

Support A Stepping Stone Foundation through the Arizona Tax Credit for the Working Poor

Do you itemize on your Arizona Tax return? If so, you may be eligible for the Welfare Tax Reform Credit program. This is a dollar-for-dollar credit on your Arizona tax liability when you donate to a self-certified nonprofit.

A Stepping Stone Foundation is a self-certified nonprofit organization that serves the working poor in Arizona. We are so grateful to those of you who qualified and contributed through this program last year. Over \$35,000 was raised for the Foundation in 2007! This year, married couples filing jointly may donate up to \$400 and the limit is \$200 for individuals. It costs you nothing and makes a huge difference in our community.

As you will read in various articles in this issue, A Stepping Stone Foundation is no exception to the economy and we are working hard to raise funds to sustain the classrooms. This tax credit donation will certainly help the fundraising efforts and is a win-win for donors. Please consider helping us out this year with this donation.

This Tax Credit is separate from the School Tax Credit, so you can take full advantage of both. If you would like to donate, please complete the form to the right and send it along with your donation to the Stepping Stone office. If you have any questions, call the Stepping Stone office at (602) 843-8281. We hope you will join us in supporting literacy and strengthening families and communities in Arizona!

First Annual Stepping Stone Foundation Bowl A Thon...A Striking Success!

Many thanks to co-chairs of the event, Evelyn Shapiro, Michael Curry and Ernesto De Leon of Colonia Bank for all their hard work creating this fun day of bowling to benefit the Stepping Stone Classrooms! Look for pictures of this great event in the November newsletter and plan to join the fun next August at this annual fundraiser!



Welfare Reform
Tax Credit
Donation Form



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____

☐ Cash/Check ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AMEX

CC No: _____

Exp Date: _____

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- ☐ Please send me more information
- ☐ I would like to visit a classroom
- ☐ Please send me volunteer and Board Member Information

Please mail your donation
before December 31, 2009 to:
A Stepping Stone Foundation
P.O. Box 87149
Phoenix, AZ 85080

Give yourself a (tax)
break...while helping the
Stepping Stone Kids
and their families!



President's Corner, by Craig Hansen, President

2009/2010 - Off to a Great Start!

Welcome back to another exciting year of preschool and family literacy programs in the Fowler and Alhambra school districts. I am proud to report to you that all classrooms are full and most of them even have waiting lists. The classes are up and running and the children and families are excited to begin this new venture in their lives.

In an article on page 5, there is an explanation of our new relationship with the classroom on the Isaac preschool campus. We will continue minimal support of the classroom, however, the classroom is at a point where it can support itself with A Stepping Stone Foundation's style of literacy model and the board agreed it is time to turn our focus towards looking for other opportunities.

We have a wonderful staff of lead teachers, assistant teachers and child-care workers on each campus and they are all looking forward to the new school year.

The Stepping Stone Board will be meeting for a retreat on Saturday, September 19th to update our strategic plan and to evaluate if we are still on the cutting edge of preschool and family literacy programs. We will also examine how we can build on our program successes. You will read about the results of the retreat in the November issue of this newsletter.

Once again, we need to aggressively pursue fundraising for our classrooms as the downturn in the economy has hurt most non-profits and we are no exception. A great way to do this is to contribute to A Stepping Stone Foundation through the Arizona Tax Credit for the Working Poor. See the

article and donation form on the first page of this newsletter. In 2008, over \$35,000 was donated through this campaign which goes a long way toward supporting the classrooms. Tell your friends about this tax credit – if they qualify, it is a dollar for dollar credit on the state tax and is therefore no cost to the donor. Again, I urge you all to consider this donation.

The Christmas Angel program is coming up in November and this is a wonderful way to experience the true gift of giving. The smiles on those children's faces when they receive these gifts is all the reward you will ever need for participating in this program. See the next newsletter for more details on the Christmas Angel program for the Stepping Stone Kids.

You will also see in this newsletter a long list of generous supporters who contributed cash and/or in-kind donations to the Foundation in fiscal year 2008/2009. Please take a look at this and see all the wonderful people who continue to support the Stepping Stone Foundation.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all of our teachers and child-care workers who come back year after year to teach these kids, the office staff for keeping the organization running, and most of all, YOU! Without your continued support, we would not be where we are today – in our 20th year of providing high quality, tuition free preschool to children and families in need of literacy programs.

We as a Board look forward to another great year at A Stepping Stone Foundation.

Craig

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Director's Footnotes

by Cynthia Gattorna, Executive Director

So many wonderful things are happening at A Stepping Stone Foundation! Our goal to provide young children with connections to opportunities through education is alive and well. We find ourselves beginning the 20th program year this fall. After two decades, we are in a beautiful new office thanks to Jack and Vianne Kucera of Climatec. Additionally, our website will have a new look and feel by December of this year. Finally, please read the related article in this issue about our continued support in Isaac School District (see page 5). We continue to fund the Isaac Preschool on a limited basis. Isaac Preschool did not reduce their capacity as a result. While we continue to provide some monetary support there, that program is ready to stand alone and we consider it a great success story!

The Foundation continues to dialogue with local First Things First Councils as to how best to collaborate in our community to provide excellent and age appropriate education to three- and four-year-old children at risk of school failure due to poor or no literacy in their local environments; however,

A Stepping Stone Foundation was not awarded any money this year to do so.

As always, your support is critically needed. We have reduced our direct presence in the community to four classrooms, down one from last year. As we have worked to increase the level of education and experience of our teachers, the price per classroom has increased slightly. We are examining ways to cut costs without sacrificing the quality of our services. A warm and special thanks to supporter, Jerry George, who visited A Stepping Stone Foundation's Executive Board session recently and gave us his ideas toward this end. We have continued to use reserve funds for yet another year, and know this cannot continue. Please watch and listen closely as the Board emerges with new fundraising strategies following our annual board retreat September 18th and 19th. As always, I am open to all new ideas and look forward to working with our Board to sustain our program presence in the Phoenix area as long as the need exists.

Cindy

Welcome Back 2009/2010 Teachers!

Westwood Elementary

Janet Casteñada, Lead Teacher (four-year-old class)

Maria Flores, Assistant

Fran Smith, Lead Teacher (three-year-old class)

Neida Asencio, Assistant

Granada Primary

Janice Milks, Lead Teacher

Veronica Dozal, Assistant

Fowler Elementary

Amy Aasen, Lead Teacher

Ivonne Diaz, Assistant

These are the people that make the difference in the Stepping Stone children and families' lives. Their love of their job and the children is very apparent in the classrooms they've created.

Paulette's Corner

A Stepping Stone Foundation

Program Coordinator

Our 20th year has begun. Staff meetings have been attended, rooms have been prepared and first contacts with families have taken place. By the time you read this, classes will have begun for children and parents.

We have full classrooms with waiting lists on all campuses. There has been a change at the Westwood Elementary campus. Fran Smith's classroom will have three-year-olds instead of four-year-olds. This change provides the opportunity for an additional year of learning and growing for our children as well as more learning time for their parents. Our other classrooms will continue to offer preschool experiences for four-year olds.

Our program at Fowler received a grant from the Junior League. In addition to funds, a wonderful group of women will participate in five events with our families during this school year. The first event will be a *Read-In* in October. We are very appreciative of their support of our newest classroom.

Over the past several months the news has been filled with stories regarding cuts to our public education system. Due to your generosity and grants we have received, we have not made any cuts in our programs. We celebrate the fact that all of our lead teachers are now certified in Early Childhood Education. This certificate will not be required for preschool teachers until 2012. With three classrooms starting the accreditation process this year we continue to strive to provide a preschool program of the highest quality for our children and their families.

Paulette

Classroom Notes

Westwood Primary

Ms. Fran Smith and Ms. Neida Asencio

Dear Friends,

Once again we're in the process of preparing for another school year, and had a great day with 15 lively three-year-olds ready for our first day of school on August 17th.

Before school began, we had the pleasure of visiting all of our families in their homes. We are fortunate again this year to have several returning families who are committed to making this another successful and fun year.

Many of our families are referred to us by previous families. This year we have a mom who is so pleased we had room for her and her daughter, she can't stop smiling! She has wanted to go back to school for a long time but didn't know if she could do it. She only completed the first grade and was afraid to start. One of our former parents told her about our program, and said it would be a great start for her. So with the help and encouragement of that former parent, she is in our program and looking forward to her new adventure in her ESL classes!

We are all aware of how the economy has hit all of our lives and we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

What we do know is how A Stepping Stone Foundation has helped the families we work with and we want to express once again our gratitude. To you, supporters of A Stepping Stone Foundation, thank you for making a difference. The future is looking brighter because of you!

Fran & Neida

Evaluation Report from Dolores Retana

"In short, you guys rock!" was the quote from independent evaluator Dolores Retana, M.A. Ed to our preschool teachers late in August as she went over the evaluation results with them and Program Coordinator, Paulette Harshberger. After collecting data from the Social Competency and Behavioral Scales for preschool, compiling results from the Get Ready to Read school readiness tool, and receiving in person feedback from Teachers and parents, Dolores informs us that our program is making a significant difference in the lives of our children and their families. Regarding the Get Ready to read, "in aggregate, on average, an 81% improvement is noted (interpret cautiously)," meeting our goal of 80% set at the beginning of the school year. Thank you for your support! As you can see, it is well worth your resources, time and passion!

Granada Primary

Ms. Janice Milks and Ms. Veronica Dozal

News from Granada Primary

It is great to be back! Our school year has gotten off to a wonderful start. We have 20 bright, shining faces full of energy and challenge, ready to begin a new adventure in learning.

This year we have more fathers asking to participate in ESL classes than before. Instead of 20 parents for ESL and GED we total 25, with four of them attending GED.

It is always special to rekindle old friendships with our returning families, many of whom we have not seen for four years. We look forward to building new ones with our first time families.

Our families are eager to participate in the program, and send their thanks for allowing them to have this opportunity.

Thanks to all who work so hard to make this possible. It's going to be a great year.

Jan & Veronica

Shop, Shop, Shop...and Benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation

You are cordially invited to a CAbi Clothes Party at the home of Board members Jackie Smith and Wendy Blair on October 17th, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Founder Bill Smith's daughter, Annette Stertzer, is now selling this exquisite line of clothing and will donate 10% of the proceeds from the party to A Stepping Stone Foundation.

If you have not heard of it, CAbi is a line of on-trend, beautifully made and reasonably priced clothing. CAbi stands for Carol Anderson by Invitation. Carol Anderson is a talented designer, and her exclusive, custom-designed clothes are sold only in homes by invitation.

Please join Jackie, Wendy and Annette and see Bill and Ann's daughter, professional model Alison Pachoe, model the clothing.

The Fall '09 line of clothing has just been released and they are really beautiful. Snacks, "spirited" and non-spirited beverages and a great deal of FUN will be served.

To RSVP, more information or directions, please call Jackie at (602) 525-7507

Classroom Notes

Fowler Elementary

Ms. Amy Aasen and Ivonne Diaz

Welcome to Fowler Elementary School! We are excited to show off our brand new classroom. Our school was renovated this summer and EVERYTHING is brand new. The students who returned from last year were very excited to see their new room. The parents were also amazed at the changes. We are so excited to start the year with a full classroom. We started our program in January and are full already with several families on a waiting list. VERY EXCITING! Our first day of school was great. Everything went very smoothly. A few tears, but they quickly turned into smiles. We look forward to working closely with all of the families in our class this year. *Amy & Ivonne*



Westwood Primary

Ms. Janet Castaneda and Ms. Maria Flores

We had a wonderful first week with our new students. Every day we have learned something new about one another and have starting building our classroom community.

We believe the time we take to visit each family before our students start school really helps build trust between parents and teachers. I try to remember that for each family this is a new experience and that it is so important to make them feel welcomed and prepared for the year ahead. Home visits help us build stronger meaningful relationships with the whole family. Families appreciate the personal attention and support. This year we have eight returning families, and you can see how much they have grown from last year. From the very first day they took on a role to help their new friends. I have also seen their parents providing support to the newer families.

A Stepping Stone Program provides so many unique opportunities for learning. I am always excited to begin another year in anticipation of what it will bring. I look forward to continuing sharing the events of our class throughout the year and as always appreciate all your support that allows us to continue this important work. You are the guardian angels helping to build the foundation for our children's educational future.

God Bless!

Janet & Maria

Isaac Preschool Lives on With Support From A Stepping Stone Foundation

As you read our Program Director and President's reports, many of you might notice we are funding four complete classrooms this fall; three in Alhambra District and one in Fowler Elementary District. Some of you may be missing news from Isaac Preschool Campus. Our long-standing relationship with Isaac School District is still intact; however, we have reduced our monetary support, both due to scarcity of funds and because -- they are a success! Isaac Preschool Campus had two family literacy style classrooms last year, one of which A Stepping Stone has funded for 19

years. This year, although our funding is significantly reduced on that campus, Isaac Preschool Campus continues to have two family literacy style preschool classrooms. A Stepping Stone Foundation values its continued relationship with Isaac School District and has committed to support high quality childcare for this school year.

Our vision has always been to provide services where none existed. Our very first Stepping Stone classroom was located at in Isaac District at Mitchell School in the fall of 1990 when early childhood education awareness was just peek-

ing over Arizona's horizon. We have supported high quality preschool in Isaac Elementary District, sometimes funding one and sometimes two classrooms continuously all those years. Our current support at Isaac Preschool Campus is for quality childcare in a program that continues to require parents to attend GED Prep and/or English language learning and parenting education while providing excellent preschool to disadvantaged children. No services were lost or removed from families in the Isaac District.

Way to go Isaac!

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Many thanks to the following donors for their monetary or in-kind donations to A Stepping Stone Foundation in fiscal year 2008/2009 (ending June 30, 2009). Supporters such as these generous people are the backbone of the Foundation and they have all made a difference to so many lives (list continues on page 7).

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"A Stepping Stone Foundation preschool classrooms make the difference between night and day for our families whose children are at risk for school failure."

Dr. Jim Rice,
Alhambra School District Superintendent

Thank you to the Alhambra School District Print Shop and Rainy Cramer for printing this newsletter!

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DATES TO REMEMBER!

Stepping Into College
Saturday, September 26, 2009

CABi Clothes Party
October 17th 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
10% benefits
A Stepping Stone Foundation

2010 Cena y Serenata
February 13, 2010

March 23, 2010
Bill and Billie's Kids Go to College
Annual Dinner

Be an Angel this Christmas...

*Help Support our Christmas Angel
Program for Stepping Stone Children
and their Families*



The Christmas Angels are flying again! For the 19th year, A Stepping Stone Foundation is proudly sponsoring the Christmas Angel Tree program for our preschool children and their families. Imagine the excitement these children will feel as they receive their presents! You will rejoice too as you realize how good it feels to put smiles on these children's faces that otherwise might not have presents. This year we have close to 75 families, many of whom are in great financial need with two to five children. We need many hands to make these children's holiday season special.

Angel Tags representing the 'wish' lists of all our preschool children and their siblings 12 yrs old and under will be available beginning Sunday, November 22nd through December 9th on our Angel Tree at Shadow Rock Church, 12861 N. 8th Avenue, Phoenix.

Also, you may obtain tags by calling Beverly Carroll, Project Chairman, at 623-694-9191.

Guidelines for gifts: Every child should receive a toy, a book, and an article of clothing. Limit spending to \$50 per child's tag to ensure that all recipients' gifts are somewhat equal. Sorry, we cannot handle large items such as bikes. Each tag will contain the complete guidelines.

The Angel Tree will also hold Stars. Taking a star means you wish to donate dollars to the project which will be used to buy gifts if a child's tag is not chosen or for food coupons for the family to spend at local grocery stores to ease their holiday meal shopping. **If Shadow Rock is not a convenient location for you, please mail a check to A Stepping Stone Foundation, P.O. Box 87149 Phoenix, AZ 85080.** Make checks payable to A Stepping Stone Foundation and identify as a gift to the 2009 Christmas Angel Project.

Gifts should be delivered to Shadow Rock no later than Thursday, December 10th.

Tax Credit

For the
Working Poor
Donation Form



NOTE: The tax credit law has changed! Anyone qualifies for this tax credit. There is no baseline qualifying year anymore!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____

☐ Cash/Check ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ AMEX

CC No: _____

Exp Date: _____

Signature: _____

- ☐ Please send me more information
- ☐ I would like to visit a classroom
- ☐ Please send me volunteer and Board Member Information

**Please mail your donation
before December 31, 2009 to:
A Stepping Stone Foundation
P.O. Box 87149
Phoenix, AZ 85080**

*Please Consider helping out A Stepping Stone
Foundation while earning a state tax credit!
It costs you nothing!
See the article on page 6*

President's Corner, by Craig Hansen, President

2009 Board Retreat

Planning the Future of A Stepping Stone Foundation

On September 19th, A Stepping Stone Foundation's Governing Board took an entire day to explore and discuss where we are and where we want to go. Wonderfully facilitated by Karen Kurtz, the board reviewed and discussed: 1) A Stepping Stone Foundation's accomplishments over the last two years; 2) The Foundation's business model in terms of sustainability and identified options for making ASSF sustainable and competitive over the long term; 3) Identified the trends and forces most impacting ASSF's future sustainability; and 4) Identified specific, concrete, measurable changes the Foundation wants to accomplish in the next three years to continue moving toward achieving our mission.

I am pleased to share the many positive things that were accomplished over the past two years: 1) A new classroom was opened at Fowler Elementary School; 2) The program model keeps getting stronger; 3) There is a strong relationship between parents and staff; 4) ASSF hired a Program Director; 5) ASSF has found that parents without children currently in the program want to continue their adult education. Three parents received their associate's degree and are working on their BA; 6) 75 families (189 individuals) were served in 2008/2009; 7) All of the lead teachers are certified in Early Childhood Education (this certification will be mandatory for all preschool teachers in 2012); 8) ASSF opened a dedicated class for three-year-olds. The children will be in the preschool program for two years now instead of one and their parents will be able to participate in two years of adult education; 9) Two students with ASSF scholarships graduated from college; 10) Thirteen students are in college. (one in medical school) with scholarships from ASSF; 11) The transition to new leadership of the Christmas Angel Program went smoothly (see article on page 1); 12) ASSF is launching a new website on January 1, 2010; 13) ASSF continues to partner with Climatec, APS, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and others in the business community; 14) The board members continue to be dedicated and work hard for ASSF; 15) ASSF celebrated the 20th anniversary; 16) ASSF has developed new relationships with Helios Foundation, Aguila, Jr. League, Teach for America and with the Hispanic professional community; 17) Many grants were written; 18) ASSF is applying for First Things First funding; 19) ASSF held the first bowling tournament fundraiser; 20) The Isaac classroom is funding itself with minimal financial support from ASSF; 21) Cena y Serenata 2009 was very

successful; 22) Tracking of the kids that have finished the preschool program has improved; and 23) ASSF has received outstanding feedback from an outside evaluator for two years.

WOW! Look what has happened! Now, where do we go from here? After much discussion about ASSF's business model, the board agreed what concrete actions need to be accomplished in the next eighteen months to ensure sustainability:

1) Develop a mentoring program for current parents and kids; 2) Identify potential collaborators; 3) Create a marketing/PR strategy; 4) Expand the use of the internet and website to promote the organization; 5) Develop and get consensus on a clear message that we all use to promote the organization; 6) Expand the current network contacts (media, corporations etc.); 7) Strategically grow the board. 8) Identify new ways to make money; 9) Create a fundraising event for excitement, friends, and public relations; 10) Create a campaign to push the tax credits; 11) Apply for the First Things First grant again (March – May 2010); 12) Create ways to stay connected with kids in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

And now, we ask our supporters...what would you like to see us do? And finally, how can you help us reach these goals?

The biggest concern right now is fundraising. In the economic times we are facing right now, non-profits are feeling the pinch – and ASSF is no exception. We have a tough year of raising funds ahead of us to sustain the four classrooms through the year and beyond.

How can you help? Donate to the tax credit, **anyone can donate - there is no longer a base-line giving year to qualify** (see form on page 1), make a donation to the Foundation, talk to your friends and family about donating to ASSF, look at your estate planning and think about leaving a legacy to ASSF; join us at Cena y Serenata on February 13, 2010 and have a great time while raising funds for ASSF; help us come up with new, innovative ideas for fundraising...there are many things you can do to help. Until this economy recovers, our focus will be on fundraising so that we can accomplish the goals listed above and serve the children and families with a high quality program that will impact them for the rest of their lives.

On behalf of the board, I thank you for all your past support and look forward to your continued support of A Stepping Stone Foundation's Family Literacy Program.

- Craig

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Director's Footnotes

by Cynthia Gattorna, Executive Director

I had the privilege of chatting with Sean McLaughlin of KPHO Channel 5 a few weeks ago. He was interviewing several local organizations that the kind ladies of The Junior League of Phoenix support. A Stepping Stone Foundation is the grateful recipient of a Jr. League grant and volunteer agreement to help support our Fowler Expansion classroom. In preparation for that interview, I was given a series of questions to answer (the interviews will be aired as part of the Jr. League's new marketing video).

Should you not have the opportunity to view it, I have paraphrased my responses below.

- Cindy

What is the biggest challenge Phoenix is facing with early childhood education? What needs to be done? Everyone in the City of Phoenix needs to understand the importance of caring for our youngest citizens! The biggest challenge is finding the resources to be sure all children have access to safe quality education in developmentally appropriate ways. Families, especially those folks that spend the most time with children, must understand the importance of those first five years. These are challenging times, economically and socially. Until those in Congress, the State Legislature and the Phoenix City Council show through the allocation of resources and political focus that early childhood is a top priority, those of us in the trenches will have an uphill battle to be sure the general public knows the importance of early health and education. We need the public to know about the importance of nutrition, safe environments and age appropriate language and math experiences. Only then can we really further focus on what will ultimately "save the world," which is a

well-rounded education that not only produces literate students, but those that can solve the complex problems facing us today.

Define family literacy - Everyone in the whole family values the ability to read, write, and think critically. They have a vision of their children going to college or university and they know that learning is a life-long journey. For A Stepping Stone Foundation it means educating two generations at once. While three- and four-year-old children are in a quality preschool, parents are in their own education classes (English, GED, Parenting) and younger siblings are in safe, caring childcare settings. Home visits are made monthly by lead and assistant teachers and at least one parent must work in the child's preschool room on literacy activities.

Why is it so important to focus on the family unit? Think of something traumatic that happens in the environment, an oil spill for example. The local bird, fish and mammal populations are impacted for years to come. You can clean up a shore bird or a baby seal if you get to them in time, but then would you release them back to the same toxic environment? Before their old environment is repaired? Our families are begging the City of Phoenix and the State of Arizona to help provide them a better environment in which to raise their children. A Stepping Stone Foundation is helping families repair their environments through educating two generations at once, not only to learn English and to read at an age appropriate level, but to create and reinforce the value of life-long education.

What do you see as the need within the greater Phoenix area? Again, without a doubt it is access to quality health and education for ALL children, not just those who happen to be born to families of means. One way to do this

is for all of us, from our city council to anyone with the means to donate time and resources to make early health and education for all a priority, especially for kids that don't typically have access to those basic needs.

What is the impact of not investing in early educational opportunities of our children? One popular definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Arizona is in the cellar when it comes measuring how children and youth are doing in our state. The 2009 *Kids Count* just came out a few weeks ago--only fourteen states have a worse rate of child poverty. Only six states have a worse record than Arizona when it comes to teens not attending school AND not working, and only four states have a worse record for teen birthrates. Perhaps most alarming, only one state has a worse teen death rate.

What does that have to do with early childhood? There are very long term, well respected studies that show that focus on early health and education has amazing long-term impacts when it comes to reducing police and court contact with at risk populations, increasing earning power, staying in school to get their high school diploma and seeking higher education.



"... simply stated, my position is that if government is going to invest in education at all, it should invest in enhancing early childhood development. For me, this is an economic growth issue."

*Jeffrey M. Lacker, Presiden
Federal Reserve Bank of
Richmond, 2007*

Classroom Notes

Westwood Primary

Ms. Fran Smith and Ms. Neida Asencio

Hello Stepping Stone Supporters,

Since the start of school in August, the "Mighty 3's" have come a long way. The first few days brought on some tears and separation anxiety. But now our mornings are full of smiles and friendly greetings from both our students and their parents.

Our main focus so far has been building our classroom community. We have read many books about being a friend, and the importance of working together and helping each other. A few class favorites have been the books *HUG*, *Corduroy*, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, and *Little Blue and Little Yellow*. Another book that has become a class favorite is called *FRIENDS, FRIENDS, WHO DO YOU SEE?* This is a class book we put together with every child's picture in it. Children love seeing themselves in pictures, and this is a great way for them to get to know each other. It has been a wonderful experience inducing our "Mighty 3's" to these books and others – I believe it's a great beginning to a lifelong love of reading.

The parents in our program have been attending several community workshops on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The response to these workshops has been great. These workshops are providing information about the importance of education, and the importance of parental involvement even as children get older. Other topics covered in these workshops are: exercise, nutrition, and discipline.

We have had a great start into the 2009/2010 school year, and we thank all of you once again for your continued support. Thank you! - Fran & Neida

Stepping Into College

25 former preschoolers and families gathered together on September 26th for Stepping Into College, sponsored by A Stepping Stone Foundation's Scholarship Team. These students, freshmen through seniors, were all in Stepping Stone preschool classrooms and were brought together to learn about college opportunities and scholarships, including the Foundation's Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship which is offered to any former preschooler planning to attend college.

Many thanks to Team Members Charlie Adornetto, Judy Brengi, Maritza Hernandez, Jackie Smith and Wendy Blair for facilitating this event.

Special thanks to Shadow Rock Church for hosting this event.

Granada Primary

Ms. Janice Milks and Ms. Veronica Dozal

The month of September was very exciting for us at Granada. Ms. Veronica became a U.S. citizen!

Her road to citizenship started in 1990, when she applied for her first work permit. After a long 9 year wait, she finally received it in 1999. After receiving her work permit she was allowed to apply for permanent residency. She was granted permanent residency in 2004. This brought her closer to citizenship, but there was still another required wait of 5 years before she could even apply. Finally in May of 2009 she was permitted to apply. She passed her interview and exam in August and was sworn in on September 18, 2009. It was a very special moment in her life. She is very proud to call herself an American.

The ceremony was very moving and made me realize how lucky I was to be born a citizen, something others have to work so hard for.

Our classroom is great. Our children are making so much progress, and learning so much. Our parents are very dedicated to learning English and supporting their children's learning.

This month we have learned about fall, used our five senses to taste and compare apples and we are learning about patterns (which will help us with reading and math).

Many old friends have stopped by to check up on us. They really want to let us know how much the program has helped them do well in school. They send their thanks.

Again, we send our sincere thanks to all who work so hard to make this program possible.

- Janice and Veronica

**Watch for A Stepping Stone Foundation's
New Website to be unveiled
on January 1, 2010.**

**The new website will be easier to navigate
and contain everything you need to know
about the Foundation. Many thanks to Jesse
Palacios of The Kreative Mind
for all his hard work in the
design and implementation
of A Stepping Stone Foundation's
New Look!**

Classroom Notes

Fowler Elementary*Ms. Amy Aasen and Ivonne Diaz*

Welcome to fall! We can't believe the end of the first quarter is already here. We have had so much fun! We had a wonderful time at our "Read In" at the park on October 17th with our volunteers. All our families were invited to join us to receive a book and take home an activity. Ms Ivonne and myself are noticing how the children are really learning a lot and they really enjoy each others company while at school. We have received several compliments on our parenting classes this year. The parents really love coming to school.

- Amy & Ivonne

**A Stepping Stone Foundation Scholar Update**

Brenda Cuellar and **Alyssa Burris** have enrolled in Glendale Community College. **Jose Benitez** plans to enroll at Phoenix College next semester. **Maritza Hernandez** graduated from ASU and is seeking employment in her field. **Vanessa Tang** graduated from ASU and entered medical school at University of Arizona. She writes, "Attending the University of Arizona has been great deal of fun. I am currently studying for my finals in the Foundations block that introduces us to basic medicine and will start the Neurology block around mid-October. People around me told me there is a lot to learn and hard work involved, but the nervous system is very fascinating to them so I look forward to the upcoming classes!" **Blanca Pereda** finished her Dental Assistant Certification and is currently working in her field of study. **Paola Rodriguez** is taking classes from ASU-Tempe online and continues to study criminal justice.

"I thank A Stepping Stone Foundation for reimbursing my college books and helping achieve my educational goals."

- **Alejandro Espinoza, Phoenix College**

"Thanks to the help of the Stepping Stone Foundation Scholarship, I am now in my Junior year in college majoring in Films and Media Studies with in an emphasis in Media Industries. I'm currently attending Arizona State University at its main campus, Tempe. I'm taking a variety of film and media courses focusing on film history, the process of making a movie and U.S media policies and distribution. Up to now what interests me most in my career choices in working as an advertising and branding executive, or a media publicist."

- **Marlette Espinoza, ASU**

Westwood Primary*Ms. Janet Castaneda and Ms. Maria Flores*

The children have really settled into a strong class community. Everyone is working together, sharing and taking care of one another. The other day I observed one of my students outside sitting at the table all by herself. As I started to approach her to help figure out what was going on, another student came up to her friend and put their arm around her. "What's wrong?" she asked, "Don't you want to play with me? We could make lots and lots of cakes."

I kept my distance to see how things would be resolved. When I noticed she wasn't comforted or enticed by her friend's offer, I went over to her. It turned out she wasn't feeling well and needed to go home.

Later in class we read a story about feelings and the students shared their experiences. I asked "What makes you happy? Sad? Scared? Mad?" A student noticed that we were missing a friend and he said she was robbed. We explained that she went home with her mommy because she was sick and that we would never let any one come steal them. Others shared that was why we always stayed with our teachers, so we can be safe.

When we reflect on all that is going on in a single day with our students, it is an eye opening experience to see how they make connections. While one child reached out to help a friend, another thought his friend disappeared because he was so busy playing he had not seen her leave. However, he had noticed that she wasn't in class without anyone pointing that out to him.

Everyday I see how much the children accept and care about each other. You see it in the way they play or how they approach challenges. I believe these social behaviors help build a strong foundation for their future. When children are encouraged to ask questions and explore the world around them, they are on the path to become independent thinkers. They will be our future problem solvers in the workforce.

I want everyone to know how much your support is valued. Past and present parents continue to share with us how much this program means to their family. They truly appreciate and value the opportunities provided by A Stepping Stone Foundation.

- *Janet & Maria*

Support

A Stepping Stone Foundation through the Arizona Tax Credit for the Working Poor

Do you itemize on your Arizona Tax return? If so, you may be eligible for the Welfare Tax Reform Credit program. This is a dollar-for-dollar credit on your Arizona tax liability when you donate to a self-certified nonprofit. This year, ANYONE qualifies!

A Stepping Stone Foundation is a self-certified nonprofit organization that serves the working poor in Arizona. We are so grateful to those of you who qualified and contributed through this program last year. Over \$35,000 was raised for the Foundation in 2008! This year, married couples filing jointly may donate up to \$400 and the limit is \$200 for individuals. It costs you nothing and makes a huge difference in our community.

As you will read in various articles in this issue, A Stepping Stone Foundation is no exception to the economy and we are working hard to raise funds to sustain the classrooms. This tax credit donation will certainly help the fundraising efforts and is a win-win for donors. Please consider helping us out this year with this donation.

This Tax Credit is separate from the School Tax Credit, so you can take full advantage of both. If you would like to donate, please complete the form on the front page and send it along with your donation to the Stepping Stone office. If you have any questions, call the Stepping Stone office at (602) 843-8281. We hope you will join us in supporting literacy and strengthening families and communities in Arizona!

**PLEASE NOTE: THE STATE TAX LAW FOR THIS CREDIT HAS CHANGED!
ANYONE CAN DONATE
THERE IS NO LONGER A BASELINE CHARITABLE GIVING YEAR TO QUALIFY**

FBR Birdies for Charity Giving Opportunity

The Thunderbirds' *Birdies for Charity* Program has invited Arizona 501(c)(3) organizations to involve the community in a pledge drive program based on the total number of birdies made during the 2010 FBR Open.

A Stepping Stone Foundation is registered for this program. Anyone can fill out a pledge form and pledge one cent or more per birdie to be a part of the program.

No funds will be collected by the Foundation. Following the 2010 Open, The Thunderbirds will invoice those who filled out pledge forms, collect all monies and send the Foundation the total of donations **plus 10%**. The Thunderbirds are a 501(c)(3) organization, therefore all donations are tax deductible as the law permits. For more details, go to:

www.birdiesforcharityarizona.com

or call the Stepping Stone Office at (602) 843-8281

Paulette's Corner

*A Stepping Stone Foundation
Program Coordinator*

What a pleasure it is to visit each of our classrooms weekly. Being given the opportunity to observe the joy on the children's faces as they master a new skill and the concentration as they work toward that mastery is a gift. I would love to share that gift with you by inviting you to visit any one of our classrooms. Due to field trips, early release days and no school days, it is always a good idea to check with the teacher prior to a visit. We want them to be there when you visit!

Our parents and in some cases grandparents are also working hard in their classes. The ESL students are working on their English comprehension, speaking and writing skills and we have several GED students who should be ready for the final testing during this school year. In addition to these classes, our parents also attend parenting classes and volunteer in our classrooms. What wonderful role models they are to their children. Showing them every day how important education is in their lives and that you never stop learning no matter your age.

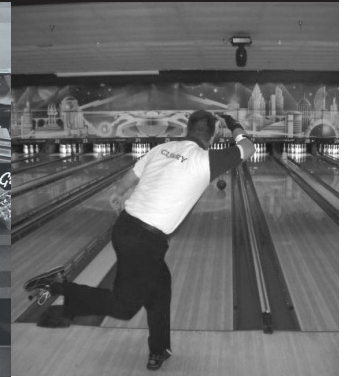
Younger siblings of our preschoolers are learning and growing in our childcare rooms. Our child care teachers not only lovingly care for these beautiful children; they also plan activities to promote their development. On a recent visit they were busy exploring rhythm instruments. What a joyful noise they were making!

Your support allows us to provide these services to families in our community.

Thank you! *Paulette*

OOPS!
Our apologies to APS and Bill and Jo Jones for mistakenly leaving them off our list of donors in the last newsletter. Bill and Jo and APS are both longtime supporters of A Stepping Stone Foundation and we truly appreciate all they have done for us over the years!

A Stepping Stone Scrapbook



Semi-pro and event co-chair, Michael Curry, shows his award winning bowling skills

Enjoying the Bowl A Thon for A Stepping Stone Foundation on August 22nd are (from left) Wendy Blair, Jackie Smith, Gladys and Jack Bobo and Event Co-chair Evelyn Shapiro



Many thanks to the Jr. League of Phoenix and Executives from Chase Bank for sponsoring Jumpstart. Chase Bank Executives went to the Stepping Stone Preschool Classrooms and Read with them on October 8th. Thank you to all who made a wonderful day for the children!



Stepping Stone Teachers and Assistants (pictured clockwise from right): Paulette Harshberger (Program Coordinator), Janet Castaneda, Ivonne Diaz, Amy Aasen, Neida Ascencio, Maria Flores, Fran Smith and Janice Milks. Not Pictured: Veronica Flores.



Two Fowler preschool boys working hard on their activity. Notice the smiles on their face? That's how Teacher Amy's class runs!



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DATES TO REMEMBER!

Tax Credit Donations Due
December 31, 2009

2010 Cena y Serenata
February 13, 2010

FBR Open
Birdies for Charity
Pledges due February 28, 2010

March 23, 2010
Bill and Billie's Kids Go to College
Annual Dinner



Save the Date! Cena y Serenata is February 13, 2010

Please join Stepping Stone friends led by Tio Tachias, Event Chairperson, and Tony Astorga, Event Finance Chairperson for the third annual *Cena y Serenata* to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation. This year's event will feature top notch entertainment, great food, dancing and another wonderful Silent Auction. Watch for all the details in the January Edition of this Newsletter.

Come celebrate and help the Stepping Stone Kids continue to participate in high quality, tuition preschool with adult education for their families.



Happy New Year from A Stepping Stone Foundation!

Third Annual Cena y Serenata is Saturday February 13, 2010 at El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium

*Join the fun at this traditional Hispanic celebration
to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation*

Please join friends from the Hispanic community led by Tio Tachias, Event Chair, and Tony Astorga, Event Finance Chair for the third annual *Cena y Serenata* to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation. They have really gone the extra mile to make this event special! Translated as "Dinner and Serenade," guests will enjoy a delicious meal as compadres and mariachis serenade guests with traditional songs. Following dinner, guests can

dance to the music of "New Image."

There will also be a silent auction with all proceeds going to A Stepping Stone Foundation. The semi-formal event will be held on **Saturday, February 13th** at the El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium at 6:00 p.m. with a no host bar. If you haven't received an invitation, please call the Stepping Stone office - *all* are welcome at this event! Tickets are \$100 per person and reservations are required.



At press time Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Helios Education Foundation have committed as sponsors for this annual event. A big thanks to these sponsors and others who have committed since press time.

Please RSVP to the Stepping Stone office at (602) 843-8281.

*Bring your sweetheart and
celebrate Valentine's Day
a little early at this
must see cultural event!*

2010 Waste Management Phoenix Open Birdies for Charity Giving Opportunity

The name has changed, but the program is the same! The Thunderbirds' *Birdies for Charity* Program has once again invited Arizona 501(c)(3) organizations to involve the community in a pledge drive program based on the total number of birdies made during the 2010 Waste Management Phoenix Open (formerly FBR Open).

A Stepping Stone Foundation is registered for this program. Anyone can fill out a pledge form and pledge one cent or more per birdie to be a part of the program.

see FBR, page3

Bill and Billies Kids Go To College Annual Dinner is March 23rd

Please plan to attend this dinner to honor A Stepping Stone Foundation's Billie Gannaway scholars. This year's theme is "Opening Doors of Opportunity" and will be held at Shadow Rock Church at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased at the church or you can reserve a seat by calling the Stepping Stone office at (602) 843-8281 and either give your credit card number or mail in a check. Come and celebrate with us and help open doors of opportunity for our scholars.

President's Corner, by Craig Hansen, President

Crai's article will introduce Caroline, thank people for tax credit donations, encourage people to attend Cena and Bill and Billie's dinner and also talk about the Climatec thank you lunch. I think I will also include the news about the two grants for field trips.

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Enjoying the Climatec Thank You Lunch are, from left, Board President Craig Hansen, Climatec owner Jack Kucera and A Stepping Stone Foundation founder, Bill Smith



Many thanks to the staff and board members who helped make the Thank You Lunch a success! Pictured with Craig, Bill and Jack are from left, Paulette Harshberger, Maritza Hernandez, Judy Brengi & Linda Pape.



Director's Footnotes

by Cynthia Gattorna, Executive Director

As I began my article for this New Year edition of *Footprint News*, one of our former preschoolers, Efren Martinez (Stepping Stone Preschool class of 1993-1994), who is currently in his 3rd year at ASU studying Nursing, dropped by today to hand in his Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship Application. I was struck by his insight that a person must remain well-rounded and versatile to succeed in today's world. Maritza Hernandez (ASU grad, Stepping Stone Preschool class of 1990-1991), who is filled in at our office for a few weeks, echoed the sentiment. They both noted that the more diverse job experience and training one has in combination with studies makes one more likely to find a job in today's world.

I would say that is as true of college students and recent graduates as it is of non-profit organizations. As A Stepping Stone Foundation focuses on how best to continue to serve young children and their parents with life altering education, we must not lose site of the fact that the world around us does not remain

static. Funding streams change, delivery systems change, and we must, as our most recent retreat facilitator put it, "stay ahead of the curve" if we are to continue to serve those children and families most in need of our services. In the past few months I have been communicating with several organizations about this very topic. I have visited Rainbow Housing that has a center for K-12 students and adult learners built into their apartment complex at Whispering Palms: can we find funding and room for A Stepping Stone Foundation preschool that could use the learning center for adult education classes? How would we fund and sustain it? I have met with representatives from Teach for America: could we staff multi-classroom expansion with Teach for America teachers? I received a call today from Oma Hamaoud asking for an appointment to discuss serving the Somali families in Central Phoenix. What would that look like and how would we fund and sustain that expansion? I have been in touch with First Things First South Phoenix and

Fowler District Office to see if we could expand to add a 3-year-old classroom at Fowler Elementary. In the end, the question is always, how will we fund anything; including our current classrooms and how will we responsibly sustain it?

In great part, it is you, our faithful supporters, who help us do the good work we do and to whom we return year after year for donations, in-kind support and fresh ideas. If we are to expand, we need your continued support now more than ever. Would you please tell all your friends about us? I have heard you many times comment A Stepping Stone Foundation is the best kept secret in the valley. Please let the secret out! If you have not already done so, one way to help us out this year is to pledge Birdies for Charity. This is a great program where the Thunderbirds Charities will match your donation by 10% (see related article on page 1).

As always, we are so grateful for you all and look forward to an amazing new year together!

Happy New Year!

Cindy

Birdies for Charity, from page 1

No funds will be collected by the Foundation. Following the golf tournament, The Thunderbirds will invoice those who filled out pledge forms, collect all monies and send the Foundation the total of donations **plus 10%**. The Thunderbirds are a 501(c)(3) organization, therefore all donations are tax deductible as the law permits. For more details, go to:

www.birdiesforcharityarizona.com
or call the Stepping Stone Office at:
(602) 843-8281

**Congratulations to
PGA Golfer, Ted
Purdy, long time
supporter of
A Stepping Stone
Foundation on his
Hole-In-One
last October.
Way to go Ted!**

A Stepping Stone Foundation bids a fond farewell to Margie Talley! Margie has taken a position with Family Promise, a non profit organization helping the homeless in the greater Phoenix area, as their Operations Manager. We are so very grateful for her three and a half years with us during which she ran the office, took pictures of Santa, organized bulk mail crews and kept your Executive Director sane.

Good Luck, Margie!

In the mean-time, a huge thanks to Maritza Hernandez, Board Member and Stepping Stone Scholar, who filled in until these very big shoes were filled.

Classroom Notes

Westwood Primary*Ms. Fran Smith and Ms. Neida Asencio*

Our little engines have been on the go since you heard from us last. When I say little engines, I really mean little engines. Our class was the recipient of a WONDERFUL donation from the Hansen family. We received a large train table; many train sets and lots and lots of tracks that would give the Santa Fe Railroad a run for their money! Our students have enjoyed every minute exploring the endless possibilities of laying tracks and using their imagination of where they're going.

With the train theme so popular, we read many books about trains – their favorite *The Little Engine Who Could*. We talked about how the little engine didn't think he could get over the mountain but tried and did. We encouraged our students to make their own trains using collage materials and different shapes.

We were able to decorate our room with many trains, and proved they were little engines who could too!

With our train theme reaching it's final destination, we went to the McCormick Railroad Park in December. We had the opportunity to experience riding a real train (student size) and tour the train exhibits. Each student brought a parent along to share the excitement. Our parents were very excited to come along with us, and are very thankful for this opportunity.

With times being what they are, we understand how difficult it is for some to give to others. We want to say "THANK YOU" to all the ASSF supporters. Our parents have told us so many times how fortunate they feel to be involved in a program like A Stepping Stone Preschool, and are very grateful for your dedication and help.

Love, Fran & Neida

Granada Primary*Ms. Janice Milks and Ms. Veronica Dozal*

It is hard to believe the school year is half way through.

The students and parents want to send their thanks for making their Christmas special. For many of our families it was all their children got this year. Veronica and I send our thanks also. We feel so privileged to act on your behalf in delivering the gifts. We know how important they are to our families and get to see first hand the joy they bring.

The second part of school year is going very well. Parents are learning much in their ESL and GED classes. They have really worked hard and are making the most of this opportunity. We have three dads attending ESL. They tell us the classes are helping learn more English which in turn helps them in their jobs. They are very thankful. The children are making so much progress. We have started working on learning the alphabet and letter sounds so that they will be ready for kindergarten next year. They are especially enjoying the dinosaur alphabet.

They love to put their name written in dinosaur language into the alphabet.

Two former students stopped by for a very special visit. Glenda (2002) and Jayline (2006) Soto auditioned for the Phoenix Girls Chorus and they were accepted. As Glenda writes in her letter of introduction, "So far this is the biggest challenge I have taken in my life. In the Phoenix Girls Chorus, it requires a lot of discipline, dedication, and financial support. I am willing to dedicate myself to put in all my effort and energy. In regard to the financial challenge, my dad has not been working regularly, and it has been difficult. That is why I am asking for your help. Your donation is tax deductible. Thank you."

When I talked with mom and dad later, I found out dad was injured on the job, and is now unable to work. Family members are helping as much as they can, but their goal is to keep the girls in the chorus if at all possible because they feel it is a rare opportunity for them. I let them know I would tell their story and we would see what might come of it.

It is such a wonderful opportunity for these sisters, and also a great success story that reflects back on our program. Mom and dad are so thankful that all three of their children were able to attend A Stepping Stone preschool and feel strongly that it has made such a difference in their life. Hopefully there is help out there for them.

Again, thank you seems to be such a small word, but it comes with heartfelt sincerity.

Janice & Veronica

**A Stepping Stone Foundation's
new website is up!**

**Go to: www.astepplingstone.org
and see the wonderful work of**

Jesse Palacios of the Kreative Mind.

**The new website is easier to navigate and
contain everything you need to
know about the Foundation.**

Thank you, Jesse, for our great new look!

Classroom Notes

Fowler Elementary*Ms. Amy Aasen and Ivonne Diaz*

December was such a short month for us here at Fowler. We only had two weeks and so much to do. We had a great time at our holiday party. Our parents enjoyed listening to their child sing some favorite Christmas carols. We also enjoyed having projects to do at the tables. Polar express day was so much fun! The kids wore their pajamas to school and we enjoyed a movie with popcorn. Santa coming to visit our classroom was unforgettable. The kids were asking all week when Santa would come and when he arrived, the kids were so excited.

January will be very different for us as Ms. Amy will be on maternity leave until the middle of February. Ms. Ivonne will be taking over the class with the help of our parents and childcare workers. Happy New Year!

Amy & Ivonne

What would you like here?

Westwood Primary*Ms. Janet Castaneda and Ms. Maria Flores*

We recently took a field trip to Tolmachoff Farm and our expanding on our experiences through classroom discussions and viewing the many photos taken that day.

The students have shared many ideas about their experience through drawings, play dough sculptures and through their play. Providing these field trip opportunities truly impacts the children by broadening their world.

Our class has had several wonderful parenting class topics discussing the purpose of learning centers and working on classroom projects. For the first project, we set up the classroom in a way that provided parents the opportunity to explore each classroom center and discuss what they discovered in each area. The second class provided the parents the opportunity to work in groups to complete a classroom project about trains. It was wonderful to see the parents making connections about how their children learn through hands-on experiences. The parents provide each other support and have a formed a strong community of learners.

I see A Stepping Stone Foundation and its supporters as an extension of our own community. Through your continued support and involvement you are providing unique opportunities for families to learn and grow along side their children. Families are focused on providing better education for their children.

We thank you again for everything you do. Happy New Year and God Bless!

Janet & Maria

Picture(s) from wrapping party?

New Addition to Name Honors Founder Bill Smith

Dear Readers,

You may have noticed an addition to the Footprint News this issue. At the October Board Meeting, A Stepping Stone Foundation Board of Directors voted unanimously to add to all our print materials and website the words, "Founded in 1989 by William O. Smith." At the November Board meeting the Board presented Bill a framed copy of the proclamation, which reads:

WHEREAS, A Stepping Stone Foundation recognizes the vision and hard work over two decades by William O. Smith in his commitment to provide early childhood education to preschool children at risk of school failure;

WHEREAS, A Stepping Stone Foundation was formed by William O. Smith and fellow members of Shadow Rock Church in 1989;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of A Stepping Stone Foundation hereby unanimously vote to add "Founded in 1989 by William O. Smith" to be included on all letterhead, website, newsletter and other printed materials beginning December 1, 2009 into perpetuity.

Thank You to the Jr. League of Phoenix!

Stepping Stone Foundation is very grateful to the Junior League of Phoenix for not only their two-year commitment to support our Fowler Expansion classroom both with grant money and volunteers, but for their leadership in early childhood issues in the Valley. Through the team leadership of Kat Moore (sreamlinedesignhome.com), we have seven strong volunteers who took the time to go through A Stepping Stone Foundation's volunteer orientation and fingerprinting meeting (Thank you Paulette Harshberger!), and volunteered at our first ever weekend family reading event in October.

We are so grateful for this new community partnership. In December, Board Member Linda Pape and Director Cindy Gattorna attended the Valley Impact Luncheon where keynote speaker Alison Dubois spoke about the importance of early childhood issues.

Welcome and well done, Junior League of Phoenix!

Paulette's Corner

*A Stepping Stone Foundation
Program Coordinator*

I would like to start the new year with many "Thank You's".

Our Angel Tag program was once again a great success. Our families so appreciate the gifts for their children. My first "Thank You" goes to Beverly Carroll and her family relations team. Without Bev's leadership and the team's hard work, this successful program would not happen. I would like to say "Thank You" to all who took tags off the tree at Shadow Rock. Your continued support means so much. My next "Thank You" goes to the wonderful ladies at the Phoenix Jr. League. They took 71 of the Angel Tags! We greatly appreciate their participation and support. Also supporting us were Alhambra School District employees who took Angel tags. Thank You to all who helped by fulfilling Angel Tag requests and helped with wrapping and sorting the gifts. We couldn't have done it without you.

I would also like to say "Thank You" to Mo Portley, our Santa. Mo visited each of our classrooms on December 10. He read the children a story and took the time for pictures with them. What a pleasure it was to see the wonder in the children's eyes when "Santa" walked into the room.

Thank you to our wonderful staff of teachers and ladies who care for our youngest children while their older siblings and parents are in school. You are the faces of ASSF at each of your schools. We appreciate your dedication and efforts in making ASSF successful. My last "Thank You" is to all of you who have supported A Stepping Stone Foundation this past year. Without you we could not do this work for "our families."

THANK YOU AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Paulette



A Stepping Stone Scrapbook



For the 20th year, Santa Mo Portley visited all the classrooms in early December. Many thanks to Mo for making the children's day as he talked, read and sang with them.



As part of the commitment to A Stepping Stone Foundation's Preschool program, at least one parent of each child is required to volunteer in the classroom. The parents like those shown above are an important part of their child's education and work hard while enjoying getting to know one another.



***This is what it's all about! Stepping Stone Children:
smiling and learning!***

★
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Phoenix, AZ 85080
★

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DATES TO REMEMBER!

2010 Cena y Serenata
February 13, 2010

Waste Management Phoenix Open
Birdies for Charity
Pledges due February 28, 2010

March 23, 2010
Bill and Billie's Kids Go to College
Annual Dinner



Save the Date! Cena y Serenata is February 13, 2010

Please join Stepping Stone friends led by Tio Tachias, Event Chairperson, and Tony Astorga, Event Finance Chairperson for the third annual *Cena y Serenata* to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation. This year's event will feature top notch entertainment, great food, dancing and another wonderful Silent Auction. See all the details on the front page of this edition of *Footprint News*.

Come celebrate and help the Stepping Stone Kids continue to participate in high quality, tuition preschool with adult education for their families.

***Join the Fun at a Bowl-A-Thon to
benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation
on August 21, 2010, 9:00 a.m.
at the AMF Family Bowling Center,
19th Ave and Bethany Home Rd.***

August...and it's hot outside, it's the weekend and school is back in session so you can't go out of town. What to do?

Join us for a fun-filled morning of bowling to benefit the Stepping Stone Foundation classrooms!

Here's how it works: collect a minimum of \$75 in pledges per bowler (collected at the door), convince your friends to do the same and you can bowl for free! There will be bowling games, prizes, raffle items and a silent auction to complete the morning. If there are enough bowlers, there will be a second round at 1:00 p.m. Registration packets are available at the AMF Family Bowling alley at 1919 W. Bethany Home Rd., or the Stepping Stone website at:

www.asteppingstone.org

or call the Stepping Stone office at:

(602) 843-8281

Questions? Call any of the
co-chairpersons:

Ernesto De Leon (602) 524-3859

Michael Curry (623) 889-1086

Cindy Gattorna (602) 843-8281

**Come beat the heat and have some fun while
benefitting A Stepping Stone Foundation's
three-and four-year-old
preschool classrooms!**

**First Things First Opens
New Classroom
at Fowler Elementary!**

In the January Newsletter, we mentioned we were investigating the possibility of collaborating with the Arizona Department of Education and the Fowler Elementary School District to use First Things First money from Central Phoenix Council to provide additional preschool slots at Fowler Elementary School.

We did it! A Stepping Stone wrote the proposal on behalf of Fowler Elementary School and on April 12th, 21 3-year-old children who had not been receiving preschool walked into their First Things First-Stepping Stone Foundation classroom. All the parents of the 3-year-olds are participating in the adult education, home visiting, and parenting pieces of A Stepping Stone Foundation. First Things First South Phoenix is providing the funding through the Arizona Department of Education's Early Childhood Department. Kudos to all parties, this is what we hoped for... leveraging existing community resources to serve new children and their families with high quality services.



A Stepping Stone Foundation Wants You!!!

A Stepping Stone Foundation is looking for a few more amazing Board Members to share our journey to educate two generations together! If you have the second Tuesday of the month available, and about 8 hours a month to give to A Stepping Stone Foundation, we would love to chat with you more about joining our Board. Board duties include: Fundraising (finding and thanking donors, active support of events, and speaking the good word about A Stepping Stone whenever possible), approving and monitoring the annual budget, and the hiring and evaluation of the Executive Director. If you are interested, please call Cindy at the office at: 602-843-8281, or contact any of the current Board Members (full list on p. 2 of the newsletter).

President's Corner, by Craig Hansen, President

What Lies Ahead for A Stepping Stone Foundation?

As I write this article, I'm so proud of A Stepping Stone Foundation. I am very pleased that, with limited funds, we did not have to close a classroom this year, and in fact opened a new classroom at Fowler Elementary with First Things First funds (see the article on page 1). Our board has committed to raising additional monies to ensure that we can keep all of the classrooms open and continue to serve children with limited opportunities with the advantage of the preschool experience. As studies show, children who attend preschool do better in school and Kindergarten teachers who serve many of our children say that they can tell the difference in the development of the children who attended A Stepping Stone. They always look forward to having them in their classroom.

With this in mind, exciting things could be happening next year; however, we need everyone's help. With the economic downturn, donations from individuals, corporations and organization's have been far less than previous years. This is very understandable as it is a tough time for us all. I invite you to go to our website at: www.stepsingstone.org, click on "donate" and see what your donation of \$40, \$50, \$200, \$500, \$800, \$1,250, \$6,500, \$24,000, \$50,000 and \$100,000 can do for the program. As you will see, all amounts, large or small, have

an impact on our program.

The fabulous Governing Board of A Stepping Stone Foundation has committed to raising \$100,000 to keep all classrooms open and fully functioning this year and have a unique fundraising activity. You will soon be receiving an invitation to our "non-event" fundraiser. An invitation will be sent to all of our supporters asking you to consider making a donation, rather than holding an event which would be costly to the Foundation and to the supporter. I hope you consider buying a "ticket," as 100% of it will go to A Stepping Stone Foundation.

In August, the second annual Bowl-A-Thon will be held to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation. This event was great fun last summer and we hope more people will join us. What's better on a hot August day than joining with friends in an air conditioned bowling alley? Please see the article on page 1 for details.

Finally, I thank all of you who continue to support us and ask you to consider donating even a small amount. Our program, working with both the children and parents, helps to break the cycle of illiteracy in Arizona and shows the families how they can better themselves through education. Will you like to be a part of this?

Have a great summer!

Craig

**See A Stepping Stone Foundation's
2010 Annual Report
for a full report by independent
preschool evaluator,
Dolores Retana at the website:
www.stepsingstone.org
by August 1st.**

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Director's Footnotes

by Cynthia Gattorna, Executive Director

It is always our incredible pleasure and privilege to attend our parent celebrations. Board President Craig Hansen I joined staff and families for three amazing celebrations at Westwood, Granada and Fowler schools this past month, where children performed and parents were recognized for their participation and scholastic achievement.

Below is one of the parent speeches given at the events.

"Good evening my name is Carlos Jimenez and this is my second year with A Stepping Stone. It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of all the parents in Ms. Fran's class.

This past year has been a wonderful experience for both our children and us. We have been amazed at how much our 3-year-olds have learned, and what they are capable of doing. It has been exciting to have the opportunity to spend so much time in the classroom, learning along with our children. We have learned how to work and play with them which has given us the

knowledge and confidence to be a better parent. This has helped us build a close stronger relationship with our children and families.

This year we also learned how important it is to manage our time better. Spending two days a week in English or GED class, attending workshops, and volunteering in the classroom has been challenging at times, but with all the positive support we receive we knew we could do it. It has been rewarding to see how much we have learned in English and GED classes. We're all more confident and happy and look

forward to continuing what we have started.

We also found that we have gained so much more than we expected. Being part of this program has given us some wonderful friendships, times to share, as well as a nice "distraction" from our everyday lives at home.

All of these opportunities would not have been possible if it wasn't for A Stepping Stone Foundation - and for that we want to say:

"Thank You!"



**A huge thank you to the
amazing Ladybugs,
who once again put on their annual golf tournament
to benefit A Stepping Stone Foundation
and Boy's and Girl's Clubs.**



Paulette's Corner

by Program Coordinator, Paulette Harshberger

Another successful year of educating two generations at the same time comes to an end. By the time you read this I will have attended the parent recognition celebrations at each campus. These celebrations recognize the hard work and lessons learned by the parents in our program. They have spent 32 hours per month in their adult education and parenting classes, volunteering in the classroom and opening their homes to home visits. Add on time spent on homework and raising a family and you can see what a big commitment they make to be part of our program. Congratulations to all!!!

I have also watched these beautiful children grow and blossom. They have developed new skills and confidence in their ability to learn. They face each new day with excitement about what they will learn next.

Our now 5-year-olds are ready to face the challenges of kindergarten enthusiastically. Our now 4-year-olds will return for another year of exciting experiences.

At the end of this school year we will say good-bye to Neida Ascencio. Neida started her involvement with ASSF as a parent in Mrs. Milks' class. She earned her GED while in the program and continued her education in college, earning an AA degree in Early Childhood Education. She has been working as an assistant teacher with Fran Smith at Westwood. Neida has decided to move back to Mexico. We will miss her, but are very pleased that she will continue teaching in her new home. The children she will be working with will be lucky to have her as part of their lives. We wish you well Ms. Neida.

Paulette

Classroom Notes

Westwood Primary*Ms. Fran Smith and Ms. Neida Asencio*

As this school year comes to a close, I think back to August when we visited our new 3-year-olds and their families. We saw new backpacks that were nearly as big as they were. We saw children who didn't want to talk to us. We saw parents who wanted to better themselves and provide their children the opportunity to go to school.

Now that our school year is coming to an end, we see children who can open their backpacks by themselves, and have grown so much that those same backpacks don't look so big! We see children who have so much to say, they're all talking at once! We see confident parents who are speaking more English, and excited about it!

Our mighty 3's recognize their name, and those of their classmates. They know their colors, shapes, and have mastered some fine motor skills such as using scissors, and holding on to a pencil correctly.

More importantly at this age is how they have learned to talk to each, and work together cooperatively. Last week several students were building houses for a few stuffed animal friends. When other students wanted to join in, the first group welcomed them and even offered to help them build another house for more animal friends! We're so proud of what they have accomplished.

These milestones could not have happened without your love, help, and support though A Stepping Stone Foundation. We all know this is a very difficult time for education, our



Every single person who contributes to the Stepping Stone Foundation is making a real difference in the lives of our families. Your involvement is impacting how our students and their families will succeed in the future. A Stepping Stone Foundation is very unique in the way it works in partnership with families. The program provides an example of how positive relationships between school, community, and families lay strong foundations for the educational future of children."

Janet & Maria

Westwood Primary*Ms. Janet Castaneda and Ms. Maria Flores****A Message from A Stepping Stone Parent***


This year one parent representative from each class at Westwood spoke on behalf of the parents in the class at our Parent Recognition Night on May 6, 2010. I would like to share with you, one of their speech expressing how the Stepping Stone program impacted their lives

"Good Evening,


My name is Brenda Sanchez and my daughter Brianda is in Ms. Janet's and Ms. Maria's class this year. Tonight I am speaking on behalf of all the parents in our class about our experiences in the Stepping Stone program and how it has impacted our families.

This experience in the program has been unforgettable and has helped us in various aspects. By providing childcare for our younger children we were able to work towards our obligations and the Stepping Stone program provided the opportunity to learn English. We became more confident as parents to help our children grow by learning alongside them. We are very pleased and satisfied with our experiences in the Stepping Stone program. We had the opportunity to get to know one another and make wonderful friendships. This has given us the motivation to put the effort to succeed each and every day.

The impact the Stepping Stone program has on our families is seeing how the children have learned positive ways to express themselves and form very close personal relationships. We felt very satisfied working alongside our children and the teachers in the classroom getting to know one another better. The Stepping Stone program has had a very positive impact and has helped our children succeed. The methods they use to teach the children and how they learn is extraordinary. Thank you Stepping Stone Foundation for providing this opportunity.



**Former Preschooler Brittani Roberts
(Isaac Preschool Class 1992-93)
called the office to let us know that she graduated from
Everest College on May 15th with her
AA Degree in Criminal Investigation.
She hopes to pursue her BA in the same vein
and is investigating her options now.
We all wish Brittani a warm congratulations
and good luck in her further studies.**




When applying for a Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship, the students must write an essay as part of the application. Below are two scholarship recipients' essays.

The Strongest Influence in My Pursuit of Higher Education

by Jazmin Scott

The strongest influence in my pursuit of higher education is my acknowledgement of my surroundings. Many people in my family did not get a chance for a higher education, nor did they take it seriously. I know that they now are not fully satisfied with their achievements in life and I do not want to end up the same way. I want to take advantage of my young age and availability.

I have tried my best to stay on track throughout these past years. I finished high school, and I am not a parent, nor plan to be one anytime soon. I am determined and ready for the challenge that comes with expanding and improving my knowledge. I am thankful for being able to get this far and I am not even close to being finished. I also want to thank the Stepping Stone Foundation for giving me that first bit of inspiration towards going to college and believing I can be someone important. I know that with my parents' financial and supportive help, and with any other help I receive I will succeed in my schoolwork and be the best student I can be.



My Greatest Challenge

by Beatriz Ortega

The greatest challenge for me has been working full time while trying to go to school. I work full time to help my family, to pay for school and to buy things that I need so I won't have to ask anyone else for anything. I have three brothers, the eldest, 23, has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. My other two brothers are younger, 10 and 6. They require a lot more attention and resources, so I like to help in every way possible.

Because I have been working full time, I don't obtain financial aid like I would if I didn't work. I used to work full time at a nursing home as a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), but they started cutting back on people and on everyone's hours, which is why I started working at a high school full time. I had tried working part time, but not many places that pay decent will work with your school schedule. It's hard and frustrating to prioritize between school and work. School will help me in the future, but work is what's helping me now and what's paying for my school. When I enter the nursing program, working full time will not be an option in order for me to be successful.



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DATES TO REMEMBER!

**A Stepping Stone Foundation
Annual Meeting
June 8, 2010, 6:00 p.m.
Shadow Rock Church**

**Bowl - A -Thon
Saturday, August 21
9:00 a.m.**

**AMF Family Bowling Center
19th Ave and Bethany Home Rd**

**Attention All Stepping Stone Friends:
You are invited to attend the
2010 Annual Meeting
on June 8th at 6:00 p.m.
at Shadow Rock Church
Please join the board and learn
about the Foundation's
experiences this year
and plans for next year.
All are Welcome!**