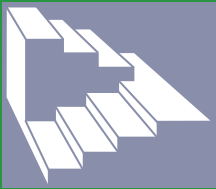


THE BANISTER

CRYSTAL



STAIRS, INC.

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Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 2009



Parents Tell Their Stories

Next year, Crystal Stairs will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Our programs have served a whole generation of families and more than 100,000 children. Over the years, we've read and heard many stories telling us how Crystal Stairs has made a difference in thousands of lives. We're sharing two of them with you because their words capture the thoughts and experiences of so many others.

“I began with Crystal Stairs during a time when my children were placed with (my) mother due to my drug addiction. Crystal Stairs relieved my mother's burden of having my children and allowed me to focus on my recovery. My children (got) an awesome education during a traumatic time of our lives, which made my process of getting my life back much easier. (Since) recovery, I've completed a Bachelor's and Master's degree... I'm able to maintain the well-being of my children... and am on my way to financial freedom.”

Realizing what a benefit she had received, this parent *voluntarily* withdrew from the program so another family could get the help that made such a difference to her.

“It has helped me for the last seven years for my three children to have good child care. When I started, I was working part-time, receiving welfare and going to college. We were just moving from a housing project into a Section 8 house. Now, I've graduated from college and work full-time with benefits. I believe I should let someone less fortunate get the program now ... I believe I'm self-sufficient.”

And, let's acknowledge the thousands of child care providers who have partnered with us to help our families succeed. The following comment reflects what many providers have told us about the value of what we do:

“Stay involved because many of these services are needed and appreciated. Continue to do your best to provide learning for children in betterment of family values. Help poor parents to provide a better life for their children.”

Do you have a story to share? Join our 30th anniversary celebration by sending it to us at banister@crystalstairs.org.

Martha's Corner

This summer, I attended the International Family Child Care Conference in Cork, Ireland. It was exciting to meet people from different countries and to learn that as in America, the goal is to provide quality child care.



Providers in Europe are called *childminders*. If they care for three,

but not more than five children, they are regulated—what we call being licensed. Regulation is voluntary if the care is for three or fewer children.

What's different from America is that from five to seven *childminders* living in the same neighborhood also regularly work together in a "playroom group" that meets weekly or biweekly. The playroom has space, equipment and materials that allow for a greater range of activities (dramatic play, music, dancing) for a larger and more age-diverse group of children. And, because the children get to know every *childminder* in the group, it's easier for them to accept another when theirs is not available.

Family child care is the preferred form of care for more than 80% of parents in Europe. And, as in America, *childminders* told me that word-of-mouth is the best method of advertising. Like to hear more about the Conference? Email me at mycorner@crystalstairs.org.

Take Note

24/7 DRIVE & DROP!

Providers, save your time and energy. Try our **drop box for your claims**. Located right inside the Fairfax entrance, we check the box 5 times a day during the first week of the month, and twice a day after that. Great for last-minute delivery when our office is closed. Put claims in a delivery envelope and fasten them with a staple or paper clip.

Want to make sure we got your claims?

Call our 24/7 toll-free claims processing information service at 800-833-3663. The voice system will ask you to enter two provider identification numbers. A few easy steps and you will hear your claims information for the current payment month and for up to two more months before that. Or, check your claims information through our web site www.crystalstairs.org. Click on "Providers," then on "Claims Processing Status." Complete the easy registration instructions and you'll be able to see up to six months' of your claims information for each child.

PROVIDERS, CALL US BEFORE WE CALL YOU

Openings? New phone number? New business hours? New services? New fees? Call our R&R Department at **888-KIDS-247** to update your provider file. Help us to help you. Make sure we give parents accurate information about your services when they call us looking for child care.

ON THE MOVE!

Our Deegan office in Leimert Park Village is closing. Staff from the Resource & Referral and Children's Health and Wellness Departments and our provider Resource Library will move to the Wateridge office. Our anticipated last business day at Deegan will be Friday, November 13, 2009.

411 for 2010

Every 10 years, the federal government conducts a Census to gather information about the people who live in our country. Census information is used for many purposes. One of the most important ones is to help the government decide how and where to spend its money for all kinds of programs and services, including child care. In 2000, the population in Los Angeles County was "under-counted." This means we didn't get our fair share of some of the funding and services that provide much-needed help to working families and low-income communities. So, be a participant when you get a letter or a visitor from the Census next April. Remember, if you want to count, be counted! Watch for more information from Crystal Stairs about the Census.



Bust Those Nasty Bugs!

Did you know that we'll always share our world with germs? Infectious diseases like the flu cause most of the sick days that children and child care providers have during the year.

We can better protect ourselves by understanding how germs do their work to make us sick. Knowledge gives us the power to take actions at home, at work, at school or in child care to reduce the risk that the "bugs" on us and around us can make us sick.

Germs grow and move around by person-to-person and place-to-place contact. Anything that interferes with their ability to grow and move can prevent illness from starting and spreading. Parents and providers, keep these tips in mind:

■ **PRACTICE**—Abide by your written policies that explain when and how you will accept children who are ill; inform parents of your policies so they can have other arrangements in place when children are ill; give tips that parents can use to prevent the spread of illness at home

■ **PREVENT**—Cover up that cough or sneeze, frequent 20-second soap-and-water hand washings; sanitize toys, furniture, equipment, work and play surfaces, door knobs, and other "highly touched" items

■ **PROTECT**—Get and keep current with child and adult vaccinations for flu and other infectious diseases

Be prepared and you'll know why it's really true that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Source: Healthy Child Care, August-September 2009

Free Family Fun Celebrations

TRASH TO TREASURE

■ Celebrate America Recycles Day from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, November 15. Enjoy games, crafts and activities that show how to practice the environmental 3 "Rs"—Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. **Call STAR ECO Station at 310-842-8060 for location and other information.**

MARIACHI FESTIVAL

■ Celebrate the Mariachi tradition on Sunday, November 22 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Boyle Heights. Dance performances, exhibits, children's art activities. **Call 818-509-0088 for location and other information.**

GRIFFITH PARK HOLIDAY LIGHT FESTIVAL

■ Drive, walk or take a free shuttle through a

mile-long lighted display of seasonal messages along Crystal Springs Drive. Open from November 22 through December 30, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. **Call 323-913-4688 or check www.laparks.org for details.**

WINTER HOLIDAY FEST: DOWNTOWN IN ICE

■ Play in a real "snow zone," make-it-take it arts and crafts, tree decorating contests, music, live entertainment, artists' area, puppet shows, food court and more. Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6, 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in Pershing Square. **Call 213-847-4970 or check www.laparks.org for more information.**

SANTA'S WORKSHOP

■ Hands-on holiday craft workshops. Make-and-take Christmas stockings, cards,

gift wrap and ornaments. Kids will enjoy face painting, cookie decorating and a photo with Santa. Saturday, December 12 from Noon to 4:00 p.m. at Darby Park in Inglewood. A small fee of \$3 for lots of fun. **Call 310-412-5391 for more information.**



NAVIDAD EN LA CALLE OCHO FESTIVAL

■ This event features one of the biggest toy giveaways in the community plus entertainment, clowns and rides for small children. Saturday and Sunday, December 12 and 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. at 8th Street and Normandie Avenue. **Call 213-388-8291 for more information.**

LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

■ Enjoy choirs, musical groups and dance companies from many cultures as they give holiday-themed performances. Downtown on Thursday, December 24 from 2:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Los Angeles County Music Center's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Free parking. **Call 213-972-3099 or check www.lacountyarts.org for more details.**

AFRICAN AMERICAN ART FESTIVAL

■ Enjoy African American Heritage month from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, February 6, 2010. Dancers, live music, visual arts, jewelry, crafts, food vendors and more! **Call STAR ECO Station at 310-842-8060 for location and other information.**

Creating Conversations with Your Children



In our last issue, we talked about the fun of reading to and with young children as well as its value to their literacy development. Since then, exciting new research from UCLA's School of Public Health has added to what we know about how children acquire and develop their speech and language abilities.

Dr. Frederick J. Zimmerman and his research team studied 275 families with children aged from infancy to four years. With the families' permission, a small digital language recorder was used to record the adult speech, child speech and TV "speak" that occurred in their homes over a period of time. The team used these recordings to understand and assess each child's language experience.

Here are some highlights from what they discovered.

- "The effect of adult-child conversations was roughly six times as powerful at fostering good language development as adult speech alone."

- "TV viewing had no effect on language development, positive or negative."

- More conversations allow children to correct their mistakes and to learn and practice new words.

- The exchange of conversation between adults and children produced better language acquisition outcomes than when it's just adults speaking or reading to them.

So, what is the "take-away" of this study for parents and providers? The research was conducted in children's homes but we know that many children spend much, if not more, of their waking hours with child care providers. Providers have the same opportunity as parents do to enhance language development through creative conversations with children. Parents and providers should also have conversations with each other to share ideas and resources that help them work together on a child's language development.

For example, if you just read a book about boats to your three-year-old that created a conversation about all the different kinds of boats there are, share that with your provider. The provider can continue the conversation about boats and also give your child an activity centered on boats and other ways that people travel from place to place. The provider can also ask your child if he or she would like to share their new knowledge about boats and traveling by conversing with the other children.

In summing up the results of his research, Dr. Zimmerman noted that "It is not enough to speak to children. (Adults) should also engage them in conversation. Kids love to hear you speak, but they thrive on trying speech out for themselves. Give them a chance to say what's on their minds, even if it's 'goo, goo, gah.'"

Why Does Talk Work So Well?

Why are parent-child conversations such a powerful driver of language development? What's the science behind it?

- First, practice makes perfect. This old saying is as applicable to language development as anything else. Parental speech provides a model of language, but it is the child's use of language that helps to solidify and internalize this knowledge.

- Second, conversation allows parents to adjust their speech so that it is understandable but slightly challenging for the child. In order for a parent to remain aware of the child's conversational limits, he or she must maintain ongoing conversations with the child.

- Third, parent-child conversations provide an opportunity for the parent to actively correct the child's language mistakes. So, while parents should keep reading to their children and narrating daily events, whenever possible they should also try questions and exchanges that encourage children to speak.