by the civil unrest of 1992, and home to a large number of low- to moderate-income Latino and African-American families.

The characteristics of the targeted area were stark, but not surprising:

- Ethnic breakdown for the area was 68% Latino and 30% African-American¹
- Median family income was under \$24,000 per year, the lowest in the county²
- Approximately 91% of the school children in the area qualified for free or reduced-price meals³
- The area had the highest use of county services and public assistance⁴
- The area had the highest rate of unemployment in the county⁵
- 63% of Kindergarten children are Spanish-speaking, English language learners⁶
- There were close to 258,000 children up to age five.⁷

Crystal Stairs was not daunted by these statistics. In fact, these realities made the agency more determined than ever to firmly deliver messages of and resources for child care quality to its parents and providers. Crystal Stairs' goal was not only to educate providers on what constitutes quality child care, but to encourage, aid and support them in achieving the highest measure of program quality, accreditation.



Crystal Stairs developed an intense program, comprised of an ongoing series of workshops designed to educate the child care program staff on what constitutes quality child care, and to introduce and prepare them for the accreditation process. The workshops informed and guided the participating child care programs in meeting the Criteria for quality established by their respective accrediting agency.

Project staff and mentors provided individualized support and guidance to the participating programs throughout the accreditation process. The agency offered grants to the participating programs to cover the cost of the accreditation application, the Observer/Validator Visit, and any necessary program enhancements.

Five years later, we beat our own goals. Sixty-one child care programs (centers and homes) have gone through our accreditation process. Before Crystal Stairs received funding, of the then 1,401 family child care homes and 286 child care centers in our referral database, only three child care programs were nationally accredited. Thirty-six programs have been awarded national accreditation and the remaining 20 programs are awaiting an Observer/Validation Visit. The increase in our "Olympians of Quality" is a wonderful

Developing
'Olympians
of Quality'

Fast Facts

Child care is expensive. Low-income families pay up to 25% of their earnings on child care.⁸ The median income in Los Angeles County is \$43,518; families in this income bracket pay anywhere from 18 to 25% of their earnings on child care.⁹ Full day child care can cost from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year.¹⁰ Sending an infant to child care costs six times more than sending a child to a California State University.¹¹

This is why Crystal Stairs helps families find quality, affordable child care for their children.

Maria Aguado Mentor

Prior to becoming a mentor for the SPAN project, Maria went through the accreditation process with her own child care facility.



Her accreditation helped her to gain four-star status with Los Angeles Universal Preschool. This process motivated her to become involved with the child care community. So

far, she has formally mentored two providers toward accreditation status and informally mentored five. "I get calls from other providers [who have heard about my center and my mentoring] asking me to come tour their centers and give them suggestions."

She has received a tremendous amount of feedback from providers saying their parents notice the changes and the accreditation makes them feel more secure.

"One of my parents is looking to start a daycare and has asked me to help her get started."

Jocelyn Tucker Trainer

Jocelyn first got actively involved with Crystal Stairs as a grant facilitator. Immediately, she knew the SPAN project would be successful since many of the components were already in place.

As a trainer for the SPAN project, she liked that the providers who voluntarily signed up for the accreditation courses had a



sense of pride and were enthusiastic. She says it can be challenging for some providers to have to change their ways, but she likes it when people learn something new.

Helping providers

find new ways to interact with children is one of her joys.

“Children prepared for school are better prepared for life,” is her motto. In her training sessions, she likes to explain what the best practices are and how to incorporate culture and family. “This is what I like to do... this is what I want to be when I grow up.”

Ana Vera Provider

Earning accreditation status has helped Ana become more professional in how she runs her business. “Accreditation has helped



me to grow as a professional and stay up to date with current child development issues and/or classes and trainings.”

Ana’s child care environment now has areas that

are better defined and with quality materials and equipment. The children have become more motivated because they have more options. Parents have also shown more motivation in their parent involvement and express to Ana how happy they are with the changes that were made to her child care program.

“I now have a waiting list of families and it is all through word of mouth. All in all, it has helped me to become a better provider and to strive to offer the highest quality care I possibly can.”

We surpassed our own goal.

success story. The unfortunate reality, however, is that funding for this important project ended and as a result, our community is not able to fully capitalize on and leverage the strides we have made in this area.

Crystal Stairs remains committed to enlarging our core of “Olympians of Quality” and will continue to look for partners for this community investment.

Notes:

1. United Way of Greater Los Angeles, 1998-99 State of the County Report
2. Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee, 2000
3. Los Angeles County Child Care Planning Committee, 2000
4. Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council, 1996
5. United Way, 1998-99
6. Los Angeles County, Children and Families First, Proposition 10 Commission, 1999
7. PACE, 2000
8. Warner, 2007
9. Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council, 2007
10. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2007
11. Fight Crime, 2001





Holly J. Mitchell

In our 2007 message, we talked about Crystal Stairs' striving to be a "quality organization," a journey we continue every day. We also wrote about our work and aspirations to enhance the quality of child care available to the thousands of children and families in the communities we serve. So, you ask, what have we done about this lately?

As you read in our cover article, we successfully concluded a multi-year project funded by First 5 LA whose goal was to **increase the number of accredited centers and family child care homes in our service area**. Programs accredited by nationally-recognized early childhood organizations have met standards of performance beyond minimum licensing requirements and demonstrated their commitment to provide the care, attention and stimulating activities that help children thrive. When we launched this project, there were only three accredited programs in our service area. At its conclusion, 56 child care programs will have been assisted through the accreditation process.

In the past year, we created

the **Provider Dialogue Forum** to strengthen our connection to the provider community and to truly listen to their concerns about child care quality, the services they receive from Crystal Stairs, and other issues. I've dialogued with over 200 child care providers and I was able to speak and listen to over 200 providers. I was both heartened and distressed to hear about their struggles to provide quality child care in low-income communities, most of whose working families do not have child care subsidies. We will continue and expand the Provider Dialogue Forum in the coming year.

Responding to what we heard from the provider community, we created a new position to bring resources and assistance that support their efforts to offer and sustain high-quality child care. Our Provider Outreach Coordinator has over 30 years' experience in direct child care services and provider-related work at Crystal Stairs. She will coordinate continuation of our Provider Dialogue Forum, conduct site visits requested by providers, write a column for our newsletter, *The Banister*, and act as an ombudsperson to bring providers' interests, needs and issues back to Crystal Stairs for our attention and action. She is an asset to our team and will extend our commitment to quality out into the community.

In June, we celebrated the long-awaited opening of our **Resource Library** that provides an exciting and diverse array of high-quality equipment and educational materials to enhance the quality of child care programs. Because of their high cost and/or space requirements, providers' only access to many of these resources is through the Library.

We believe that a good parent-provider relationship is part of quality child care. With that in mind, we have combined our parent

newsletter with *The Banister*, our provider newsletter. Its on-going theme is high-quality child care with articles on topics that are appealing and helpful to both parents and providers. Our goal is to show them how their combined efforts produce the best outcomes for children. *The Banister* reaches over 16,000 parents and providers quarterly.

We're also using **smart technology to support providers**. We built three new 24/7 automated information systems. Through our website, parents are able to get on-line referrals to licensed child care centers and family child care homes. We expect that this will increase the number of parents who contact our providers about enrolling children in their programs.

As the leader of this community treasure, **I have made a commitment to keeping Crystal Stairs financially viable, customer-focused and relevant**. Now, may I ask, what have you done for the children and families of our community lately? Public funding is perilous and competition for dwindling private finances is fierce. We need partners to invest in the valuable work we do to grow and sustain high-quality child care in the communities we serve. Support to continue and expand our provider accreditation efforts is a high priority for us. Accreditation is a lengthy, costly and labor-intensive process but also offers a particularly high return on investment for children, parents, providers and communities. We welcome you as a partner in our quest for quality.

[Message from the Executive Director]

[Profile of Programs]



Finding and Selecting Child Care

Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R), our longest-running service, provides free referrals to licensed child care to thousands of families living in South and Southwest

Los Angeles, and the cities of Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale and Gardena. Referral specialists help parents find care that meets their particular needs in terms of location, price, hours of

service, their child’s age or special needs, and other factors. Parents also receive information on how to identify high-quality child care.

To assure that parents have child care choices, R&R staff outreach to newly-licensed providers and regularly update all providers’ information so we have an accurate, comprehensive inventory of services available. R&R’s resource library, workshops, technical assistance and special projects are all designed to enhance the quality of care for children as well as providers’ abilities to operate successful, sustainable businesses that meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Paying for Child Care

Child Care Assistance Program

The Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income parents living in our service area by paying for child care that enables them to work, complete their education, or

get job training as pathways to family self-sufficiency. The largest component of this program is specifically targeted to support families who are transitioning from welfare to work. By giving parents access to a broad array of child care options, the program also promotes developmentally-appropriate care and school-readiness for their children.

Parents can choose care in licensed centers or family child care homes, or with relatives, friends or neighbors for children up to age 12. Every family has a specialist who keeps and updates their records and helps them make and change child care arrangements. Because so many of our families have other needs, specialists also provide referrals to a diverse array of supportive services such as housing assistance, food banks, financial and legal counseling, health and mental health services, and parenting classes.

While thousands of children and families receive our services every day, equal numbers of them are still on the waiting list because there is not enough funding to enroll every eligible family.

CalWORKs Stage 1 Child Care Program

The CalWORKs Child Care Program assists parents in our service area who are beginning the challenging journey from welfare to work. Program staff are located in four local welfare offices to readily provide parents with information about quality care and their child care choices.

Our service structure is designed to assure that making child care arrangements does not pose a barrier to parents’ participation in work-readiness, training, job search and other activities that help them enter and remain in the workforce. It also encourages collaboration between welfare and child care specialists—an important factor in supporting families as they navigate through the public service system that helps them move from welfare to work.

Fast Facts

CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

- 4,865 Requests for referrals
- 2,209 Requests for technical assistance
- 402 Licensed child care centers listed
- 1,789 Licensed family child care homes listed

Fast Facts

OUR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

- 25,999 Children enrolled
- 14,207 Families enrolled
- 11,117 Providers received monthly payments

Training and Technical Assistance

High-quality early childhood programs help prepare children for educational success and lifetime achievement. Well-trained, caring child care professionals are the hallmark of quality child care. Every year, our Child Care Resource and Referral Service offers stimulating, informative workshops designed to enhance the quality

of care for children and providers' abilities to operate sustainable businesses.

We also collaborate with public and private agencies, professional associations, and other groups actively working to meet child care needs in our community.

Fast Facts

WORKSHOPS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- 2,220 Providers attended a variety of child development trainings
- 136 Site visits to child care facilities
- 395 Child care programs received CPR/First Aid reimbursement
- 198 CPR trainings
- 21 Newly licensed family child care homes

Health and Wellness

Children's Health and Wellness Program

The Children's Health and Wellness (CH&W) Program extends our family services mission to include health-related information, access and advocacy based on our belief that healthy families are assets to themselves and to their communities. The program also forges links with the child care community as a means to deliver vital health information and services to families. CH&W's core program is outreach and enrollment of low-income

children and families on a variety of free and low-cost health insurance programs.

To maximize its outreach and resources, CH&W's newsletter provides information to hundreds of health, family welfare, and social service practitioners and organizations, enabling the families they serve to access our programs as well as services offered by other community-based organizations and public agencies.

CH&W's breast cancer prevention project continues to provide information, screening and follow-up treatment referrals for low-income women aged 40 and above.

Over its life-time, this program has screened more than 1,500 women and referred 75 of them for further testing and treatment.

In the coming year, Children's Health and Wellness will

continue its quest for new projects and community partnerships that encourage healthy living and provide access to vital health services.

Fast Facts

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Outreach and information to 34,145 individuals
- 5,773 Medi-Cal/Healthy Families/Healthy Kids/Kaiser Permanente Child Health Care plan enrollments
- 264 Breast cancer screenings
- 1,937 Referrals to health programs and other social service programs

Our Child Care Center

Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center

The SAGE Center offers preschool and school-age child care services to families living in Nickerson Gardens and the greater Watts community. SAGE's school-age program has achieved accreditation according to nationally-recognized standards of high quality. SAGE's curriculum is designed to enable children to become well-balanced, confident, creative and successful life-long learners.

It features a mix of structured (e.g., homework assistance, tutoring), recreational and enrichment activities of the children's choice. With support from corporate donors and individuals, SAGE is also able to take children on trips to sports events and artistic and cultural performances.

The program's staff also reflects SAGE's commitment to those who live in the neighboring community. The education, training and employment SAGE provides has created career paths and opened opportunities for many residents. SAGE is also a training venue for students in early childhood education and a catalyst for other child- and family-centered projects that benefit the surrounding community.



Resource Library

[Research and Advocacy]

Throughout our history, Crystal Stairs' research activities have initiated and supported our service and advocacy efforts. This past year, we continued to disseminate information from our 2007 report, "A Step Up, But Not Out," that chronicled the impacts on income and poverty status experienced by families receiving child care subsidies. The key message to policy-makers, advocates, the media and other stakeholders is that while child care subsidies are an effective income supplement, helping families secure affordable child care of their choice, their ability to alleviate poverty is, at best, temporary. However, the "return on investment in child care subsidies" can be maximized when policies and programs are enacted to directly address the root causes of enduring poverty and rising income inequality, thereby enabling families to attain and sustain economic independence.



Community Voices parent speaking at a Sacramento town hall meeting.

For our 6th Annual Legislative Briefing, census data and service statistics from our child care programs were used to create district-level community and child care profiles for the briefing book. State and federal representatives who attended this meeting were briefed on our programs and navigated through the maze of federal and state child care funding. This year's theme, "The Quality Puzzle," explored the dimensions and benefits of quality child care. Acknowledging the daunting funding landscape facing all aspects of child care and development, our call to action was to not leave quality by the wayside. Research has demonstrated the immediate and long-

term value of quality child care, particularly for low-income, minority children. (See cover article.) **Our message to decision-makers was to continue and expand funding for quality-oriented education, training, resources and assessment tools.**

This year Crystal Stairs also continued its advocacy work around child care. This year's focus was on encouraging policy makers to increase child care funding so all families on waiting lists can be served, to make annual inspections of child care facilities mandatory, and to commit to funding and supporting programs that focus on enhancing the quality of care in all communities.

Community Voices is a recent project of Crystal Stairs. It was designed in partnership with other Resource and Referral agencies across Los Angeles County to develop caregivers into advocates for their children. Since its inception in 2006, the project has hosted advocacy workshops for close to 700 parents across the county.

We believe empowered parents can build an engaged community.

Fast Facts

COMMUNITY VOICES

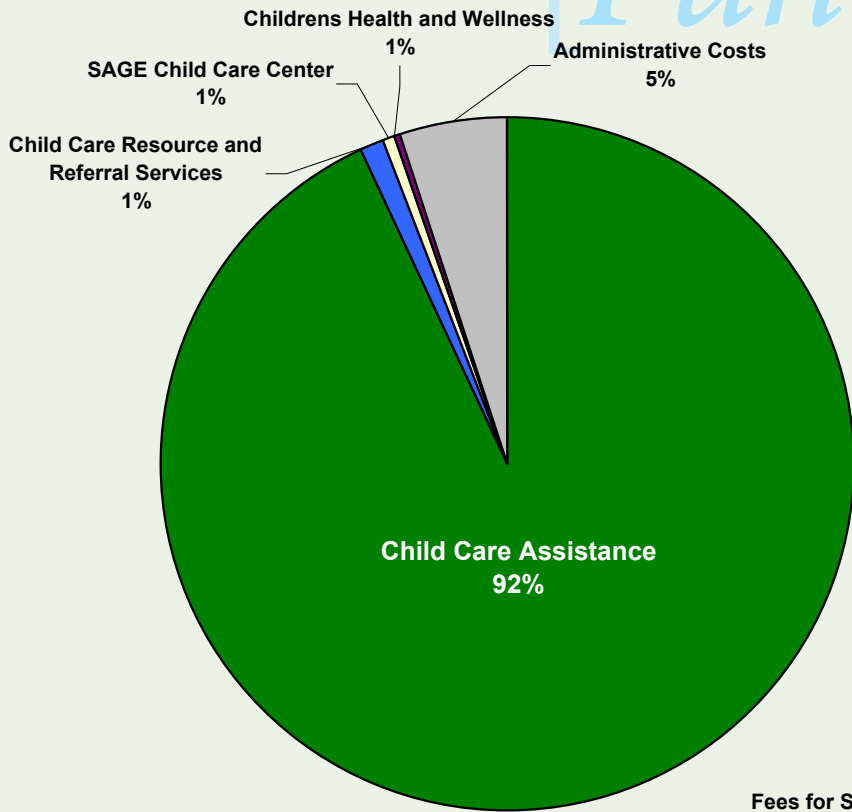
- Sent parents to Sacramento to lobby legislators and the governor
- Participated in listening forums with state officials
- Rallied around the issues of full funding for families on waiting lists
- Addressed the lack of funding for school-age child care programs
- Identified green space in urban communities for parents and children



Community Voices members outside the Governor's Office after meeting with his staff.

Community Voices

[Funding]

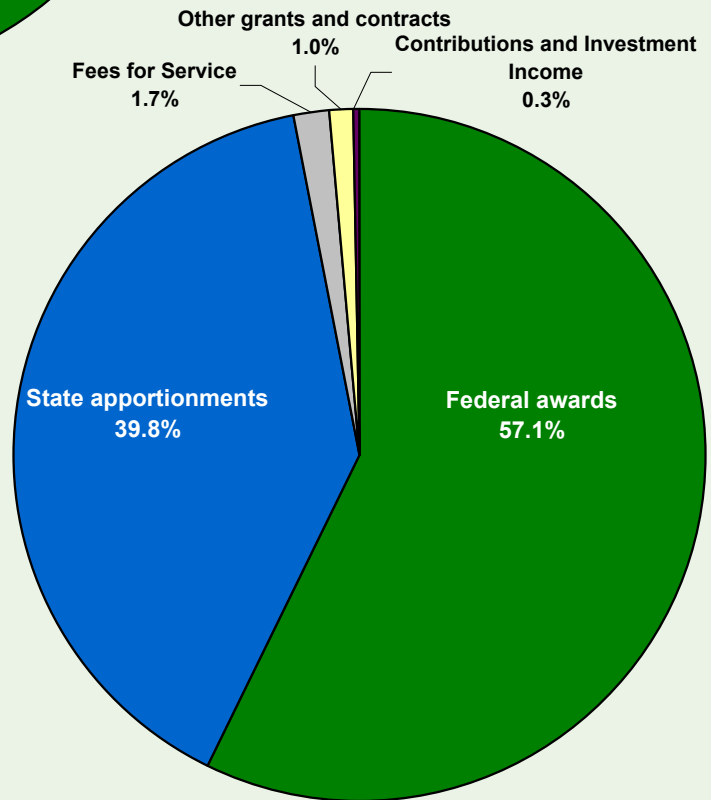


[Expense]

PROGRAMS OUR FUNDING SUPPORTS
CRYSTAL STAIRS EXPENDITURES
2007-08

[Revenue]

WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM
CRYSTAL STAIRS FUNDING SOURCES
2007-08



[A Quinfecta of Support]

Vanessa Bell Calloway

Actress, dancer, writer, producer and philanthropist Vanessa Bell Calloway is a long-time supporter of Crystal Stairs. This is probably because of her most important and rewarding job, that as mother.

Calloway has supported many of our projects and has served as an Event Co-Chair for our “Dancing Under the Stars” major annual fundraiser the past two years in a row.



Calloway knows that having access to child care providers who are experienced, constantly seeking education in their profession, of high quality, accessible and affordable is incredibly important to a parent. Crystal Stairs works to make this pool

of child care providers available to all of its parents. Quality, affordability, and accessibility is a right all parents deserve.

Pauletta Washington

Pauletta Washington is a stalwart figure in the world of philanthropy and Crystal Stairs is happy to have her as one of our longstanding supporters. Washington has served in a number of capacities—as a donor, for two years as an Event Co-Chair for our “Dancing Under the Stars” fundraiser and has collaborated with us on projects that support child care and the arts.

She is an advocate for keeping our mission active. Child care is an important service and is becoming more critical every day as local and federal economies struggle.

Research is a useful tool as we continue to talk about how quality child care environments support early brain development. Advocacy is the empowering tool that moves our families closer to financial self-sufficiency, and child care resources for families of all incomes and backgrounds.



Mo’Nique

Mo’Nique is a show-stopper who stopped at the offices of Crystal Stairs and has never looked back. Originally she joined Crystal Stairs as a donor to our Project 730, a program designed to support former welfare recipients transition off welfare according to the time limits 730 days or two years. Mo’Nique’s story, success, and participation in this project proved to be a beacon of light for the participants. She has remained

connected to Crystal Stairs ever since.

One major component of Crystal Stairs is to



provide quality, accessible child care to parents—usually single mothers—who are transitioning from welfare to work. We help them identify child care providers, we work to enhance their parenting skills and we try to support the parent’s journey as their child moves from 0-12 years of

age. For many of our parents, we are their strongest and staunchest ally. They should add Mo’Nique to the list as well.

Atresia Price

Atresia Price is a past recipient of our services. She is also a Crystal Stairs donor. Price received child care from Crystal Stairs from 2000 to 2007 and as a result of this supportive service, she was able to place her child in a quality, safe environment while she continued her schooling and searched for work. “There is nothing better for a parent than knowing your child is safe while you are at work,” she says. “It puts your mind at ease.”



Price no longer needed Crystal Stairs and self-terminated. “I did it so that someone else can have what I was so fortunate to have.”

Atresia Price continues to stay connected with Crystal Stairs. This past spring, she supported our 2008 “Dancing Under the Stars” fundraiser and has vowed to continue to stay connected as a donor. Artresia Price continues to give back, to and through Crystal Stairs.

Patricia Williams

Patricia Williams is a longstanding donor to Crystal Stairs’ work, mission and commitment to the community. Her most recent “Bronze Level” donation affirms her commitment.

As a local business owner, Williams understands that skilled, educated workers build strong economies. For Crystal Stairs, that translates into having employees who have quality child care. How? A stress-free parent is a productive parent, and that is often the beginning of a strong, sustainable community.



Women supporting families.

[Donors]

Platinum Stairs \$25,000–\$100,000

Community Technology
Foundation of California
Union Bank of California
Union Bank of California
Foundation
The James Irvine Foundation

Gold Stairs \$10,000–\$24,999

Citibank

Silver Stairs \$2,500 - \$9,999

Michael A. Cohen
Harbor Building Services
Los Angeles Cotillion
Foundation
Mayfield Junior School of the
Holy Child Jesus
Nestle USA
Romero & Associates, LLP
United Way

Bronze Stairs \$500–\$2,499

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Eleanor E. Beasley
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Community Health Councils,
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Deloitte Services LP
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Hellen Jones-Eibling
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Gary Kaplan
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Saundra C. Lang
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Evelyn M. Leverhant
Elizabeth Y. Lim
Lee M. Linderman
Ed London
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Caroline Labiner Moser
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Pilar M. Romero
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Suzanne Singer
Anthony N. Singletary
Sharon Ann Smith
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Gwendolyn Staples
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Barbra Sullivan
Tara Sullivan
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Yuovene Whistler
J.L. White
Sheila Wills
Wendy Savitt Wilson
Laura S. Wiltz
Ava Ann Wood
Sheryl M. Yamada
Patricia Zdravecky



We thank

you

Project Crystal Stairs

On Sunday, October 14, 2007, Crystal Stairs participated in the 1st Annual HEIR Street Fair. Sponsored by HEIR Apparel, a black-woman-owned manufacturer of quality children's clothing, the street fair was an opportunity to highlight business owners in the fashion corridor, support local non-profits, and connect with the community. There was a children's fashion show, food, live music and entertainment, and partial proceeds raised from the event went to participating non-profits.

Mayfield School Shows the Money

On December 5, first graders from Pasadena's Mayfield School came to Crystal Stairs to meet SAGE children and to deliver a check for \$6000. The money was raised during their annual walk-a-thon. Cheer and friendships were exchanged as the first graders presented to SAGE the big check along with a handmade book shelf. SAGE presented a handmade reading chair to Mayfield that will go in the school's "secret garden." During the visit, the children had fun making crafts and eating pizza.



[How We Activate Our Mission]



Celebrating the Holidays at Crystal Stairs

This last holiday season Crystal Stairs was full of joy and giving. Each year our hearts and opportunities to give to our families get bigger and bigger. Thanks to numerous staff-elves, many of our families enjoyed a brighter, gift-ier holiday season.

Three parents were nominated by staff (Veronica Garcia, Esther Luna, and Andrea Kennon) to be the recipients of a \$500 shopping spree at Kmart. The event was sponsored by KLOS 95.5 and KABC. Funds were raised by their radio listeners. Crystal Stairs families were heard live on 95.5 on Thursday, December 13, thanking the listeners and answering some tough questions: A bike? A waffle iron? More clothes? How about all of the above?

The Delancey Street Foundation donated six trees to Crystal Stairs families.

Four families were nominated by staff to receive toys and gifts through the Sparks of Love holiday giving event.

Staffers Diane Wise-Jack, Esther Luna, Renee Clough, Naomi Meza and Kibbi Arrington helped to make the holidays a bit brighter for those families!

Community Voices Hosts Candidate's Debate

In February, Community Voices co-hosted a candidate's debate for the major candidates running for the open 2nd District seat. Hundreds came out to the event and thousands more heard it broadcast on local radio. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring child care issues to the forefront of a major election.



Crystal Stairs Plants a 'Giving Tree'

In April, Crystal Stairs unveiled its Giving Tree. The Giving Tree is one way for Crystal Stairs to thank its growing number of major donors, who continue to invest in and commit to the work of Crystal Stairs. Thank you major donors. Your seeds are being planted.



Resource Lending Library Opens to Cheer

Crystal Stairs' Resource Lending Library enjoyed its open house on Wednesday, April 9.

The event officially marked the return of our lending library—the community's passport to quality. Child care providers and Crystal Stairs special friends showed up to celebrate the opening, including district Councilman Bernard Parks.



French Horns in Leimert Park

On Friday, May 2, 2008, Robert Watt, a retired member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, joined with young people from SAGE and Crystal Stairs' Community Pre-Kindergarten project to offer a music tutorial on the French horn.

Melodious sounds came from a number of horns (vintage and modern) and were met with giggles, oohs and ahhs and a fun time. After a few song selections, Watt took apart a French horn (tons of small pieces) and with the help of his young audience, was able to put it back together. The finale was an invitation for everyone to make some music. Toot-toot-toot-toooooot!

Community Voices Rallies Against Cuts

On May 7, Crystal Stairs and Community Voices went with 70 parents and providers to Sacramento to rally the governor and legislature against the cuts to child care.

Community Voices met with hundreds of other parents from around the state. They all marched to steps of the capitol where Los Angeles single parent Louis Wright gave a rousing

speech declaring that children will not be forgotten this budget season. Afterwards, the 70-plus parents and providers went inside the Capitol for a Community Voices-hosted town hall meeting with dozens of Los Angeles County districts. The event allowed parents to have real dialogue with legislators on how to fix the budget crisis, how to advocate for real change and how to prevent the budget from being balanced on the backs of children and working poor families.

During the meeting, parents gave heart-wrenching testimonies on how important child care subsidies are to the survival of their families.

Dancing Under the Stars 2

On Saturday, June 21, Crystal Stairs hosted "Dancing Under the Stars 2," the agency's major fundraiser, at the Wallis Annenberg Science Center in Exposition Park. Proceeds from the event benefited SAGE and other special projects. Attendees sweated it out on the dance floor and fired it up at the silent auction tables. The event was fabulous as donors, friends and the Mistress of Ceremonies Erica Gimpel danced the night away and celebrated the successes and hard work of Crystal Stairs.



[The Crystal Stairs Staff]

In 1980, Crystal Stairs opened its doors with less than a dozen passionate and enthusiastic staff. Today we have grown to employ over 300 dedicated solution-oriented staff members and manage close to \$140 million in child care and development funding. This speaks to the depth of our mission and its connection to social justice. It also speaks to our core values as a preferred employer: instilling excellence, relationships, integrity and empowerment in our work and in our service.

Crystal Stairs is committed to building and sustaining a diverse workforce and culture. We have a dynamic, talented pool of staff.

At Crystal Stairs, diversity is an organizational strength. We have staff that are comedians, singers and actors, a published poet, authors, staff who are certified in CPR, professional musicians, a professional pilot and a sailor. We have an ethnically diverse staff where over a dozen languages are spoken.

We have staff who are pursuing or continuing their

Fast Facts

DIVERSITY

- 85% of our workforce is female
- The average employee age is 39 years

TENURE

- Average tenure is close to six years
- 53% have been employees five years or more
- 8% of our staff were hired before 1997



education while employed. We believe that a knowledge-based staff is an empowered staff, which is why we celebrate the educational milestones of our employees each spring.

Crystal Stairs represents compassion, community and service. It is an exciting, compassionate workplace where hard work is done everyday and lives are transformed for the better.

At Crystal Stairs, our core values—excellence, relationships, integrity and empowerment—are more than words. They are the best of us.

[Board of Directors]



Crystal Stairs has a multi-talented, active Board of Directors which is dedicated to helping the agency thrive. The board members bring technical skills, commitment and passion to their work at Crystal Stairs.



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Our mission is to
improve the lives of
families through child
care services, research
and advocacy.



How We Got Our Name

We selected our name from the Langston Hughes poem, “Mother To Son,” which captures our perspective on life, our aspirations for the future, and our dream that every child’s life will have its full measure of “crystal stairs.”

We Believe

- We believe quality child care is an important societal issue, not just a responsibility of individual families.
- We believe quality child care and development services should be universally available and accessible.
- We believe how children are treated when young will significantly influence the kind of adults they become and the quality of life for all of us in the future.
- We believe that parents should be able to choose among a variety of child care service models.
- We believe child care needs a strong infrastructure in which government, business and civic organizations work together to develop policy and to plan and fund child care.

These values guide our design and delivery of the essential services we provide to children and families.

Designed by Alan Bell

Photography by Kalem Aquil, D'Angelo Photography, Ian Foxx, Leroy Hamilton, Sydney Kamlager-Santner, Tonica Lucas

Crystal Stairs, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.