

Anniversary Issue

CELEBRATING

30

A look at the history of Crystal Stairs
after thirty years of service to
families, children and community

“To be able to celebrate the growth and sustainability of a community institution founded thirty years ago, and to be still standing today... is awesome!”

CRYSTAL STAIRS MISSION

Improving the lives of families through child care services, research and advocacy since 1980.

WE BELIEVE

We believe quality child care is an important societal issue, not just a responsibility of individual families.

We believe quality child care and development services should be universally available and accessible.

We believe how children are treated when young will significantly influence the kind of adults they become and the quality of life for all of us in the future.

We believe that parents should be able to choose among a variety of child care service models.

We believe child care needs a strong infrastructure in which government, business and civic organizations work together to develop policy and to plan and fund child care.



A FINAL MESSAGE HOLLY J. MITCHELL

This year Crystal Stairs celebrated its 30th Year Anniversary.

Over the years, we have seen a number of service organizations close their doors. During these critical times when services, advocacy and support are needed more than ever before, that is a devastating reality for our community. So, to be able to celebrate the growth and sustainability of a community institution founded thirty years ago, and to be still standing today... is awesome!

I credit the vision of our founders, the support of our community, and the commitment of our staff and board with our ability to “just keep climbin’.”

Dancing Under the Stars

As a way of celebrating this momentous year, we hosted our 3rd Annual Dancing Under the Stars event at Target Terrace at L.A. Live. We tried a new venue, spiced up our program and received rave reviews. We raised money, had a fabulous time and made some new and lasting friends and



supporters. We are already planning for Dancing under the Stars 4. It will be on April 30, 2011 at L.A. Live's Target Terrace and may just be the best one yet.

Strategic Planning

Crystal Stairs completed its 2011-2013 Strategic Plan this year as well. This process was inclusive, targeted, and really challenged us all to envision an ambitious future for the agency. I believe we rose to the occasion and have a vibrant path ahead.

We also brought on two new board members, Nike Irvin and Omer Simeon. They are seasoned industry leaders and have begun to offer welcomed observations about new ways of thinking and doing. Yes We Can!

Our New CEO

I announced early last year that I would be leaving at the end of 2010 to pursue other opportunities. As a result, succession planning was a priority for the agency. I am thrilled to announce that the Board of Directors has appointed our new CEO—Jackie Beaubian Majors.

Jackie brings more than 20 years of professional and instructional experience in early care and education and has earned a reputation as a trusted and respected leader. Equally important is that she shares a passion for bringing excellence and ingenuity to the field of child development. Jackie's appointment as our new "Chief Champion" guarantees that the agency is headed in a new and exciting direction.

Growth and Challenge

All of these are really impressive moments for us in terms of growth and sustainability, but

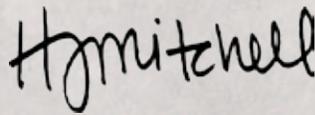
this past year has really been about strength and perseverance.

This last state budget session was the longest in history. The state went without a signed budget and spending plan for 100 days. And when the Governor finally signed the budget, he vetoed Stage 3 Child Care funding to the tune of \$256 million. This decision cut off child care for 6600 children served by Crystal Stairs and threw 2700 of our Stage 3 working families off a cliff.

Services, Research, Advocacy

This last battle to protect child care for working families reminded me of the vitality of our mission—Services, Research, Advocacy—and why I came to Crystal Stairs and accepted the honor of leading it in 2004.

Crystal Stairs was founded upon an unwavering belief in social justice. We stand for children and working families. That drive is exhibited in the quality of service we provide every day and the ways in which we push ourselves to deliver the best to our families and child care providers. This last stand to protect funding for this critical service reminded me of the fight that we still have in us, and the power of both a great agency and a living mission.



Holly J. Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer



OUR STORY, TOLD

Every day across our country, women and men rise from their beds, prepare for their work days, and place their children into the care of someone else. For some, it is an option that supports demanding career or lifestyle choices of a two-parent household. For many, it is an absolute lifeline to the financial security and stability of their families. Crystal Stairs exists to support these families: single mothers or fathers working to move from public assistance toward economic independence, families living at or below the poverty line and, in some cases, homeless families that need help in restoring a basic livelihood for the health and well-being of their children.

In 1979, founding Executive Director Dr. Karen Hill-Scott set out to explore the idea of bringing quality, affordable child care to the communities of South Los Angeles. “I wanted to create a community institution that changes the model of service delivery to people in the community, and invests in them in a way that they could change their own lives,” says Dr. Hill-Scott. “It was quite a thing because at one point there was very little happening in terms of South Central,” says Levi Kingston, a child care provider and long term partner to Crystal Stairs. “For Karen to come from the School of Planning at UCLA and focus on child care in this

The founders always had a focus on positive outcomes for children and families. It was at the heart of everything that they did.

CARL BALLTON, Former Board Chair

community was very unique at the time.”

Dr. Hill-Scott recruited long-time friend and colleague Dr. Alice Walker Duff to fulfill a mutual desire to change the world. “Alice and I were both committed to social change and social justice,” says Dr. Hill-Scott. “I liked running an organization. And Alice loved advocacy. She liked the work of mobilizing people and knew how to get

them engaged.” Together, they built an organization that has changed countless lives and altered the landscape of entire communities.

Crystal Stairs is now one of the largest private, nonprofit child care and child development agencies in California. It connects families to licensed child care centers and family child care homes, pays for the care of those who qualify, provides

training and technical assistance to child care providers, and creates opportunities for parents to act as advocates on behalf of their children and communities. Crystal Stairs’ 110-square-mile service area spans South Los Angeles city and county, and the cities of Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale and Gardena—an area that includes most of the lowest income communities in Los Angeles and is home to a predominantly African American and Latino population.

“Karen was greatly committed to quality child care and greatly committed to the communities in South Central,” says Mary Hruby, a founding employee of Crystal Stairs. “She

MILESTONES

30 YEARS OF HISTORY AND COUNTING

Crystal Stairs has played a vital role in the development of children, families and the community. While the number of positives are countless, here’s a closer look at some of the most well-noted milestones.

1980

Recognizing the need for quality child care in the inner city, Dr. Karen Hill-Scott and Alice Walker Duff created Crystal Stairs, Inc. Joseph Duff provides pro bono services and original Board members include: Dr. Marguerite Archie-Hudson, Carl Ballton, Beverly Davis, Alice Walker Duff, Joseph Duff, Dr. Karen Hill-Scott, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Timothy V. Scott, Barbara Shields, and Jeffrey Wallace.



1981

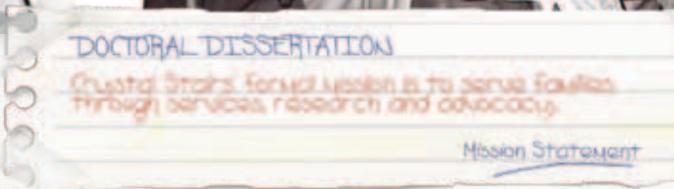
\$3 million

Launch of the state-funded Alternative Payment Program, Crystal Stairs’ first child care subsidy program. Ten years later, this project triples and expands the agency’s revenues by \$3 million.



wrote her doctoral dissertation on meeting child care needs in the community. I remember way back in early 1980 sitting around her kitchen table and writing the mission statement." Crystal Stairs' formal mission is to serve families through services, research and advocacy. "And through all we've been through and all the changes, we have stuck to our mission," says Mary.

According to Dr. Hill-Scott, the goal was to be a data-driven organization explicitly designed to serve the community. "I wanted the institution to be research based," she says. "In



other words, we would make our decisions on having done research on our community, on their needs, or that we had reviewed the research on what was going to make the greatest difference for people. That was always my vision of what I wanted Crystal Stairs to be."

Crystal Stairs' first and most enduring program is its Child Care Resource & Referral service to help parents find child care. Its largest program

administers subsidies for low-income families who could not otherwise afford the costs of care. "Karen also found in her dissertation that the process for locating child care for parents was extremely fragmented," says Mary Hruby. "You asked people you knew, you looked at ads, etc., and she determined that it would be extremely useful to have one focal point where parents could get free referrals to licensed child care in their



community." The Clinton Administration's passage of welfare reform in 1996 was a major milestone. The legislation forced parents to engage in work or work-related activities in order to receive public assistance, required

1984

Martha Williams joins Crystal Stairs and eventually works in six departments throughout the agency, all to enhance both quality and access to child care. Martha continues to represent the agency and the epitome of excellent service to our provider community. She retires in 2010 after 26 years of service.

1985

Crystal Stairs starts its Toy Loan Project. Educational toys are purchased and then lent out to child care providers that contract with the agency. This project is the genesis for our eventual Resource Lending Library.



1991

Carolyn Moultrie joins Crystal Stairs and dedicates her tenure to enhancing service delivery to the child care provider community. Her dream was for the agency to offer an accreditation project and a resource library. Both dreams are eventually realized.



1993

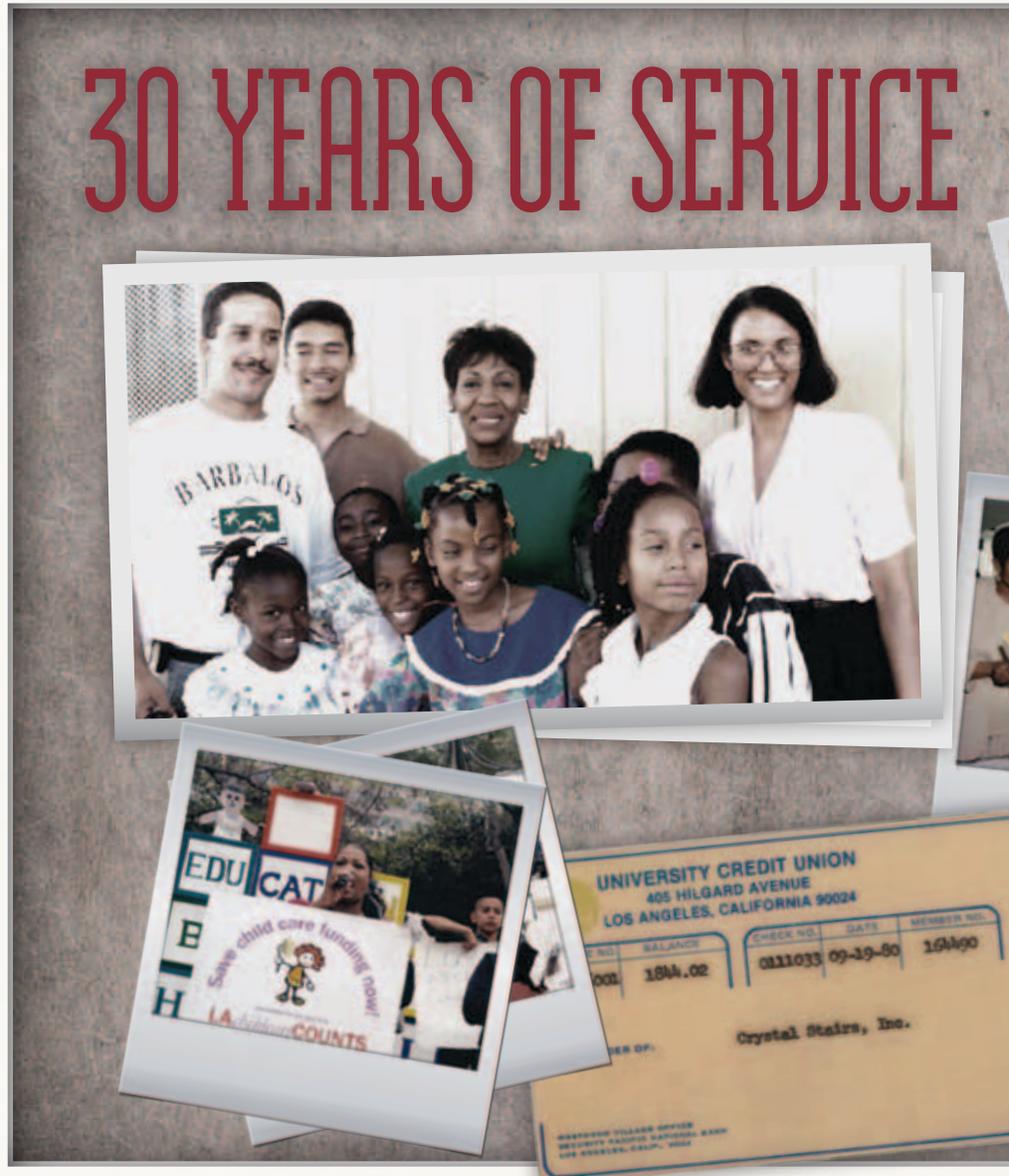
After six years of hard work, Congresswoman Maxine Waters' vision of providing school-age child care in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development becomes real. Construction begins on the SAGE Child Care Center, making it the first located in a housing development.



recipients to begin working two years after receiving benefits, and placed a lifetime limit of five years on benefits paid by federal funds. “Welfare reform was sort of good news and bad news,” adds Mary. “It did provide resources that previous welfare-to-work programs did not. It took the federal government almost a decade but they finally realized that if you wanted to get families off the welfare rolls and into jobs that would hopefully promote economic self-sufficiency, they needed certain supports. And the key one was child care.”

The change led to an explosion of growth at Crystal Stairs. Chosen as a primary local agency to administer California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)—California’s version of welfare-to-work—Crystal Stairs grew exponentially over the next several years, hiring additional staff to respond to growing demand and greatly expanding its reach to low-income families (see page 8). Despite the trepidation among other agencies about participating in the program, Mary Hruby credits Crystal Stairs’ leadership for recognizing both the urgency and opportunity it represented. “Many organizations and their boards were very concerned about what the impact of taking this federal money would be. But you could not not do it. When the waiting lists were yards long and you’ve got families in the welfare system that are now going to be time limited, you had to move. And it provided a nexus for the development of other critical projects.”

30 YEARS OF SERVICE



1993

Dr. Karen Hill-Scott steps down as executive director of Crystal Stairs, passing the baton to Dr. Alice Walker Duff. Dr. Scott remains a member of the Board of Directors and an active supporter of Crystal Stairs.

1994

The “Fork Closure Campaign,” is launched to save the Child Care Food Program. Lapel pins are made of a child’s name on plastic forks with their middle tines broken off, to symbolize child nutritional health that will slip away. The campaign is adopted nationwide.



1995

“The Doll Project” focuses Congress on the need for child care. Written on each doll is a parent’s personal story about how child care subsidies have helped them. Crystal Stairs sponsors a rally and takes dolls to Washington, D.C.



1995

Crystal Stairs activates one of the important tenets in its mission—advocacy—with the hiring of two of bi-lingual community organizers: Sean Green and Eduardo Gonzales. Eduardo goes on to secure funding to start the agency’s Children’s Health and Wellness Department.



"We came from babysitting and developed and made the field of early childhood a professional field with people with degrees and PhDs."
 - Martha Williams, 26-year employee



One of those programs is Crystal Stairs' Children's Health and Wellness Department. Launched in 1999, Children's Health and Wellness was designed to ensure that children are enrolled in any public health programs for which they are eligible (see page 10). "Our motto was that no child should be without health care," says Eduardo Gonzalez, a former employee who established the program. Crystal Stairs works with elementary schools, child care providers, churches, and other non-profit organizations to aggressively reach low-income families, and the department has consistently exceeded its annual targets to enroll them in low- and no-cost health insurance programs. Children's Health and Wellness also distinguished Crystal Stairs as one of the first non-health organizations in California to successfully engage in outreach and enrollment of children in Healthy Families—California's state-sponsored insurance program for children, teens, and pregnant mothers. "They were already a leader in the child development arena but also became a leader in a new area that the organization had never done before, and did it successfully," says Eduardo. "I really give credit to Dr. Duff. She really trusted me and allowed the program to flourish. She was a visionary."

Perhaps, Crystal Stairs' crowning achievement is the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Child Care Center in the Watts neighborhood. With unyielding support from Congresswoman Maxine Waters, SAGE (an acronym for School Age) was

1995

A grant from the California Community Foundation makes the SAGE Artist-in-Residence project possible. The goal of the project is to have various local artists work with children at the SAGE Center.

1996

Crystal Stairs hosts its first Crystal Stairs Awards. The evening's honorees are Dr. Karen Hill-Scott with the Rechin' Landin's and Turnin' Corners award; child care provider, Delores Parks, and parents Samuel Parra and Yvonne Chavez with the Still Climbin' award.

1997

The Clinton White House holds the "Conference on Early Childhood Development: What the Newest Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children." Crystal Stairs hosts the White House Satellite Conference for Southern California at the Davidson Executive Conference Center at USC.



1998

The S. Mark Taper Foundation funds Project 730, an initiative to demonstrate what is needed to help parents transition from welfare to work. It focuses on providing job preparedness, effective communication and parenting skills, and the abilities needed to succeed in the workplace.

CRYSTAL STAIRS PRE- AND POST- WELFARE REFORM

A closer look at Pre-and Post-Welfare Reform and its impact on Crystal Stairs budgets, staff sizes and ability to help families.

FY 97/98 (Pre-Welfare Reform)	FY 98/99 (Welfare Reform Starts)	FY 99/00 (Welfare Reform Grows)	FY 00/01 (More Growth)	FY 01/02 (Peak of Welfare Reform)
Annual Budget \$23,561,216	Annual Budget \$45,492,953	Annual Budget \$73,930,501	Annual Budget \$102,231,988	Annual Budget \$161,907,162
Staff Size 183	Staff Size 290	Staff Size 422	Staff Size 548	Staff Size 590

Statewide Service Data (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network)

Average annual fees for full-time care for an infant in a family child-care home \$7,937	Average annual fees for full-time care for 4-year-old in family child-care home \$7,180	Number of families served by Child Care Fee Assistance 67,000	Number of children served by Child Care Fee Assistance 104,900	Number of child care providers participating in Fee Assistance 80,291
Average annual fees for full-time center care for an infant \$11,580	Average annual fees for full-time center care for 4-year-old child \$8,234			

established in 1994 to provide low-income families with a safe and stimulating pre-kindergarten and before and after school environment to place their children while they work, seek job training, or both. The plan to open a child care center in the heart of Nickerson Gardens was audacious. Nearly half of Watts' residents were living below the federal poverty level, and over sixty percent of children under

the age of five were living in families whose annual income was less than \$17,050 for a family of four. In 2006, LAPD Police Chief William Bratton declared the Jordan Downs-Nickerson Gardens area "the most violent community in the country."

By contrast, 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. SAGE's Director, LaTisha Wilson, has worked at the center since 1997. She describes SAGE's priorities for their children as "giving them

experiences, exposing them to opportunities, to people, to things so that they know this is not the end for them. That they can really do and be anything that they want to be." This focus beyond the immediate trappings of poverty is a consistent aspect of the philosophy that drove the creation of SAGE. "The founders always had a focus on positive outcomes for children and families. It was at the heart of everything that they did," says Carl Ballton, a Senior Vice President at Union Bank who served on the board of Crystal Stairs for 25 years. "That's why the organization has run a child care center at Nickerson Gardens over all these years. It's just a piece of what the organization does but having that direct connection with how the children develop and are treated in child care helps them to understand and better serve their clientele, which are the child care providers that they serve."

For child care providers, Crystal Stairs' consistent support and technical assistance for the industry and the community is invaluable. "I see them helping people," says Betty Luckett, founder and Administrator of From the Heart Preschool in Inglewood. "They've had provider trainings, they've had parenting seminars which I thought were awesome, they've

1998

Crystal Stairs explodes as a result of the implementation of California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), or Welfare-to-Work. Numerous agency projects are initiated, staffing doubles, office sites expand, and Crystal Stairs' revenues grow exponentially.

2000

Board establishes the Proper Time Award in memory of founding staff member and Associate Director of Finance, Yvette Henry. Nominated by co-workers, the awardee demonstrates work performance, embodying Ms. Henry's belief that "hard work is easy work not done at the proper time."



2002

Crystal Stairs hosts its first Annual Legislators' Child Care Budget and Policy Briefing. State and federal representatives receive information about child care services and funding in their districts, enabling them to better understand the landscape of subsidized child care.

2003

After operating the Child Care Food Program for almost 25 years, and unable to reduce the program's operating costs, the agency is forced to close the program entirely. Thousands of families and providers are impacted by this loss.

2003

Crystal Stairs organizes LACHildcareCOUNTS, a coalition of child care agencies, providers and advocacy groups. The group rallies at the Children's Museum to save child care in the state budget. Child activists voice their concerns to a crowd of 3,000.



Preschool insurance costs skyrocketing Publicity of sex abuse cases blamed

By Wade Swanson
 Insurance has become more than a mere expense for child care centers. It has become a major concern for parents and providers alike. Large increases in rates and coverage options have led to a re-evaluation of the industry. The cost of insurance has risen sharply in recent years, and the industry is expected to continue to rise. The cost of insurance is expected to rise by 10 to 15 percent in 2004. The cost of insurance is expected to rise by 10 to 15 percent in 2004. The cost of insurance is expected to rise by 10 to 15 percent in 2004.



"From the beginning, we viewed ourselves as translators and amplifiers of the impact that public policy was going to have on our community."
 — Dr. Alice Walker Duff

had specialists that help parents make their way through. And as they get into jobs, Crystal Stairs helps make sure parents stay on track by checking back with them. It's an organization that helps people who want to help themselves."

Betty Luckett identifies Crystal Stairs' advocacy work as the most unique aspect of the organization as a Resource and Referral agency. "When there were budget cuts and budget crises, they didn't just come out and say 'We're going to suffer.' They said, 'The families and

communities that we all serve are going to suffer. And we want you to get out and speak for yourselves. Advocate for your children. Gather together your parents that are going to lose child care or may have changes in their child care because of these budget cuts or because of what the Governor is going to propose."

Crystal Stairs' advocacy work has included major efforts to preserve child care-based nutrition programs, child care subsidy programs for low-income families, and the development

of an informed and engaged community-based constituency. Through its Community Voices program, Crystal Stairs has worked with its partners in the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network to train over 3,000 parents and providers to engage as child care advocates at local, state, and federal levels of government.

"From the beginning, we viewed ourselves as translators and amplifiers of the impact that public policy was going to have on our community, then communities could really understand what policy meant and affect it," says Dr. Alice Walker Duff, co-founder and ten-year President of Crystal Stairs. "Advocacy wasn't just a program, it was a process, a strategy. And we had to develop a strategy that was inclusive beyond policy wonks to all providers, parents, and the general public. It was necessary if we were going to change the minds of people who didn't understand that working parents need child care—especially those earning very low incomes."

Many of Crystal Stairs' partners and supporters also view its advocacy work as critical to the general advancement of the child care industry. "I've included Crystal Stairs' staff in a lot of our board meetings to give the board a little more perspective on advocacy," says Levi Kingston. "This perspective is lacking, in my opinion, in child care in general. Crystal Stairs has been aware of this and has made it a point to be advocates and not just sitting on the sidelines waiting for things to happen, which is peculiar to the profession."

"I don't think that anybody

2003

After 23 years at the helm, Crystal Stairs co-founder, Dr. Alice Walker Duff, steps down as President. Dr. Duff continues to serve on the Board of Directors. Holly J. Mitchell is appointed Chief Executive Officer and Javier LaFianza, Chief Operating Officer.



2004

Crystal Stairs' Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center receives national accreditation as a high-quality school-age child care program. SAGE is one of only a few school-age programs to achieve these standards and the only one located in a public housing development.

2004

What goes up can come down. After four years of welfare reform-related rapid growth, a decrease in revenue as a result of declining welfare caseloads requires our first down-sizing. Lay-offs and voluntary terminations result in a 17 percent reduction in our workforce.



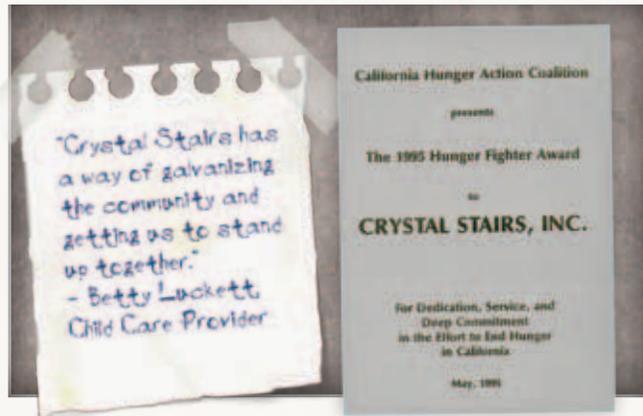
2005

Crystal Stairs ends its notable experiment with decentralization and comes full circle, once again housing itself under one roof at the Wateridge Business Park.

else has been able to do that for child care workers,” says Betty Lockett. “Child care providers are sort of different. We’re not a typical industry because we’re each our own boss. Each provider is their own independent company. So, sometimes it’s hard to get people together. Sometimes people don’t see each other as resources but as competitors. Crystal Stairs has a way of galvanizing the community and getting us to stand up together.”

Most in the profession agree that unity among Crystal Stairs, providers, parents, and supporters of child care will be essential to weathering the current economic crisis, massive federal and state budget deficits and associated cuts to child care. In October 2010, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger cut the \$256 million program that assists low-income parents who have worked their way off welfare but don’t yet earn enough to afford child care. The elimination of Stage 3 subsidized child care will leave an estimated 80,000 children and their parents without access to child care.

Dr. Karen Hill-Scott fears that at least half a generation of children in the Crystal Stairs service area will be left without the opportunities that their predecessors had. “This



is not a gradual decline,” she says. “We will lose kids. We will lose them in terms of the intellectual capital and potential they represent.” Funding for child care will disappear, but the demand will remain. “I can’t imagine what will happen to those women and families who can’t work because they don’t have care,” says Betty Lockett. “Will you be forced to leave a 4- or 5-year-old in a house by themselves? I wonder if our decision makers really considered this.”

In response to the largest reduction in funding that the organization has ever faced, Crystal Stairs will be forced to tighten its programming and reduce its staff. Dr. Hill-Scott describes the current climate as orienting the organization back to its entrepreneurial days. “Crystal Stairs knows

how to do this. We grew the organization once and will grow it again. Crystal Stairs is strong at its core.” The initial cut to Stage 3 child care represents a substantial decrease in the organization’s annual budget. “Unless some miracle happens, we will be smaller than we are now,” says Mary Hruby. “But we will have leadership and staff who are here to keep our mission going and operate with our core values. We’ll be here.”

Crystal Stairs’ supporters recognize the significant role it’s played in the “professionalization” of child care. “They helped us become accredited,” says Betty Lockett. Accreditation requires child care providers to meet national standards of quality that have been established by national child care organizations. “The best thing about Crystal Stairs is that we just

CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Children Enrolled in Low- or No-Cost Health Insurance

5,817*

Children Who Accessed Health Programs

4,886

Children Still Using Services After 12 Months

3,616

***2009/2010 target**

5,141

were not going to take ‘less than’ for the children, the parents, and community that we are part of,” says Dr. Walker Duff. Before Crystal Stairs launched its Support Provider Accreditation Now (SPAN) project in 2003, there were only seven accredited programs within its service area. By 2008, Crystal Stairs had provided training, materials, on-site assistance, and financial support to assist 56 providers in gaining their accreditation. “They brought accreditation to the Los Angeles area where there weren’t many accredited providers or day care centers. And that is a huge legacy,” adds

2006

Community Voices, a county-wide advocacy project, is launched. Parents and providers are trained to become advocates for children and child care.

The project has trained over 3000 advocates and has sent dozens to testify and rally in Los Angeles, Sacramento and Washington, D.C.



2007

The late Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald tours SAGE. She was a stalwart champion for her community and for education. She was dedicated to the child care center and helped pave the way for a number of improvements and opportunities.



2007

The first of three research reports, Crystal Stairs releases “A Step Up, But Not Out: Tracking the Poverty and Income Impacts of Child Care Subsidies.” The report is read and circulated throughout the state by child care advocates.





Betty Luckett, whose preschool represents the only accredited provider in Inglewood. “We came from babysitting and developed and made the field of early childhood a professional field with people with degrees and Ph.D.s,” says Martha Williams, a 26-year employee of Crystal Stairs.

The clearest impact of Crystal Stairs’ work can be measured in the lives of the people it’s touched. Dr. Karen Hill-Scott recalls a particular encounter with a teller at her local bank. “The woman kept looking at my check. She finally says, ‘Your name is really familiar. Are you the same Karen Hill-Scott who signs my child care checks? You’re at Crystal Stairs?’ I said, ‘Yes’ and she said ‘Crystal Stairs saved my life.’” The woman was without child

care following a relocation to Los Angeles and contacted Crystal Stairs for help. She received a referral to a child care center and payment assistance. “And, I thought, there’s the mission,” says Dr. Hill-Scott. “That was the vision. It had all been fulfilled in this one person.”

Barbara George was a single mother of three small children surviving on public assistance. She had been collecting welfare for seven years and was determined to make a change. “I took advantage of the opportunity to go to school as part of welfare to work,” says Barbara. “I qualified for financial aid but that only covered my classes. I had no one to take care of my kids and no way to pay for it.” Through word of mouth, Barbara learned about Crystal Stairs. “I called Crystal Stairs and thank God it kicked in. At the time, Crystal Stairs was the only thing I had. They paid for

my child care, I was able to go to school and work at a part-time job, and during the summer my kids were able to go to a summer day camp. I know I wouldn’t have been able to afford any of that.”

The road toward a new life was long and Barbara faced many obstacles, including the simple challenge of juggling her responsibility to her own education with that of her children’s. “Some days I just had to help my kids with their homework, catch a little sleep, then wake up at two in the morning to get my own work done. My son, who was only seven at the time, once woke himself up in the middle of the night just to make sure I was doing my homework.” Eventually, Barbara went on to earn her associate’s, bachelor’s

and master’s degrees. “My salary at the time was about \$13,000 or \$14,000 a year,” she says. Barbara now earns a six-figure salary as a Principal in the Early Education Division of the Los Angeles Unified School District. “That’s a big step from where I came from.” Barbara is the first person in her family to finish high school and pursue higher education. Her eldest daughter and sons now attend the University of Hawaii, University of California Santa Cruz, and Cal State University Northridge.

“If not for Crystal Stairs, I don’t know how I would have done it,” says Barbara. “When you really want to get out of the rut you’re in, especially when you’re on public assistance, and you can’t find anyone to take care of your kids, it’s devastating.” She describes the comfort that Crystal Stairs brought to her life as critical to her success. “When you’re going to work and you’re away from your kids you don’t have to feel bad or worry,” says Barbara. “It really makes a big difference.”

Because of the vision, mission and work of Crystal Stairs, thousands of parents can rise every day, prepare for their work days, and with peace of mind place their children into the nurturing hands of a trained child care provider who will help their child to grow and thrive.

2007

Artesia Price thanks us for our service, and for standing by her while she receives the educational degrees that allow her to land a full-time job that pays her enough to cover the costs of child care without a subsidy. She voluntarily self-terminates from our program.



2008

Jumping into the 21st Century, Crystal Stairs launches new 24/7 services. Through our website, www.crystalstairs.org, parents can get child care referrals on-line. Providers can access claims information on-line or through an automated telephone information system.

2009

In the midst of a national recession and an explosive state budget crisis, Crystal Stairs maintains its infrastructure and major programs and is even able to secure federal funding, with support from Congresswoman Diane Watson, to revive its Special Needs Advisory Project (SNAP). SNAP fills a needed void in the child care community.



2010

Launch of Crystal Stairs’ Community Forum, a three-part panel discussion on relevant community issues. Topics include: “How Healthy is our Community: A Conversation on Healthcare Reform and Health Access”; “The Education and Prison Pipelines: In Which Do Our Priorities Lie?”; and “The Quality Rating System: What We All Need to Know about Quality Child Care.”



CRYSTAL STAIRS

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Nickerson Gardens

SAGE Child Care Center

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Co-Founder and Board Chairperson

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Chief Program Officer

Ly Tanya Loughridge
Chief Financial Officer

William Pino
Chief Technology Officer

We selected our name from the Langston Hughes poem, “Mother to Son,” which captures our perspective on life and our aspirations for the future—that one day, all children will experience a life of crystal stairs.

MOTHER TO SON

*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.*

—Langston Hughes

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