

# Heart & Sole

A SMALL STEPS NURTURING CENTER NEWSLETTER

♥ Hope for Children Straight from the Heart



## A Tale of Compassion: What Preschoolers Can Teach Us in Times of Economic Adversity



February 20, 2009

"Dear Friends and Family,  
We are collecting pennies. We are helping children in the country of Afghanistan. The pennies will help buy new books, pens, markers, pencils, paper, and other school supplies. Please bring some of your pennies to Small Steps. Thank you for your pennies."

Your friends,  
Cristina, Shanice, Oscar, Francisco, Nathaniel,  
Patriciana, Brian, Jessica, and Jacob



"Economically at-risk." It's one of the three criteria that families must meet in order for their children to attend Small Steps. At a time when many of us are feeling "at-risk" because of the economy, the experience and wisdom of Small Steps students can help us consider ways we can respond to these times.

**Experiences of living with little can elevate our sense of compassion towards others**

Our Kindergarten students at Small Steps' DePelchin campus have been reading *Listen to the Wind*, an early reader's version of the story of Greg Mortenson and his efforts to build schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan. (The full story is captured in *Three Cups of Tea*.) The children responded to this moving story, one of Pakistani students who have often gone to school without buildings or any classroom materials, by deciding to collect pennies. They invited all eight of Small

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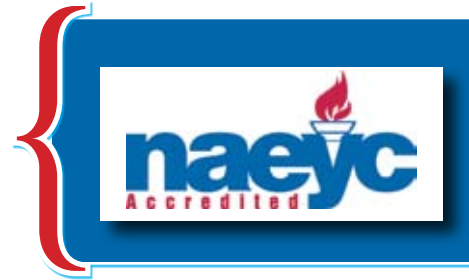
### Inside This Issue:

- 3 | Thank you to our SSCC Sponsors!
- 5 | Parent Education Events
- 6 | Rice Literacy Project
- 7 | Multiplying Our Talents

# { NEWS BYTES }

## Small Steps Reaccredited by NAEYC Through 2014

**Small Steps Nurturing Center recently received some very good news!** We have been reaccredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for another five years, through 2014. This achievement is only reached by the top 6% of Houston's schools and 4% of schools in Texas. NAEYC is the nation's leading organization of early childhood professionals. NAEYC created its accreditation program in 1985 to set professional standards for early childhood education and to help families identify high-quality child care and early education program. We at Small Steps are so proud of this great achievement! NAEYC Accreditation lets families in our community know that children in our program are getting the best care and early learning experience. As our DePelchin campus program director Hermette Ward reinforces, "of course, the reason for it all is to provide the best for our children."



## Small Steps Earns 4-star Rating from Charity Navigator for 5th Consecutive Year

**Charity Navigator, the premier charity evaluator in the US, awarded Small Steps 4-stars for sound fiscal management.** This is Charity Navigator's highest rating, and is the fifth consecutive year that Small Steps has received this rating. Only 4% of the charities rated by Charity Navigator have received at least five consecutive 4-star ratings. Charity Navigator says that this indicates "that Small Steps consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way, and outperforms most other charities in America." Small Steps is committed to good stewardship of donated funds and we are pleased to have our responsible practices recognized by such a highly regarded outside evaluator. Individuals interested in more information regarding Small Steps financial results may find historic financial statements as well as a copy of our Donor Privacy Policy and Bill of Rights on the Small Steps website.



## Check Out Small Steps' New Website!

**Small Steps is pleased to announce the launch of our new website!** It's still the same address—[www.ssnc.org](http://www.ssnc.org)—but it's got a new face. We hope you enjoy keeping updated with the school through photos, special events information, and the aspect that we're most excited about: **the blog!** The blog is where we can post updates about what's going on at the school, volunteer news, and even updated needs at Small Steps. To get connected to our blog, just go to our website and look for the green button on the right side of this page. It just takes a moment to click and sign up to receive the blog via e-mail or RSS feed! It's an easy way to stay plugged into what's going on at Small Steps.



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*Small Steps Nurturing Center: Hope for Children Straight from the Heart*

*Our mission is to provide an exemplary early childhood program to instill and foster the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth of economically at-risk children and their families.*

1709 Depelchin, Houston, TX 77007 | 713.862.1020 2902 Jensen Dr., Houston, Tx 77026 | 713.236.0330 | [www.ssnc.org](http://www.ssnc.org)



Save the Date!  
2010 SSCC  
February 25, 2010

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**CLAYS CLASSIC**  
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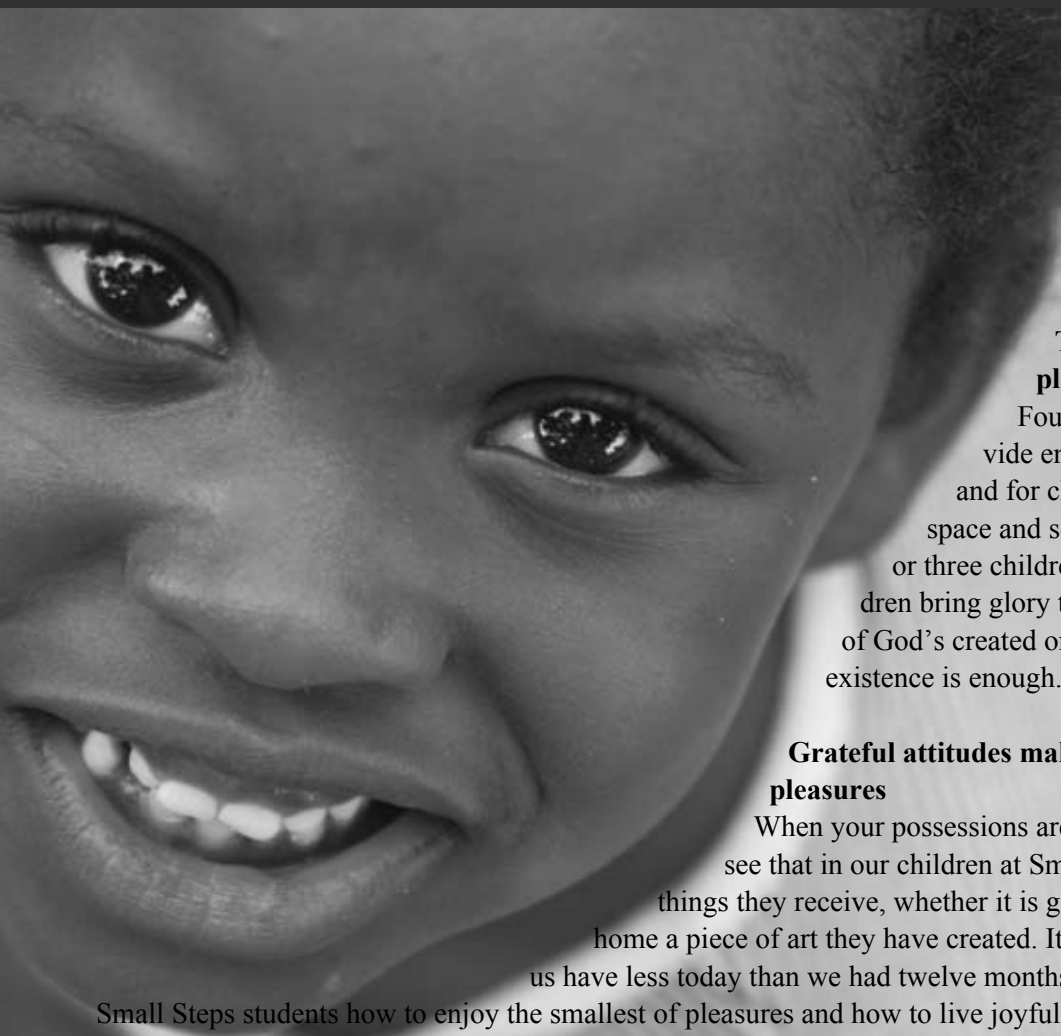
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## SPECIAL THANKS

- Optimum Shotgun Performance Shooting School,
- Gil And Vicki Ash*
- American Shooting Center,
- Jeani Harris*

# A Tale of Compassion continued from page 1



Steps' classrooms to collect pennies to support children in Afghanistan. The money raised will be sent to contribute to community-based education and literacy programs in remote mountain regions of Central Asia.

## **The joys in life can come from the simplest things**

Found items such as a stick or a rock can provide endless times of joyful play for our students and for children everywhere. A little bit of open space and some fresh air is all that is needed for two or three children to create infinite amounts of fun. Children bring glory to God by celebrating the simple beauty of God's created order and enjoying the fact that a simple existence is enough.

## **Grateful attitudes make us marvel in the smallest of pleasures**

When your possessions are few, each new thing is significant. We see that in our children at Small Steps who are thankful for all the little things they receive, whether it is gifts at Christmas or the chance to take home a piece of art they have created. It feels harder to be grateful when many of us have less today than we had twelve months ago, but we are always learning from our Small Steps students how to enjoy the smallest of pleasures and how to live joyfully.

How inspiring it is to see children who have few material possessions wanting to share with others! In times of challenge, let's thank these children for showing us how to live simple, grateful, and compassionate lives.

## **New Special Education Advocacy Ministry Launched!**

Led by St. John's Presbyterian Church members, a new ministry has been formed to serve Small Steps families who have special education needs. The special education process can be complicated and confusing. Being partnered with an advocate to assist, equip and support a family through the process can dramatically increase a

child's chances of receiving the educational services he or she needs.

"An Introduction to Special Education Advocacy" will be held on Saturday, April 25 from 10:00 am – 11:30 am at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 5020 West Bellfort, Houston (713-723-6262). A repeat of the Introduction will be held on Wednesday,

May 6 from 10:00 am- 11:30 am, also at St. John's Presbyterian. For more information about becoming a volunteer advocate or about other opportunities to help in this new ministry, contact Suzette Harrel at 713-501-4703 or [suzharrel@comcast.net](mailto:suzharrel@comcast.net).

# Parent Education: Showing Love to a Child

*Did I Tell You I Love You?*, a book about Michael Jordan as a little boy and written by his mother, was read to the Small Steps' parents. The parents were then asked to name all the ways that Michael Jordan's mother showed him that she loved him. The brainstorming began: giving a hug, preparing healthy food, smiling at him, speaking with a kind voice, playing games, cleaning his room together, sending him off to school with encouraging words. The parents were then asked to write a love note to their child.

Each month the staff at Small Steps plans an activity that gives the parents practice with nurturing their children while being nurtured themselves. "The classes are very encouraging. They reinforce our social-emotional focus with the children while building relationships with the parents," says



Bekah Williams, one of our Social-Emotional Program Coordinators.

One of the moms mentioned that it had never occurred to her to write such a note to her child. At the end of the class, she proudly came and read her love note aloud to Small Steps staff. She couldn't wait to hang it in her son's room. "I'm going to leave it somewhere that he can find it," said another mom. She smiled as she placed the items in a bag and added, "Its going to make him so happy...I know that it will!" The activity was so much fun that parents took home the remaining materials to create letters for their other children.

Parent Education classes are held on the third Thursday of each month. Refreshments and child care are provided, as well as Spanish translation.

If you are interested in helping with a Parent Education class or have ideas for future classes, please feel free to contact Terris Eddington, Project Manager for Communities in Schools at 713-236-0330, extension 233.



# A Story to Tell:

## Small Steps Adopts the Classroom Storytelling Project

*“I couldn’t sleep. The wind storm was really big. I didn’t like the hurricane. Me and my granny and my momma did not like the wind storm. My daddy was out of town. The wind storm was really big and it knocked down trees and leaves. I didn’t like the wind storm. The wind storm had a big boom thing. I didn’t like when the wind storm came.” – Small Steps Pre-K student: October 6, 2008*

Being a safe place for the children we serve is a common anthem we all march to at Small Steps. However, would one ever guess that such a safe haven and sense of confidence for the students could come through learning to read? We’re seeing that these go hand in hand, especially since Small Steps has incorporated Rice University’s Classroom Storytelling Project.

Small Steps has partnered with Rice University’s School Literacy and Culture Project with a major emphasis on the Classroom Storytelling Project. Four of our Pre-K/Kindergarten teachers, Shawna Honeycutt, Doris Maynard, Mike Thomas, and Denise Wilborn, have participated in the program through in-class mentoring, monthly seminars, and observations of model classrooms.

What does this look like translated into the classroom? Children, starting at an early age at Small Steps, dictate stories to teachers, one-on-one. When they enter the Pre-K/Kindergarten class, however, a shift occurs: their stories turn into plays, acted out by the students. As Ms. Shawna tells us, this dictation and then acting process has many purposes: “The biggest thing that the students learn is that their words have meaning. Words out of their mouth can be written down. The dramatic aspect of the project helps a student connect words they don’t know orally with what they can see acted out.” This process increases their vocabulary, shows the child how words are written down on paper, and as they get older, allows them to have sight words pointed out to them.

Ms. Denise also addresses the emotional impact these stories have: “These students feel such energy seeing their story acted out in front of peers. It’s really empowering for them. They come to know that ‘what I say is important!’” “Storytelling really fits into the SET for Life, therapeutic model that Small Steps uses,” Ms. Doris adds. “It helps the kids decompress; they can share concerns and frustrations in a safe way, with a teacher, one-on-one.”

All of the teachers added that they have seen a progression over the school year from stories based purely on reality, to stories the children have created. Our students have learned to use their imaginations and to incorporate a beginning, a middle, and an end into their tales. They are learning to change their words in order to change what is being acted out in class.

These days, most of their stories are starting out with, “Once upon a time, I was a super hero...” We can’t wait to see what comes out of the mouths of these “superheroes” next.

*A big thank you to Morgan Stanley for purchasing materials for Small Steps’ Classroom Storytelling Project.*



*Ms Irazema taking story dictation from a student*

# Multiplying Our Talents

Last October, when Ruth Weatherall accepted this challenge from her minister along with a crisp \$100 bill, she didn't know that Small Steps Nurturing Center existed. She took the money and the challenge, called a Kingdom Assignment, and began to pray and listen for God's instruction in how to use the money. In the listening, she kept getting the message, "children in my own back yard" and although Small Steps is a little further away than her back yard, she was led to our school through the suggestion of a friend. Here began a relationship based in love that has resulted in over \$2,200 in gifts from her network of friends and family and a collection of more than 80 books for the Small Steps library.

Ruth's experience shows us that as talents are multiplied, great goals are achieved. Including others in a joint mission turns a challenge into a joyful and multiplying experience. Here are some examples of ways that you could – individually or in a group – multiply your talents.



- Accreditation fees for one campus for one half of the year: Small Steps was recently reaccredited by NAEYC, confirming the high-quality care our students receive.

## *Consider these examples:*

### *A gift of \$100 will provide*

- Classroom supplies for one class for one month: We use hands-on activities such as tricycles to develop the children's fine motor skills.
- Food for one student for six weeks: We make sure that our students have full stomachs before they can fill up their brain in the classroom.
- Utilities for one class for one week: Small Steps provides a warm, nurturing environment for 117 children every single day.

### *A gift of \$500 will provide*

- Classroom supplies for one class for one half of the year: We use engaging activities such as puzzles and manipulatives to inspire our students to learn.

### *A gift of \$2,500 will provide*

- Fine Arts program for one campus for one year: Small Steps provides weekly professional instruction in dance and music for our students.

### *A gift of \$10,000 will provide*

- Educational program costs for one student for one year: Our high quality teachers provide a nurturing environment and inspire learning.
- Transportation costs for one campus for one year: Sixty percent of our children depend on Small Steps transportation to get to school.
- Food for one class of fifteen students for one year: Small Steps provides two meals every day, meeting the nutritional needs of each child.



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