



CRYSTAL STAIRS

2009 ANNUAL REPORT



MOTHER TO SON

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you,
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor,
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on
And reachin' landin's
And turnin' corners
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now
For I'se still goin', honey
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

From "The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes" by Langston Hughes.
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CEO'S MESSAGE

As we approach our 30th anniversary in 2010, I'm reminded of that old saying, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." Our mission, core values and beliefs about how high-quality child care and development services benefit children, families and communities have remained steadfast. This has helped us weather and respond to significant changes in the child care landscape that have occurred during the past 30 years. For me, some of the more significant changes have been:

■ In 1980, most families' use of child care was viewed as a private choice with only a limited public interest in providing child care as a support to low-income families and children at risk of abuse or neglect. Today, funding, support and the life-long benefits of child care and development services are part of our national dialogue, and not just for the neediest families.

■ Child care has grown and become an "industry." In many communities, it is a major economic contributor, providing employment and payrolls that are greater than those of more traditional industries and businesses. It is also seen as part of our nation's human resource system—helping families to work and preparing children for education and their future.

■ Since 1980, the communities we serve have changed. The population is now about equally divided into African American and Latino households. Greater numbers of families are living at or below the poverty level, many of them working full-time. And, just when our families are most vulnerable, the safety net of vital services, including affordable health care for children, is being dismantled. The recent economic downturn has been especially hard, wiping out many of the gains our families have worked so hard to achieve. Child care providers are losing their income when parents become unemployed. There is a growing need for more child funding to help all families, but no expansion of public funding to meet this need. Foundations, corporations, and other private sector funding sources have also been negatively affected by the economic situation. As a result, Crystal Stairs is finding it challenging and more competitive to secure funding from these sources that could help us address the diverse and growing needs of the children, families, child care providers and communities we serve.

And yet, in the midst of these challenges, we have responded by tightening our fiscal belt, advancing our investment in strategically appropriate technologies, improving our client services and advocacy work, and offering more access to resources needed by our parents and child care providers. These responses have not always been easy, but they have been necessary.

Where do we go from here? Guided by a new three-year Strategic Plan, our efforts will focus on:

- assisting families to access child care and other vital services they need to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency
- revitalizing our research role to promote effective family services, high-quality early care and education, and agency capacity-building
- expanding and diversifying our advocacy efforts to keep local, state and national spotlights on early care and education
- financial continuity and security
- organizational flexibility in response to internal and external changes

We've been here for almost 30 years and we're here to stay. We look to a future in which Crystal Stairs is positioned to turn challenges into opportunities. In the words of our namesake poem by Langston Hughes, we don't intend to sit "down on the steps." There are still too many places with "tacks...and splinters, and boards torn up...and no carpet on the floor." We need your support now more than ever. Come and climb the stairs with us.



Holly J. Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer



THE WISDOM IN SAGE

HOW THE NEED OF A COMMUNITY PROMPTED THE BIRTH OF SAGE

HISTORY

The SAGE Center is a pre-kindergarten and before-and-after school child care center started by Crystal Stairs to provide low-income families with a safe and stimulating environment for their children while they

work, seek job training, or both. SAGE (an acronym for School Age) is located in Nickerson Gardens, a housing project built in 1955 as temporary housing for military personnel. Like many such projects, has become a permanent home for generations of low-income African American and Latino families. With roughly 5000 residents, Nickerson—located in the Watts community of Los Angeles—is the largest public housing project west of the Mississippi.

Watts has become synonymous with images of social unrest, urban blight, and unrelenting poverty. Historically, the outlook

for most of its residents has, in fact, been bleak. In the 2000 census, nearly half of Watts' residents were reported to be living below the federal poverty level, and over 60 percent of children under the age of five in Watts were living in families reporting annual income of less than \$17,050 for a family of four. Thirty percent of the area's students drop out before completing high school, and less than 13 percent of area residents have earned a Bachelor's degree. And no section of Los Angeles has been more defined by

gangs than the nine square miles of Watts. In 2006, LAPD Police Chief William Bratton declared the Jordan Downs-Nickerson Gardens area "the most violent community in the country."

The plan to open a child care center in the heart of Nickerson Gardens was as urgent as it was audacious. In 1988, the Reverend Jesse Jackson visited Watts in an attempt to focus local and national attention on a community of people that he described as being "trapped in a cycle of fear, pain, violence, drugs and desperation." During his stay, Jackson spent the evening at the Nickerson Gardens apartment of Denise Calhoun, a single 27-year-old mother of three daughters who was struggling to get off welfare. "But there's no day care," she told him. "If I got a job, who would take care of my girls?" Six years later, her plea would be answered through a partnership between Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Crystal Stairs' founders Karen Hill Scott and Alice Walker Duff. "One of the biggest needs I have learned about in housing developments is a need for child care," said Waters just before the Center's opening. She enlisted the help of more than a dozen federal, state and local agencies in the development of SAGE. "We have many single mothers who would like to get off of welfare and get a job or get an education, but they don't have a place to take their children." In 1994, that all changed. SAGE opened its doors to the children and families of Watts.



INSPIRING EDUCATION

One of the first things any visitor will notice about SAGE is its physical presence in the community. The quaint bungalows that house its offices and classrooms are a splash of pastel blues, greens, and pinks; a stark contrast to the rather dreary uniformity of the faded black and white housing blocks that populate Nickerson Gardens. SAGE is quite literally an oasis of beauty, calm and stability for its children, and has largely remained unscathed by the graffiti and vandalism that plagues its surrounding neighborhoods. Kimberly Greene, a single, working mother whose three children attended SAGE, describes it as “a beam of sunshine above everything else. It’s the end of the rainbow.”

SAGE operates four classrooms, each with its own age group, curriculum and atmosphere. Cathy Tate, SAGE’s Director since 1996, insists that she “likes for every classroom to have its own feel, specific to the needs of the children.” SAGE also provides snacks and three daily meals made of healthy, freshly cooked food. Visitors are offered a guided tour of its facilities and playgrounds, usually conducted by the Center’s best spokespeople—its children. They describe the lessons that are conducted in each room, how games and crafts are organized, rules for use of the computers and in play areas, and details about how the food is prepared. SAGE serves two elementary schools in Watts, 112th Street and Lovelia Flournoy Elementary Schools. Both are within walking distance. SAGE staff and teachers routinely pick children up after school and/or bring the children safely to school following morning care at SAGE.

Children enter SAGE as early as three years of age for preschool and “graduate” upon completion of elementary school. 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. The standards and practices employed at SAGE are rigorous, and have earned SAGE national accreditation. National accreditation is unique for a school-age program and, even more so, for a child care center located in a housing project. School age programs historically are not accredited as they often experience a high level of transience with children moving in and out throughout the year. “There is no real structure as far as family involvement

and curriculum in classrooms with traditional programs,” explains Cathy Tate. To maintain their accreditation, SAGE staff and teachers use 31 measures to assess five categories of development for each child, twice a year. “We are inside and outside of the classroom performing observations,” says LaTisha Wilson, SAGE’s Administrative Coordinator. “We are not just looking at how the children are playing and what they are playing, but we’re looking at teacher-to-teacher relationships, we’re looking at teacher-to-child relationships, we’re looking at how much of the activity is teacher-directed, how much of the activity is child-directed, and at the relationships between the children.”

Ana Ramirez, a Teacher’s Assistant who joined SAGE’s preschool staff one year ago, recognizes the change in a boy named Ameire as one of her proudest accomplishments to date. “When he came to us he had some problems with his speech,” says Ana. “After working with him, he came to me one day and said, ‘Ms. Ana, let’s count. One, two, three. Now in Spanish, uno, dos, tres.’ And it just blew me away because this was a child labeled as having serious speech problems and, yet, he was able to count to five perfectly in both English and Spanish.” Ana credits her supportive colleagues at SAGE for her success and believes that they are changing the way parents perceive child care. “I think some believe it’s just babysitting. I think it changes when the child goes home and says, ‘Look mommy, I can spell my name.’ And the parent is like, ‘Where did you learn that?’”

Rosemary Crosby’s son, who is now 20, attended SAGE during the thirteen years she lived in Nickerson Gardens. After years of persistence, she landed a job as a Teacher’s Assistant at SAGE. “When I saw how they take care of the kids and the program that they have, I really wanted to be a part of it,” says Rosemary. She is especially appreciative of the extent to which education is strongly encouraged and supported for teachers at SAGE. “They help you in your education. In any way they can. Books, transportation, whatever they can do,” she says. Rosemary will soon begin her second semester of college with plans to pursue higher education. “I want to get my A.A., continue on to my B.A., then go for my Master’s.” The majority of SAGE’s current staff has earned multiple degrees, including three Master’s degrees with one teacher in pursuit of a PhD.



TAJANAE GRIFFIN: TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

Tajanae was a bright, vivacious kindergarten student when she first arrived at SAGE. “Taji”, to the staff, loved art and had a particular talent for accurately portraying the world around her. Her father, Antonio, who had been incarcerated for most of her young life, came immediately upon his release from prison to visit his daughter at SAGE. He was there almost daily to walk Tajanae back and forth between school and the Center and, in an effort to reconnect with his daughter, spent time with SAGE’s staff and teachers. Less than two years later, Antonio would be ambushed and killed in Nickerson Gardens. It was a tragedy that the staff can only describe as “heartbreaking.”

SAGE’s Director, Cathy Tate, credits Tajanae’s mother, Alisha, with resilience, and fortitude in remaining focused on what was best for her daughter. “I was so proud of her mom and how she realized that she wasn’t going to wallow in this. She still had a child to raise. And she did. She raised her in the best way that she could to be a good student, to graduate from high school and to be accepted into college.” As a single, working parent, Alisha’s options for child care remained limited. “If not for SAGE I would probably have just been at home,” says Tajanae, now eighteen years old. She describes SAGE as a place where she felt comfortable, cared for, and where she learned new things. “Even after finishing my time at SAGE, I could go there and just talk to the staff and teachers. SAGE is wonderful.”

Cathy Tate believes that, for Tajanae, it could have been a very different story. “Taji could have been attracted to the streets and what was around her and thought that was the way she should go. “SAGE is a way to help keep kids out of trouble,” says Tajanae. “Somewhere that can help them, like, know that there are people trying to help them do better in life.”

Tajanae graduated from David Starr Jordan High School in June 2009 with a 3.8 grade point average. She is currently enrolled at Los Angeles Southwest College with plans to transfer to a private college in New York.

MARCUS SCROGGINS: A POSTER CHILD

Marcus entered SAGE while in elementary school. He went on to middle school, graduated from high school with a 3.85 grade point average, and attended a private college in upstate New York. For many fortunate kids from middle class and affluent neighborhoods, Marcus' story is not so unusual. But given the particular circumstances Marcus was forced to overcome, his story is truly extraordinary. Marcus was the third generation in his family to be raised in Nickerson Gardens.

As a single, working parent Marcus' mother, Lynette, qualified for child care support from SAGE. "You could get your homework done in a safe haven in the midst of Watts," says Marcus. "I had some of the best times of my life there." Like so many kids, Marcus showed tremendous potential as a child. "He was extremely confident, not arrogant, but extremely confident," says SAGE Director, Cathy Tate. "He was very comfortable in his own skin." Perhaps, Marcus' most valuable gift would be an exceptional ability to make thoughtful decisions about his life, even at a young age. In his sophomore year of high school, Marcus decided that he wanted to escape "some of the negativity" that he witnessed around him and transferred to Verbum Dei, a private four-year college preparatory school for boys. He graduated fifth in his class. Marcus credits SAGE with providing the fundamental tools that he needed to succeed. "In elementary school while at SAGE, those fundamentals that you get are basically carried throughout the whole living experience, especially in an area like Watts. It's all instilled in you very early. It's basically your tools in your tool belt."

Life continued to test Marcus' resolve. His mother suffered a massive stroke during his junior year of college. His brother and sister were sent to live with their grandparents as his mother endured the effects of her stroke, including the loss of her ability to speak. SAGE staff wondered whether Marcus could continue to focus on his studies and finish school given his strong sense of responsibility to his mother and younger siblings. But, after a brief period of soul-searching, Marcus did stay focused and he graduated college in 2009. Cathy Tate describes Marcus as "a poster child" for success beyond his circumstances. "His trajectory is amazing. To go from here, through Verbum Dei, then to college in New York with no family, no anything there, and to stay focused with all that was going on. It says a lot about him." Marcus returned in the summer to work as a teacher's assistant at SAGE. "I'm still trying to figure out how to incorporate my past where it can catch up to my present," he says. "As a token of appreciation, I want to reach out to both elementary schools in Watts, the middle school I attended and both of the high schools. To give something back."

"I'm a big believer in the idea that it takes a community to raise a child," says Marcus. "I really feel that SAGE is a part of that community that helped raise me. They get credit."

In May 2009, Marcus earned his Bachelor's degree in Marketing from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. He now works for the NBA and Clippers Basketball franchise in Los Angeles.



BEYOND WATTS

LaTisha Wilson has been with SAGE since 1997. She describes one boy who left a lasting impression on her. "Reginald was the child that made you worry about which way he was going to go. He was smart but he had attitude and could let his attitude get him in a lot of trouble. And when I say 'trouble' not trouble with the law, but just trouble with peers." SAGE emphasizes team and relationship building in the children's indoor and outdoor activities. "One of the most basic life skills we can teach them is that they are

going to need other people to accomplish a goal," says LaTisha Wilson. "We do that because we know that's what it will take for them to succeed." Such focus beyond the immediate trappings of Watts is a consistent aspect of SAGE's philosophy and the teaching style of its staff.

"It's a non-deficit based model," adds Cathy Tate. "We aren't looking for the negatives, the negatives don't steer us to do our work. We're looking for the strengths of the community and building on that to make it happen for children."

SAGE has built its own successful relationships with other local institutions and supporters. The Rancho Golf Course in West Los Angeles sponsors a summer junior golf program for children at SAGE. "They learn discipline, how to play well with others, and how to putt," says Mary Keener, supervisor for the program at the City of Los Angeles. Pfizer Health Solutions partnered with the United Way of Greater Los Angeles to paint the buildings at SAGE. "Through that, we got to know the staff," says Debbie Rourke, a past employee of Pfizer. "We just really thought that the

people that ran the place were amazing. So, that just really intrigued us and everyone was very gung-ho on doing something else for the kids." Pfizer staff pooled their personal resources to provide gifts to the children for the holidays. Cheryl Burnett, a Public Relations Manager for the City of Beverly Hills, made a similar commitment to SAGE. While visiting the facility during a tour for business and civic leaders, Cheryl decided to host a holiday arts and crafts party at SAGE. "I loved it from the first time I was there," she says. "And I thought I really want to do something for this organization. This is going to be our tenth year of holiday parties at SAGE." When Cheryl moved to England for two years, her friends stepped in to continue the tradition. "I'm quite sure that my friends and I get more out of it than even the kids," she adds. "We'll continue this program as long as SAGE wants us there."

Another of SAGE's most enduring partnerships is with the Loyola Marymount University's Center for Service in Action. Loyola sends 50 volunteer students to SAGE throughout the school year to assist with homework and provide the children with opportunities to create meaningful relationships with college students. "I explain to the Loyola students that it's my expectation for all of these children to go to college some day," says Cathy Tate. "And you're having that experience now and you can share with them what it takes to get there."

Helen Pulliam, a former art teacher at SAGE who is now retired, shares "I tried emphasizing art and music with the children because they didn't do too much of that in public schools. And I was happy with where it was located because I've worked with children for years and years. I'm sort of a child advocate, and I was glad to be a part of providing what the parents and the children in that area needed."

"Working with parents and children, they all want the same things," adds Helen Pulliam. "They want a good place to take the children, and a safe place to take the children. I used to sit and look out the window during play time and it just made my heart feel good to see those kids out there jumping rope and interacting and all the positive things about them. SAGE is a very positive place. It's a beautiful place."



THE LEGACY

A former student recently visited SAGE to announce her graduation from Pomona College. She now has her sights set on earning a Master's degree. Another came by to show her son a picture of his "mommy" when she was just a bit older than he and entering SAGE. This former student has graduated from culinary school and now works as a chef in the Staples Center and Home Depot Center complex in downtown Los Angeles. And it goes on...

There is no shortage of stories or evidence of SAGE's reach into the Nickerson Gardens and Watts community. Its impact on the lives of the children who have attended SAGE and those children's children is profound. The breadth of that impact is best captured in a collage of photographs on a wall in SAGE's office. Over the years, parents, extended family, and the students themselves have shared images of important moments in their lives during and after their time at SAGE. Cathy Tate describes it as "a ritual, a way to memorialize" SAGE's relationship to its students, their families and the community.

Marcus Scroggins says that kids like him, from communities like Watts "cling on to people that give them positive energy. That energy to sit with a kid and ask 'how was your day?' That stuff goes a long way and they remember it." Even after completing the program at SAGE, Marcus recognizes the staff "as the reason I come back. I still pop my head in there every so often just to say 'hello.'"

SAGE is the kind of place that anyone who has been fortunate enough to visit would want to 'pop their head into' every once in awhile. If only to be reminded that there is gold at the end of the rainbow.



WHAT WE DO

SERVICE, RESEARCH, ADVOCACY, OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This past fiscal year, our Child Care Assistance Program enrolled 9,499 families and 17,835 children.

The Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income families living in our service area by paying for the cost of child care. This assistance allows parents to work, seek job training and/or complete their education, all in preparation for them to become self-sufficient and lead financially independent households.

Parents enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program

care arrangements. Specialists also provide referrals to a diverse array of supportive services such as housing assistance, financial and legal counseling, food banks, health and mental health services as well as parenting classes. These resources assist the largest population of the program, which has been designed specifically to support parents who are in transition from receiving welfare benefits to becoming independent workers. Crystal Stairs provides a wide range of resources so that parents have options and can ultimately select child care facilities that are developmentally-appropriate for their children.

While we serve thousands of children and families daily, there are still many who are on the waiting list because the funding is not enough to enroll every eligible family or child. Currently, 200,000 eligible children in California are on waiting lists and close to 50,000 of them live in Los Angeles County.

can choose care through licensed family child care homes, licensed centers or care with relatives, friends or neighbors for children up to 12 years of age. Every family is provided with a specialist who maintains their records and helps them make child

RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) is our longest-running program and offers its services at no cost to all families, regardless of income. This year, R&R:

- Provided child care information and referrals to licensed child care to 4,497 callers
- Linked 2,802 callers to child care referral agencies in their communities
- Maintained and updated a database listing 279 child care centers and 1,426 family child care homes
- Opened an on-line system through our web site so parents have 24/7 access to child care referrals

R&R also offers a variety of services and resources to child care providers to assure that they meet licensing requirements, operate sustainable businesses, and can offer services that meet the diverse needs of parents seeking child care. R&R:

- Conducted child development trainings for 1,269 providers
- Reimbursed 487 providers who completed CPR/First Aid training
- Conducted 12 CPR training classes
- Partnered with two other R&R agencies to offer an Early Care and Education Conference attended by over 450 providers
- Operates a Resource Library with publications, equipment, children's books, videos, puzzles, art and music materials, toys, and many other resources to help providers develop and enhance their programs

That's what we do with the funding, staff and resources we have now. Here's what we could do if we had more:

- Re-start our very successful Support Provider Accreditation Now (SPAN) Project. With training, on-site assistance and financial support, we helped over 50 child care providers achieve national standards for high-quality services.



- Create a new Provider Workforce Development Project staffed by a Career Development Coach who assists providers to complete college-level early care and education courses, and a Child Development Site Coach who assists providers to make quality improvements in their programs.



CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health care today has become a luxury to many families. Access has become increasingly limited and only available to those who can afford its sometimes high costs. Our Children's Health and Wellness (CH&W) program helps those families in need of assistance and shares information that otherwise may seem too difficult to attain.

The core of CH&W is its outreach and enrollment component, which works to lead low-income children and families into a variety of available free and low-cost health insurance programs. CH&W believes families that are healthy are assets to themselves and better contributors to the communities in which they live.

This past fiscal year, Children's Health and Wellness made 5,528 referrals to health and other social service programs, and assisted in the enrollment of 6,080 children and families onto various health plans,

Children's Health and Wellness' continued success is not just referring children and families to accessible programs, but knowing there is lasting power once they are enrolled. Over 80 percent of our clients are still enrolled in services accessed through CH&W. Children's Health and Wellness continues to seek new projects and community partnerships that encourage healthy living, provide information and secure access to vital health services.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Advocacy has always been a part of Crystal Stairs' mission and our work. It has remained an integral part of the agency's work because progress does not happen without engagement. Imbedded in our commitment to providing accessible and quality child care services is our commitment to providing data and dialogue that keep child care issues at the forefront of all policy discussions. Healthy and successful families rely upon social programs and policies that encourage family independence and success. This is really a non-negotiable.

Few families leave our programs because their income is too high. This is why we continue to advocate on behalf of our families and their children, and the child care providers who do the heavy lifting every day.



including Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Healthy Kids, and Kaiser Permanente Child Health Plan.

CH&W maximizes its outreach through a biannual newsletter that provides health-related information to hundreds of families in hopes of helping them navigate through available health programs. During the past year, 36,613 individuals were reached through our resource-rich newsletter.

CRYSTAL STAIRS STAFF GIVE MORE AND GIVE BACK

One of the ways in which Crystal Stairs gives back is in the dedication of our staff. The agency has a set of values which guide how employees work together and how programs and services are administered: Excellence, Relationships, Integrity, Empowerment.

One of the ways Crystal Stairs activates these values is through its staff-driven Community Building Team. The mission of the team is to build communities, both within and outside of Crystal Stairs. As always, this team took its work and mission seriously.

Here are some highlights of their accomplishments:

On May 6, the Community Building team, in partnership with Children's Hospital of L.A., sponsored a Sickle Cell Disease Blood Drive. Staff and visitors at our Wateridge location were encouraged to donate blood to help in the treatment of over 600 young patients who had been diagnosed with the disease.

The Community Building team sponsored a school supply drive to benefit children who visited our office during the week of August 24. Pens, pencils, notebooks, paper, glue, scissors, binders, colored pencils and backpacks were collected and distributed to school-age children.

In April, employees wore denim in support of the Peace Over Violence, 11th Annual Denim Day in Los Angeles. Staff wore denim in acknowledgement of the 18 year-old girl who was raped by her 45 year-old driving instructor during her first driving lesson. Her assailant was found not guilty and, in response, women protested by wearing jeans to work.

Throughout the month of June, the Community Building team presented the Empowerment Exchange Conference: an opportunity for Crystal Stairs' staff to share and discuss aspects of work life amongst their like-minded peers. Four informal sessions were developed to allow staff to present daily challenges and/or concerns and speak about them in an open, honest and safe environment.



In recognition of October's Breast Cancer Awareness month, the Community Building team put on multiple events. Staff were encouraged to participate in a wide variety of activities, including: Lee's National Denim Day; honoring loved ones by placing hearts in their memory on department bulletin boards; dressing in pink to bring visibility to the issue; attending a small balloon release ceremony; supporting a "Go Pink" fundraising event where 50 percent of proceeds were donated to the Lee National Denim Day; and a Breast Cancer Walk where participants circled the Wateridge complex wearing pink shirts to honor and remember those stricken with this disease.



IN THE NEWS

CRYSTAL STAIRS MAKING IT HAPPEN BY WORD AND BY DEED

CRYSTAL STAIRS GOES TO WASHINGTON

In March, a Crystal Stairs delegation went to Washington, D.C. for the annual National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies Conference. Staff met with the offices of Congressmembers Diane Watson, Maxine Waters, Laura Richardson and Xavier Beccerra, all in an effort

to boost recognition around the issues of child care quality, licensing and adequate federal funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant. It was an exciting time to be in the nation's capital and to know that early care and education are seen as priority issues for both the Administration and our congressional district representatives.



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE

On March 28, over 500 attendees filled the Carson Community Center to hear and learn about early childhood education. This year's conference was a collaborative effort between Crystal Stairs, Connections for Children, and the Center for Community and Family Services. The partnership allowed the messages of the day to reach a wider, more diverse audience and allowed the best efforts of each agency to shine. Attendees were treated to inspiring words by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Assemblymember Ted Lieu as well as a rousing keynote address by author and motivational speaker Jonathan Mooney.

STATE OF THE CALIFORNIA BUDGET WORKSHOP

On May 16, Community Voices (CV), partnered with Crystal Stairs to present an informative three-hour workshop on the current state of the California budget and what it means for the community. The workshop focused on concerns about proposed federal and state level budget cuts as relate to child care funding, how the federal stimulus dollars will help California, and what role the county plays in child care. Representatives from Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass's office and Senator Curren Price's office were there. Congresswoman Diane E. Watson and Assemblymember Mike Davis both spoke at the event.

Attendees were also able to sign up to meet local legislators in their district offices.





FUN WITH 'COTTON CHILD'

Author and Crystal Stairs parent, Tracy Brooks, read from her new book, *Cotton Child* at Crystal Stairs' Leimert Park office on April 4. Brooks spoke about her experiences as an author, parent and advocate for child care quality and early literacy. She was on hand to answer questions from both the little people and the adults, and served as an inspiration for many of the child care providers in the audience.

Brooks also facilitated a children's activity based on aspects of her book. Part of the proceeds from the day's sales went to benefit Crystal Stairs' Resource Library.

A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

Crystal Stairs partnered with The Ebony Repertory Theatre to host an evening at the theatre to benefit Crystal Stairs. On two occasions, supporters of Crystal Stairs were invited to see August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* and a Regina Taylor production of *Crowns*. These two events were a wonderful way for two

community-based non-profits to support one another and spread the good word about important causes: the arts and child care.

SAGE AND ESPN LOOK AT CHILDHOOD OBESITY

On Sunday, March 29, ESPN aired its program, *Outside the Lines: Childhood Obesity*. The segment explored the growing rise of childhood obesity and how the issue is being addressed in schools around the country.

Between 1971 and 2006, the number of 6-to-11-year-olds considered overweight more than quadrupled from 4 to 17 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Crystal Stairs' SAGE Child Care Center was profiled on this program as a model for how child care facilities can incorporate play and exercise into their daily curriculum in an effort to combat child obesity. The segment was a result of a collaborative effort between Crystal Stairs and UCLA's School of Public Policy. Kudos to SAGE!



CONGRESSWOMAN LAURA RICHARDSON COMES TO SAGE

Crystal Stairs' Nickerson Gardens SAGE Child Care Center was privileged to receive Congresswoman Laura Richardson on July 29. SAGE is in the Congresswoman's district and this was the first time her schedule allowed her to tour the center. She played basketball, read from the book *Where the Wild Things Are* and had a chance to see and hear about the various needs of the center. She vowed to come back for another visit.

CV RALLIES IN SACRAMENTO

Over 100 Community Voices members traveled to Sacramento on May 6 to participate in the Annual Stand for Children Rally and Advocacy Day. Community Voices stood in solidarity with others from across the state to speak out against the budget proposal, especially the cuts that threaten child care.

After the rally, CV hosted a two-hour town hall. Senate Health and Human Services Budget Committee Consultant Jack Hailey, Assemblymember Mike Davis, Senator Roderick Wright and representatives from Assemblymember Ted Lieu's and the Speaker of the Assembly's office participated in the town hall. CV is funded by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. Funding for this important work ends Dec. 31, 2009.



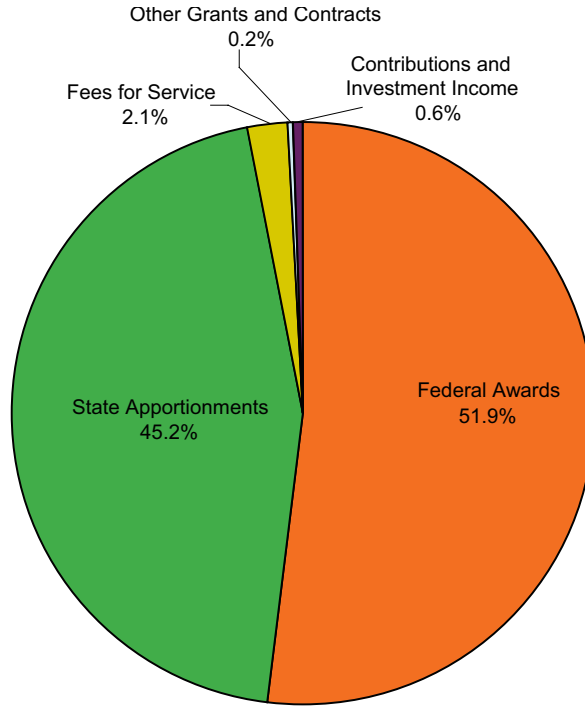
FUNDING

REVENUE

WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM

Crystal Stairs
Funding Sources
2008-09

Most of our funding comes from state and county contracts. However, those contracts do not cover all of the services we work to offer.

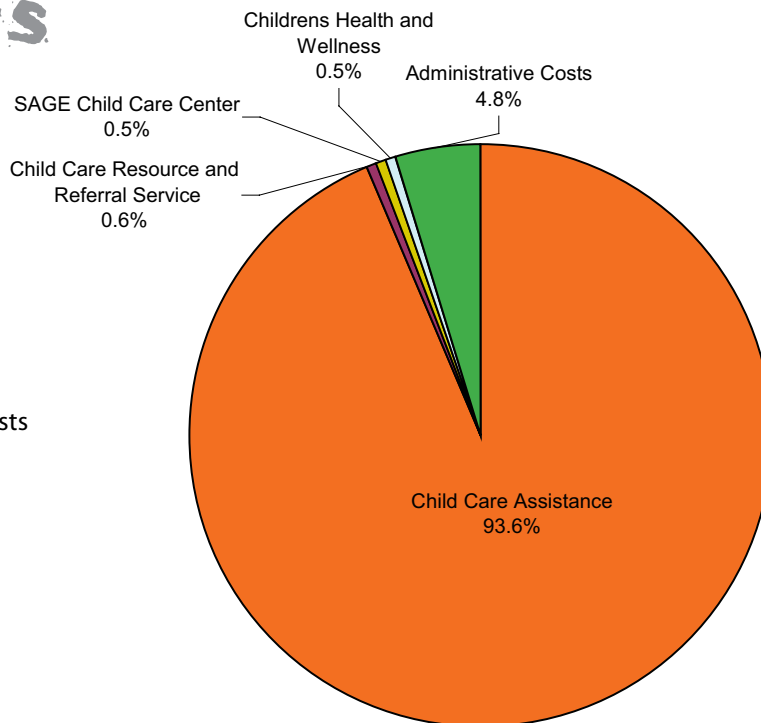


EXPENSES

PROGRAMS OUR FUNDING SUPPORTS

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Expenditures
2008-09

Crystal Stairs is committed to keeping our administrative costs as low as possible.



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