

Heart & Sole

small steps nurturing center

June 2004 Volume 3 Number 1

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- Halliburton and Everlast Energy lead the way in supporting inner city children
- Innovative parent education provides job opportunities

Upcoming Events:

- June 1**
Summer schedule begins
- June 1**
Pre-K & Kindergarten field trip to Children's Museum with West Houston Church of Christ Youth
- June 15**
2's & 3's field trip to Children's Museum with West Houston Church of Christ Youth
- June 22**
Splash Day
- June 25**
Graduation Ceremony
- Sept 7**
First day of fall semester
- Oct 18**
Small Steps Energy Classic
- Nov 19**
Small Steps Thanksgiving Feast

Capital Campaign Marches Toward Completion

This summer, the dream of a second Small Steps Nurturing Center located in Houston's 5th Ward will be a giant step closer to realization, with groundbreaking scheduled to occur on the new facility soon.

Fundraising is on target, with more than \$1.2 million raised toward the overall goal of \$2.1 million. This money will cover construction, equipment and first year operating expenses for the new center.

The 5th Ward is one of Houston's poorest neighborhoods, with 62% of its residents living below the poverty line. The twin barriers of poverty and a lack of access to quality early education programs mean the community's 1,800 preschool-aged children often start elementary school lacking the pre-literacy and language development so crucial for classroom achievement.

The new facility, to be located at 2902 Jensen, is designed to prepare 5th Ward children for success in school and life by replicating the existing comprehensive

"Texas foundations and the corporate community are stepping forward to fund the Small Steps vision."

Small Steps program. Plans call for the new center to open in time to enroll area children in 2005.

Texas foundations and the corporate community have recognized the vital need for expansion of the Small Steps program and are stepping forward with dollars to fund this vision. Recent grants from the Brown Foundation and the Meadows Foundation ensure that every dollar raised through other sources

will be matched, leveraging other fundraising efforts.

Says Lesley Scruggs, Small Steps Development Director, "We were particularly thrilled to receive the recent Meadows Foundation grant, because this is a

Dallas based foundation that recognized the important work Small Steps is doing in the Houston area." She adds that the strong support from the Meadows Foundation is due to the proven success of the Small Steps approach. Small Steps is confident that Houston's generous corporate and philanthropic communities will meet the challenge of the Meadows

Foundation grant and fully fund the organization's replication project.

To date, grant monies and commitments have been received from the following foundations, corporations, churches, and individuals: **Administaff, The Ruth and Ted Bauer Foundation, The Brown Foundation, CFP Foundation, Halliburton, The Hildebrand Foundation, The Hogleund Foundation, The Houston Endowment, The Lowe Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, The Rockwell Fund, St. Luke's United Methodist Church and The Small Steps Nurturing Center Board of Directors.** In addition, proceeds from the Small Steps Clays Classic have been dedicated to the capital campaign.

For more information on the capital campaign or giving opportunities, please contact Lesley Scruggs, Development Director, at 713-862-1020.



Hope for children straight from the heart

Two's a Charm: Second Clays Classic Is Doubly Successful

With great support from an impressive list of sponsors, the 2004 Small Steps Clays Classic exceeded our expectations for fun and fundraising. Under the leadership of event chair John Gibson, President and CEO of Halliburton's Energy Services Group, the Clays Classic netted \$232,000 for Small Steps Nurturing Center.

"The proceeds from the 2nd Annual Clays Classic were almost double what the event made last year," says Lesley Scruggs, Development Director. "It's also doubly exciting because all the proceeds go toward the capital campaign for the replication

project. In fact, the donations from the 2004 Clays Classic amount to more than 10% of the capital we need for the new center!"

Platinum Sponsors for the Clays Classic, held in February, were **Halliburton and Everlast Energy**. The Gold Sponsors were

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AROC, Inc., The Cockrell Family Fund, Energen, Fulbright & Jaworski, Mach Industries, Plains Exploration & Production and River Oaks Imaging.

"We also had amazing Silver Sponsors, individual donors and in-kind donors who helped make this a very successful fundraiser for Small Steps," Lesley adds.

Small Steps' Menagerie

The pets are multiplying at Small Steps. For Christmas, volunteers donated three baby guinea pigs for the children to enjoy in their classroom. The students took a vote and named them Noel, Tommy, and BBQ. In the lobby, Small Steps school of fish is proud to announce the arrival of sextuplets! This spring we discovered six new baby fish in the aquarium. The students have been engrossed with their development. Each day when they arrive, the children observe how much

the fish have grown and admire their courage as they venture out farther from the safety of their rock. *Finding Nemo* has new meaning for the children at Small Steps!!



Butterflies

Do you know the difference between a chrysalis and a cocoon? If not, just ask one of the kindergartners at Small Steps! To supplement the unit on butterflies in March, the kindergarten class raised a flock of butterflies in their room. They ordered caterpillars from the internet and fed them leaves and orange peels until they formed a chrysalis. The class had a wonderful time watching the metamorphosis as the caterpillars became butterflies. Once they matured, the class took them to the playground and set them free. By the way... a chrysalis is formed when a butterfly *caterpillar* sheds its final skin; however, a moth caterpillar spins a *cocoon* of silk.

Small Steps Announces Board Changes

Small Steps Nurturing Center welcomed new board members and officers in January 2004.

New board members include Thurmon Andress, Managing Director of Breitburn Energy; Michael Rhyne, Comptroller of King Ranch; GERALYN SMITHERMAN, community volunteer; and Deiedre Wright, Owner of The Wright Real Estate Co.

Executive officers of the board of directors elected for the coming year are President John Rathmell, President of Lockton Marine & Energy; Vice President Todd Litton, Director of Preschool for ALL; and Secretary Gayle Pratt, Proprietor of Pratt's Books. Richard Lucas, President of Fair Oaks Production Company, continues as board treasurer.

"With the intensive capital campaign underway, this is a significant year for Small Steps and the board," says outgoing board president Doug Foshee, CEO of El Paso Corporation. "It's great to have a board with this much depth and officers who are so capable and respected in the community to lead Small Steps this year."



Sole

purpose

By Kathie Hartzog, Program Director

It began with the question, “What should parent education include?” The answer came in an unexpected way, with another question. “What if there was a parent education event that not only taught the parents about the best practices in early childhood education, but also equipped them with a marketable skill?”

This question gave birth to a new program, *Small Steps to Becoming a Substitute Teacher*. This five-week/10-hour training program is designed to equip parents to be substitute teachers in early childhood programs. Each participant would:

- Receive instruction in: developmental stages of children two – six years

old, classroom set-up, SET (Social/Emotional Tools) for Life, nutrition, literacy and health/safety.

- Complete five assignments designed to reinforce teaching/learning experiences using the instruction materials at home.
- Tour the children’s section of a public library and register for a library card.
- Assemble a file to document qualifications for teaching.

The expectation was set that if one parent attended, it would be considered a success. What a surprise when nine parents showed up! And, what a celebration when nine parents received a certificate of completion!! One of the participants was

even asked by her husband to teach him the material she learned each week.

The *Sole purpose* at Small Steps is for the children and their families to become more of who they were created to be. As a result of *Small Steps to Becoming a Substitute Teacher*, nine parents have been exposed to best practices in early childhood education, two women are enrolled in GED classes and seven women are now on the substitute teacher list for Small Steps. Additionally, a day care in 5th Ward has asked for their teachers to receive the training and there is already a waiting list for a fall substitute teacher training program.

Small Steps to Becoming a Substitute Teacher

VOLUNTEER View

By Kathy Hock

In November of 2003, the staff at Small Steps offered me the privilege of volunteering at their school. I was eager to give the children and the staff the gift of my time. What I did not know is that I would be the recipient of the most amazing gift from each of them.

Small Steps is a truly special school. I did not really understand how special it is until I began my volunteer experience as a “Small Steps Buddy.” After I spent some time at the Center, I began to see clearly that this is an incredible program doing awesome things for wonderful children.

Each day the children take “small steps” in the learning process. Small Steps is not just about ABC’s and 123’s. The children learn manners, hygiene, and healthy lifestyle skills. If extra food, clothing or rest is needed, the school provides it.

The staff at Small Steps makes all of this possible. I stand in awe watching a dedicated staff do what they do best. Every day

they serve huge helpings of hope to these children. They are a true team willing to do whatever is needed even if it is outside their responsibility. Their job is very stressful at times, yet they never display their fatigue to the children.

I learned from the staff to look at the children through the eyes of my heart. Each week I spend time with three special two-year-olds. The moment we first see

“Everyday they serve huge helpings of hope to these children.”

each other lights up my day. That is when I see the possibility of a brighter future for them. Inside each of them lies a tremendous capacity to love, learn and have fun. Their worth as human beings is evident with every smile, belly laugh and hug.

Over the last six months, I have learned a lot through my volunteer work. I know

now that the issues that used to occupy my thoughts are not really problems at all. I also realize how blessed I am to be able to spend a lot of time with my own children. Lastly, miracles can occur when people give love, hope and prayers.

To the staff at Small Steps, thank you for making the choice to help these children have a chance for a better future. You are true heroes in the world of early childhood education.

If there are any future volunteers out there, come be a part of this truly special school. You will not regret it!

Finally, thank you to the two-year-olds I volunteer with for being my special buddies. My life is infinitely better because of knowing you.

If you would like to learn more about Small Steps’ volunteer opportunities, call Retta Bravo, Volunteer Manager, at 713-862-1020.

2004 Board of Directors:

Executive Officers

Marianna Rasco, PhD

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Todd Litton

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Louie Welch

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The Wright Real Estate Co.

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Jackson

Memorial Donations Honor Special Lives

A memorial donation to Small Steps Nurturing Center is a wonderful way to honor someone special. Leslye Weaver shared her thoughts about her donation in memory of Eloise "Todo" Crawford, her sister-in-law's grandmother.



Small Steps hosted our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 4. This event is an opportunity for the students and their families to enjoy the holiday in a safe, loving environment. The weather was beautiful and all who attended had fun! Thanks to the help of many volunteers, all of the children received handmade goodie bags filled with Easter treats. The children played games, hunted for Easter eggs on the playground, and enjoyed cake and punch. The parents enjoyed watching the excitement in their children's eyes and visiting with other Small Steps' parents.

Did you know?

The average child growing up in a middle class family has been exposed to 1,000 to 1,700 hours of picture book reading before entering school. However, the average child growing up in a low-income family has been exposed to only 25 hours of one-on-one reading during the same period.

It is estimated that 42% or almost 25,000 preschool-aged children in Houston are economically disadvantaged.



"My brother, Richard Lucas, is a long-time member of the Small Steps board. His wife, Kim, was raised by her grandmother, who died recently. I wanted to do something that was meaningful to Kim and Richard and I immediately thought of Small Steps. We also suggested Small Steps for memorial donations when our mother died a few years ago."

Small Steps recognizes memorial donations in the Heart and Sole newsletter, the annual report and on our Web site.

If you would like to commemorate the life of a loved one through Small Steps, call Lesley Scruggs at 713-862-1020.



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