

# Heart and Sole

A Newsletter from Small Steps Nurturing Center

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• From Our Heart to Yours

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## *Small Steps Takes a Big Step...*

First, I want to introduce myself. My name is Jessica Brazelton, and as the new Executive Director of Small Steps, I am absolutely thrilled to be a part of the Small Steps team.

As I reflect on my first months with Small Steps, the word that comes to mind is amazement! On a daily basis, I am amazed by the love and joy that radiates from the children's faces. And just a moment later, I am amazed by the challenges that these impoverished children and their families face. I have watched in awe as the Small Steps team equips the children and their parents to overcome their obstacles. Small Steps is truly fulfilling its mission by providing a pre-school where *Houston's at-risk children and their parents have the opportunity to grow socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually.*

The success Small Steps has experienced begs the question – "What next?" Seven years ago a small

group of Houstonians recognized a need for early intervention in the lives of Houston's inner-city community. Driven by the above mission statement, they set an ambitious goal – to build a top-quality pre-school program in Houston's First Ward.

With the support of the Houston community, the goal has been reached – the vision realized. So, what next?

With our existing facility at full capacity and a large waitlist, the answer to this question is growth (see *The Sole Purpose* on page 2).

The Small Steps board, staff, and faculty are excited to announce a plan to replicate the Small Steps program in Houston's Fifth Ward, with the goal of opening in the Fall of 2003. Potential sites for a new school have been targeted, with the capital campaign kicking off as well! We look

forward to sharing in the next issue more details of the replication project, and we hope you will support us as *Small Steps takes a Big Step...*



### *Just The Facts*

- ◆ In the last two years the waiting list at Small Steps has more than tripled to nearly 100 names.
- ◆ On average a child will remain on the waiting list for 18 months before a space is available.
- ◆ Nearly 50% of the children enrolled on the waitlist live in Houston's Fifth Ward.
- ◆ The majority of Fifth Ward residents have annual household incomes less than \$15,000.
- ◆ There are 1,590 children under the age of five and only 14 licensed childcare facilities in this area.

## The Sole Purpose

On any typical day, a parent and child will stop by to inquire about the program at Small Steps Nurturing Center. What better way to learn what Small Steps is about than to see the program in action? So, they are invited to take a tour of the building.

It is difficult to make it past the first stop, the library/computer lab, where the Pre-K students are engaged using some appealing software. But we have just begun and there is more to see. The next stop is in the classrooms. Students are busy exploring center activities or listening to a book being read. By now the visiting child is beginning to think that this school might be a fun place to spend the day. Mom is working up the nerve to ask, "How much does Small Steps cost?" Upon hearing that the families' commitment is fulfilled in volunteer hours, mom's expression changes from one of apprehension to delight.

The next to last stop is the playground. Some Small Steps children are riding tricycles; others

are holding six-week old bunnies. At this decisive moment, the child is sure that this is the school for her, and she is hoping that she can stay today.

The last stop is in the multipurpose room. Mom hears that two nutritious meals and a snack are served every day. Mom has just two questions, "May I have an application?" and "When can my child start?"

It is at that inevitable moment that my heart drops, and I experience one of the most difficult parts of my job. I must deliver the news that there are nearly 100 names on our waiting list, which grows almost daily. The truth is that it could be two years before we have an opening for her child. The replication of Small Steps in the Fifth Ward will change this situation. I am thrilled that in this coming year my response to the inevitable question, "When can my child start?" will be Fall 2003!

Kathie Hartzog  
Program Director

## Tidbits

### Harvard Bound

Small Steps is proud to report that fourteen of the 2002 graduates and two former graduates have been invited to attend Harvard Elementary this Fall. Harvard Elementary is an excellent science, math and technology magnet program located in the Heights.

### Say Ahhh...

In July, the SuperKids Mobil Pediatric Clinic from Texas Children's Hospital spent a week parked in front of Small Steps performing physicals, administering immunizations and dispensing medications to the students and their siblings. The doctors and nurses had a busy week and treated a total of 44 children. In addition, this super team helped many of the families apply for Medicaid or CHIP.

### Sugar, Spice and Everything Nicel

Ms. Heidi and Mr. Brandon became proud parents to a beautiful baby girl on July 15, 2002, when baby Emma came into the world. Emma weighed 6 pounds 11 ounces, was 20 1/2 inches long, and has a head full of dark hair. Congratulations to Heidi and Brandon. We will all miss Heidi, but appreciate that her "new job" as a mother is extremely important.

### New Addition

Small Steps is thrilled about the most recent addition to our team. Mary Anne Cessnau will join us this Fall as the new two-year old teacher. Her energy and experience will greatly enrich the Small Steps program.

### Free to a Good Home

One of the Small Steps pets, Patches the Bunny, had six babies on Memorial Day. These little bunnies provided an excellent lesson in life science to all of the children. Did you know that baby bunnies grow fur when they are four days old? The children were able to hold them and track their growth all summer. It is still undetermined who had more fun watching them develop, the students or the teachers. There is still one baby bunny available for adoption! Call Retta if you are interested.



## Volunteer View

### Summer + Volunteers = Excitement

Summer volunteers at Small Steps brought excitement and fun-filled days for our children. This year Small "Steppers" and their volunteer "Buddies" went to The Children's Museum; enjoyed a Play Day and Picnic at the park; made visors and decorated cookies on Arts & Crafts Day; decorated tricycles, cars, wagons and themselves for our Annual 4th of July Parade; and everyone's favorite get wet activity, Splash Day!

Not only did volunteers participate in the children's activities, they also worked hard around our building. Groups of volunteers washed vans, planted flowerbeds, repaired lighting, washed classroom toys and shelved library books. Each of these special events and workdays were made possible by terrific volunteer groups from...

Bering Drive Church of Christ Youth  
Highland Church of Christ Youth- Abilene, Texas

St. Luke's United Methodist Church- 5th grade VBS  
SHINE Campers- from Wisconsin, Louisiana & Texas  
West Houston Church of Christ Youth

Summer would not have been complete without high school volunteers Megan DeLozier & Sabrina Jiwani who assisted in the classrooms with computer time and one-on-one play.

Special thanks to Erika Robbins for organizing all the paperwork needed for fall enrollment!  
Thank you all!

*If your summer was not this exciting and fulfilling consider joining our enthusiastic volunteer team at Small Steps! Take the "Big Step" with us as we strive to meet the needs of even more deserving inner-city children.*

Retta Bravo  
Volunteer and Special Projects Coordinator



### *Just Add Love...*

A recipe from the Kitchen at Small Steps

#### English Muffin Pizzas

1 pound lean ground beef  
1/3 cup water  
6 oz tomato paste  
½ tsp. dried oregano  
¼ tsp. garlic powder  
¼ tsp. salt  
1 tsp. sugar  
2 cups mozzarella  
12 English muffins

**Brown** meat in a pan over medium heat until no signs of pink remain. Drain and discard excess grease.

Add water, tomato paste, oregano, garlic, salt, and sugar to the cooked ground beef. Mix well and simmer for 5 minutes.

**Split** English muffins in half; place halves crust side down on cookie sheet. Spread beef mixture on the English muffins; top with cheese.

**Bake** at 350° F for 10 minutes or until the cheese is melted.



## Classroom Spotlight...

### *Ms. Jenny & Ms. Nancy's Class*

The "blue room," our oldest Pre-K class, has been an exciting place to be this summer! The students played an active role in selecting which units they studied.

They brainstormed on subjects they would like to learn about, and after much discussion, they voted to explore forms of transportation.

The students learned about the different forms of land transportation such as cars, trucks, buses, trains and bicycles. For children who have only ridden in the back of buses and vans, this was a great opportunity to broaden their frame of reference and challenge them to think about questions such as: "What makes a car go?" The class investigated the different parts of the Small Steps' vans to discover the answers to their questions. They constructed a train with boxes and took imaginary trips to a variety of exciting destinations.

This inquisitive group decided they would like to turn their train into a boat and learn more about aquatic transportation. Questions were asked and explored... "How is a boat different from a train?" "How is it the same?" A few imaginary boat trips led to the next unit about the ocean and islands. Over the weekend, Ms. Jenny and Ms. Nancy transformed the classroom into an ocean and island paradise. Blue fabric was hung from the ceiling, to give the sensation of being under water. Three-dimensional sea creatures were suspended in the "water". The classroom kitchen area was converted into a tropical beach complete with a palm tree. The children investigated the plants, animals and foods that are indigenous to the ocean and islands.



After all of their travels, this ambitious group decided it wanted to learn to jump rope; however, a problem arose because, Small Steps did not have any jump ropes. The question of how to raise money to buy jump ropes became the next issue on the minds of these young entrepreneurs. Ms. Jenny and Ms. Nancy, worked with the class to create a plan to earn \$10.00 for a class set of jump ropes.

After much discussion, the class decided to start a juice business called The Juice Box to raise the funds needed for its goal. The class formed focus groups to determine which juices it would make and sell. A decision was made to offer freshly squeezed lemonade, grapefruit and pineapple juice. A marketing plan was created to publicize the grand opening. Students diligently painted signs and posters, which they hung around the school; flyers were made and handed out to staff. The entire school was abuzz with anticipation of The Juice Box.

When the day finally arrived, students and teachers lined up to sample the delicious juices made by Ms. Jenny and Ms. Nancy's class. It is a pleasure to report that The Juice Box was such a hit that the class exceeded their goal by raising \$13.25! The class used the surplus to purchase a set of higher quality jump ropes.



## *Out of the Mouths of Babes...*

"I wish we could build a Small Steps next to my new school, so I wouldn't have to change schools."

*Hazel, age 5*

"I wish I could take all the teachers from Small Steps to my new school."

*Sonovia, age 5*

"Ms. Jenny, can I take the playground to my new school?"

*Anthony, age 5*



*It's that time of year again!!  
The Small Steps Energy Classic  
will be held on November 4, 2002.*

*For more information on  
playing or participating as a volunteer,  
please call Lesley Scruggs at (713) 862-1020.*

### *Did you know?*

Since the first tournament in 1996,  
the Small Steps Energy Classic has  
raised over 2 million dollars for  
Small Steps!

## *Wish List*

- Children's Preschool Books  
in Spanish
- Auto-focus 35mm Camera w/flash  
35mm film (400 speed)
- Cello sponges
- Toothpicks
- Fiskar scissors for children
- Cotton art smocks for children
- Paper bags – lunch size & larger
- Play dough
- Water color paper - 18" x 24"
- Drawing paper – 18" x 24"
- Tissue paper – asst. colors
- 9" x 13" jelly roll pans
- Glue sticks
- Shoe boxes
- Clear Contact Paper
- Boys & girls new or gently  
used clothing 3t – 7
- Latex gloves-size small & medium
- Rid lice shampoo
- Rid lice spray
- Band-Aids

