

Heart & Sole

A SMALL STEPS NURTURING CENTER NEWSLETTER

♥ Hope for Children Straight from the Heart



Learning through cooking: Ms. Abigail and Ms. Teresa's Pre-K and Kindergarten students cook every Friday, this time learning to make banana popsicles. Cooking activities help our students learn how to follow multi-step instructions and learn math and science concepts.



Samuel admires his work! One activity that we incorporate into our literacy program is writing in shaving cream—it heightens the sense and makes letter formation fun! This activity gives the arm muscles the experience of forming the letters while imprinting the writing process in the child's mind.

Merry Christmas from Small Steps! Continuing to Provide Hope

This fall, we at Small Steps have been blessed with the opportunity to not only provide a high-quality early childhood program to our students once again, but to further expand our services to them. The most-needed expansion to our program has been the addition of a Speech Pathologist to our staff, greatly increasing the number of children seen in speech therapy. Many of our students come to Small Steps with significant language delays and are in need of speech services, which we are now able to consistently provide to each child. This addition enhances the program we already provide: a high-quality education, a nurturing Christian environment, transportation, nutritional meals, and social and emotional therapy to 118 economically at-risk children, ages two through six.

Another great part of the Small Steps program is the community of supporters we have. New and returning "Buddy" volunteers, who come to play with students on a weekly basis, bring in a positive sense of self for the children. Our volunteer groups and community supporters, featured on page four, allow us to provide our students with an environment full of security and hope.

We are in a position to serve our students better than ever and see the fruit of the program in the lives of our students and families. Thank you for your continued support of Small Steps and your investment in our program.

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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.

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www.ssnc.org

{news bytes}

Register Today!

9th Annual Small Steps Clays Classic • Thursday, February 24, 2011

Sign up your team today to participate in the 2011 SSCC at the American Shooting Center—a fun day of clays shooting, delicious food, plenty of great prizes, and a prime environment for networking opportunities. Last year, over 65 corporations, foundations, and individuals came together to sponsor the Clays Classic in support of Houston's economically at-risk inner city children. Don't miss out on this great event! Sign up online: www.ssn.org/donate



Save the Date!

2nd Annual Small Steps Ultimate Wine Classic • Thursday, April 14, 2011

Event chairs John and Julie Howie and Jeffrey and Theresa Eaton invite you to join them for the 2nd Annual Small Steps Ultimate Wine Classic: A Toast to Small Steps. Save the date for **Thursday, April 14, 2011 at River Oaks Country Club** for an evening with friends and

exceptional exposure to the world of wine. **Paul Roberts, Master Sommelier and Director at BOND Estates and formerly of Café Annie and The French Laundry**, will lead us in an evening featuring distinctive wines expertly paired with delicious foods. We will be honoring **Charlie Middlebrook, Impact Church of Christ Minister**, for his incredible work at Small Steps and his commitment to helping hungry, homeless, and hurting people in the inner city of Houston. Please save the date for a wonderful, fun evening! Details available online at www.ssn.org/wine-classic.



{ MARK YOUR CALENDARS for 2011! }

January 4th Small Steps Students return from Christmas Break

January 6th Come Tour Small Steps! 1:00 - 2:00 pm at Jensen campus: Come learn more about Small Steps, take a tour of our campus, and learn more ways to get involved! Please RSVP to Verna at vnoack@ssnc.org.

January 10 Buddies Resume: *Your student can't wait to see you again!*

February 1st Come Tour Small Steps! 9:30 -10:30 am at Jensen campus

February 24th 9th Annual Small Steps Clays Classic at American Shooting Center - Register your foursome online! ssnc.org/donate

March 4th Come Tour Small Steps! 10:30 -11:30 am at Jensen campus

April 5th Come Tour Small Steps! 1:00 - 2:00 pm at Jensen campus

April 14th Small Steps Ultimate Wine Classic at River Oaks Country Club



{2010 snapshots}



Congratulations to our young artists! The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, hosted an opening celebration on October 10 in honor of the 29 works of art Small Steps students created and are on display, in addition to works of art that 2nd grade students from Presbyterian School created. Pictured here are, l-r: Justin, Angel, and Lasle, with Volunteer Art Specialist Kaeli Holland.



Our Parent Education program got off to a great start in 2010 with a fun event series entitled “The Junk Drawer.” Parents learn fun and inexpensive ways to create activities for their children with supplies right out of their junk drawer. We value opportunities to engage and partner with our parents, as they are their children’s primary teacher! Thank you to volunteers Heather Baird and Jennifer Randall.



Thanks to a grant from Spindletop Charities, we have been able to update our original First Ward campus’ playground! Many of our students now call the playground “the park,” and one of their favorite activities is rolling down the miniature “hill.” We are so glad to be able to provide for our students’ physical needs, giving them a safe place to play.



Meal time! We provide over 36,000 meals and 15,000 snacks to our students each year. Small Steps is a Houston Food Bank agency, which means we are able to provide meals cooked in-house at a greatly reduced cost to our donors.

Welcome New Small Steps Staff!

We are privileged to welcome four new staff members to Small Steps this year.



Abigail Leyh, Pre-K / K, Teacher: Abigail comes to Small Steps with a degree in Bilingual Education from Boston University, experience as a bilingual teacher with Teach for America, and as a founding staff member for a KIPP School. Abigail tells us, “I was drawn to Small Steps from a desire to work in an environment that values young children and desires them to grow up understanding God’s love. I want every child in my class to grow socially, emotionally and academically; I want to give them the foundation to succeed in the future.”



Candice Tillman, M.S., LPC-I, Social and Emotional Program Specialist: Candice works with children in the classroom using SET for Life© tools through facilitative play, while also seeing children in individual play therapy and play group therapy. Candice comes to Small Steps with degrees from HBU and SMU and experience in outreach and missions. “One of the most valuable parts of working at Small Steps is seeing the children have so many positive experiences and having the privilege to see the children develop emotionally, socially, and academically.”



Eulalia Gray, M.A., CCC-SLP, Speech Pathologist: Lali is Small Steps’ first staff speech pathologist, whom we first met as an adjunct clinical supervisor of graduate level speech pathology clinicians in UH’s Outreach Program. Lali tells us, “The amount of attention given to each child is remarkable. My childhood home and church were in the DePelchin neighborhood, so when the opportunity first arose to work at Small Steps it was a unique opportunity to give back to the community. I see a little bit of myself in the students.”



Lindsey Fondren, Development Officer: Lindsey joined Development staff this summer as a TCU graduate with a BBA in Finance and with non-profit fundraising experience at Dini Partners and the CCA. Lindsey shares, “It only took me five minutes of walking through the doors to realize that this is a special place. Everyone at Small Steps has such big hearts and is really there for the kids and their families. I’m lucky because not only do I get to help raise funds for this amazing organization, but I also get to see the benefits of it every day through the children.”

Supporter Spotlight

Small Steps relies on the support of individuals, community groups, corporations, churches, and foundations to continue to operate its program. We are so thankful for the generosity of our supporters who faithfully make our program possible!



Triad Resources

Triad Resources hosted their 5th Annual Fall Festival on October 23 for Small Steps students and families—and what a success it was! It included all of the trimmings: face painting, games, prizes, a moonwalk, and lunch donated by Chic-fil-A. Thank you to Triad Resources employees for putting on such a special event!

Grace Presbyterian Church

We are thankful to the entire congregation of Grace Presbyterian, Krista Scranton, Missions Coordinator, and to Grace's hard working Sew Blessed sewing group for its generous donation of nap blankets for each of our students.

St. John's School

St. John's School 8th grade students participated in a day of giving as zoo field trip buddies for Jensen campus Pre-K students on October 28. Thank you for serving!

Linn Energy

Linn employees pitched in and collected Back to School "Wish List" items for Small Steps over the month of August. In addition to everything that Linn employees purchased and donated, Linn Energy purchased a large order of office supplies to stock up Small Steps for the year. We are so thankful to Kristin Crum, Paula Beasley, and everyone at Linn Energy.



The Kinkaid School

The Kinkaid School Service Learning Club, KOCI Kids, has adopted Small Steps' classrooms and will make name books for our students. Kinkaid Middle School students participated in a day of service on October 22 as zoo field trip buddies for DePelchin campus students. Thank you to the Kinkaid School for the many ways its students serve Small Steps!

Project Linus

Thank you to Project Linus for committing to provide Christmas blankets for each Small Steps student! Project Linus provides love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children through gifts of homemade blankets.

Rice University O-Week

Thank you to Rice University's incoming freshmen students who painted our gazebo on the playground at DePelchin this summer! What a great update our gazebo received to go along with the newly renovated playground.

Invesco

Invesco is bringing Christmas to Small Steps students! They have generously adopted all 118 Small Steps students for Christmas, providing the toys our students wished for. Thank you for making their wishes come true!



Grace Bible Church Shoe Drive

Thank you to Grace Bible Church for hosting the Third Annual Shoe Drive for Small Steps students! We are so thankful to the 100+ individuals from GBC who purchased a new pair of athletic shoes for each of our students.

Interested in how you can support Small Steps? We are always in need of financial donations, donations from our wish list, and during the Christmas season, sponsors for families. Please contact Verna Noack at vnoack@ssnc.org for more information.

Classroom Spotlight: Blue Room! Jensen Campus

Ms. Evania & Ms. Priscilla • 2- and 3-Year Olds



What is your class studying right now and how are they learning about that topic?

Our students are learning about the parts of the body and articles of clothing in this unit. We place Mr. Potato Head parts in rice in the sensory table as a fun learning activity. Sensory tables are really important as they help children use information received through the senses to function smoothly in daily life. We also have done ear “prints” so each child can see the shapes of their ears and

our students made arms with noodle art. “Head, shoulders, knees and toes” is a great way for the children to learn the body parts through song, as is “The Hokey Pokey.” *The Eye Book*, among other books, connects what they are learning about with literacy.

What are your students’ favorite activities? Favorite Books?

Our students really love puzzles, Play-Doh, the sensory table, the kitchen play set, and of course, the playground! Their favorite books are *Llama Llama Mad at Mama* and *Owl Babies*, especially when we act out the story with owl puppets.

Tell me about your experience with Rice University’s Classroom Storytelling Project.

I (Evania) just started training through Rice and I am already learning so much! I watched Priscilla incorporate classroom elements when she went through the program last year, but learning it for myself is so helpful. Right now we are



taking the students’ “Weekly News,” they’re participating in group dramas, and they just started acting out adult-authored books such as *Owl Babies* and *The Carrot Seed*. Soon we will begin to take stories from the children. I love learning how to make a story more than a story for my students. They really get excited about books and reading.

Any favorite stories from the semester so far?

One of our two-year-old students, Landon, volunteered today to play the part of the boy in *The Carrot Seed*. He is one of our youngest students and coming to school was a big transition for him. He took a big risk and did really well! I’m so proud of him.

Did You Know...

...there is an 8 million word per year deficit of words heard for children from families living on welfare support compared to their peers in professional families? The children in families on welfare support would require 41 hours per week of out-of-home enrichment to make up for this language deficit. Small Steps’ program provides an enriching curriculum and environment, along with speech therapy services for those students in need of additional language support.

(Source: Hart, Betty & Todd Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*. (Baltimore: Brookes Publishing, 1995))

mailing list:

Please inform us if you’ve moved, would like to receive the newsletter at a different address, or would like to unsubscribe from the Small Steps newsletter mailing list. Please contact Lindsey at lfondren@ssnc.org



Billy Ray Brown, former PGA tour pro and current Golf Channel commentator, joins Marty Phillips, Steve Fitzgerald, William Burkett, George Solich and Small Steps' Executive Director, Evan Harrel, on the Cypress Creek course at Champions Golf Club.

THANK YOU TO OUR 15TH ANNUAL SMALL STEPS ENERGY CLASSIC SPONSORS!

Thanks to your support, the 15th Annual SSEC raised over \$750,000 for Small Steps Nurturing Center.

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Board Focus

Thank You to John Rathmell, Jr.



Thanks to John Rathmell, Jr., for his loving service to Small Steps Nurturing Center. John is retiring from his role as Board Chair and President, after 10 years on the Small Steps Board of Directors, including seven years as Board President. John joined the Small Steps Board of Directors in March 2001. Under John's leadership, Small Steps added a second campus in Houston's Fifth Ward, where further expansion is planned for the immediate future. At the same time, the program has also strengthened significantly in terms of program quality and is now an accredited, high-quality program with social-emotional support. This period has also seen the achievement of the aggressive academic goals set by the Small Steps Board.

John has brought in many friends and colleagues to learn about Small Steps, whether through supporting the Small Steps Energy Classic and encouraging others to do so or extending invitations to tour one of our campuses. We are grateful to John for his service for many years as Board President, and most recently, that of Board Chair as well. On behalf of the children, families, staff, and Board of Directors, we thank you, John.



We Need Your Help

As we enter the Christmas season, please consider investing in the lives of our Small Steps students. Help provide an economically at-risk student with an exemplary early education and nurturing environment.

A Donation of:

\$10,000 can pay for:

- Educational program costs for one student for one year, or
- Transportation costs for one campus for one year, or
- Food for one class of fifteen students for one year

\$5,000 can pay for:

- Transportation costs for one van for one year, or
- Food for one campus for more than one month, or
- Classroom supplies for one campus for one year

\$2,500 can pay for:

- Fine Arts program for one campus for one year, or
- Accredited high-quality education vs. day care for one student for one year

\$1,000 can pay for:

- Field trips for both campuses for one year, or
- Food for one campus for one week, or
- Transportation for one campus for one month

\$500 can pay for:

- Classroom supplies for one class for one half of the year, or
- Licensing Fees for one campus for one year

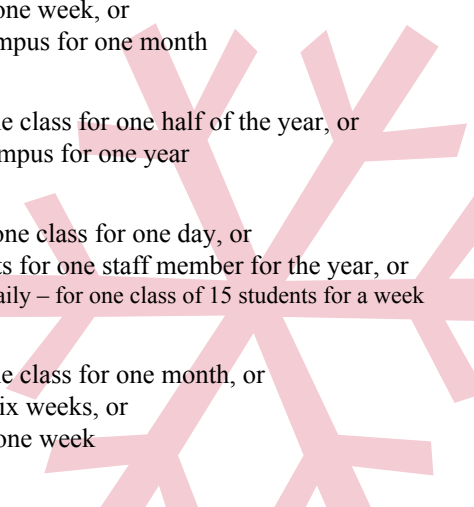
\$250 can pay for:

- Classroom personnel for one class for one day, or
- Continuing education costs for one staff member for the year, or
- Food – 2 meals plus snack daily – for one class of 15 students for a week

\$100 can pay for:

- Classroom supplies for one class for one month, or
- Food for one student for six weeks, or
- Utilities for one class for one week

Small Steps relies on the generosity of its supporters, receiving no funding from the government. Please partner with us as we invest in stopping the cycle of poverty in Houston. Make an impact today with your financial support!





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Merry Christmas from
 Small Steps
 Hope for Children Straight from the Heart