

A Message From Our
Stepping Stone Foundation President

"The whole object of education is...to develop the mind. The mind should be a thing that works."

*Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)
American novelist and short story writer.*

I ask myself what education really means to me. It was uncomfortable applying the question to myself with all the opportunities that I have had for educational enrichment in comparison to the children and families our organizations serves.

Yet this is a fundamental question for all of us and it focuses us on why we do this work. As a daughter of parents in the medical field, I was taught early in life that academic achievement and the pursuit of excellence were paramount and these values later became measures of my self-worth.

Where children are less fortunate and where they are deprived of formal or informal educational opportunities because of class, gender, race, sect or economic condition, there is darkness instead of light, restraint instead of freedom, servitude without the potential for independence. Where education is withheld or denied,

"Where education is withheld or denied, repression and exploitation thrive, physical conditions can be degrading and dangerous, and the human spirit cannot soar."

repression and exploitation thrive, physical conditions can be degrading and dangerous, and the human spirit cannot soar.

Our work is far from over. It requires passion, diligence, resources, and adherence to the belief that all children are entitled to be educated in way that allow them to have dreams and to reach their potential as human beings and global citizens.

This is an achievable goal but **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** As you might well know A Stepping Stone Foundation relies on volunteers within their operations and a volunteer working board. Volunteers are the gatekeepers of critical resources for the organization and provide the networking necessary

(Continued on p. 3 **Prez Bev**)



What better way to begin the day than with a hearty healthy breakfast? What better way to begin an education than with an award-winning preschool education? It seemed like these were two concepts matched in heaven, so we launched our first Breakfast of Champions this past October fourth.

This breakfast to thank and update supporters gave us the opportunity to showcase all the programs Stepping Stone nurtures every year. A current parent, April Hernandez, spoke of behalf of all the parents about how much the program meant to her and her preschool child. This *First Steps To Success* program is what most of you already know we do: preschool with mandatory parent education, parenting classes, younger sibling childcare and home visiting.

Our beautiful children sang and former preschooler and ASU graduate, Marlette Espinoza, spoke about what the scholarship program meant to her. President and MC, Beverly Carroll, introduced our newest video generously donated by Avnet Inc. Director, Cindy Gattorna highlighted all the other things A Stepping Stone does including: the annual Bill and Billie's Dinner; the Stepping Into College event; and our Christmas Angel program.

This wonderful event was aptly named Breakfast For Champions because not only were we looking for champions to help us keep our programs alive, we were asking them to help the world's future champions with access to excellent education. Thank you to all who attended. Through their generous donations and many others who have pledged and donated with their regrets for attendance we have already raised more than \$17,000 as of the writing of this article. Please watch your email and our website for more exciting developments around our Breakfast For Champions Campaign.

A special thanks to the Alhambra School District for allowing us to use their beautiful Board Room!

A "Foot" Note from the Director

I recently had the opportunity to sit quietly in the storage room on the Westwood campus. I was sitting in this quiet room because I was between interviews that the good people from Avnet were conducting as part of their generous pro-bono production of our marketing video which we debuted at our donor breakfast mentioned on page one. Following these interviews, I was going to welcome the filming crew of a documentary into our four-year-old classroom one last time. They had been filming our children, families and teachers all week. It had been quite a busy few days and the quiet was very welcome.

As most of you know, we had to close our program at Granada campus due to lack of funding. Many of the Granada preschool materials and furniture ended up in this room that now sheltered me. It was a wonderful assortment of colorful large balls, games, book shelves, and other furniture which we hope to use to open another site or classroom when conditions allow.

I let my eyes rest on a now empty wooden phone booth with open windows. I remembered various children poking their heads through it in by-gone years with a fireman's helmet or police cap on their heads and a toy cell phone in hand. It occurred to me that several of those very children were now getting ready to graduate high school or were attending college with assistance from our Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship program.

Why this nostalgia? I was reflecting on A Stepping Stone Foundation's future. I had been reading an article in *NONPROFIT World* (we'll save why they should call it the "Social Sector World" for a future article). The article was entitled, "The Night Your Nonprofit Died".

It cited several reasons some organizations have to close their doors when their funding is cut. More importantly, they referred to pro-active leadership, assertive networking, and fresh marketing to funders among chief characteristics of those organizations that *are* able to continue even when funding is cut. I am exceedingly grateful to A Stepping Stone Foundation volunteer board and the ever-increasing net of active supporters and funders for their expertise and willingness to help us look at what is working and what is not—and what are the trends that predict the future? This, in turn, guides our decision-making process and helps us not just survive, but thrive.

I am so grateful to you all for continuing this journey of how best to deliver our mission as the newest thrust of history reveals itself and how we will bend that history to the betterment of our families. **We need your continuing help so that we may be not only one of the survivors, but one of the organizations that will thrive as we move forward together.**

Cindy Gattorna

Paulette's Corner

At the time of this writing the children and parents at Westwood Primary have attended class for 5 weeks. With 10 of the 20 families in our 4 year olds class returning from last year, the adjustment to the school routine has been very smooth.

Some of those in our three years olds class are still working on it. Their parents are also adjusting to their adult education classes, time volunteering in the classroom, parent workshops and monthly home visits. It is a commitment of 32 hours per month for our parents.

This year we have the largest GED class we have ever had with 10 parents attending class twice a week. Both of our twice a week ESL classes are also full.

We have parents whose children have moved on to kindergarten continuing to participate in all of these adult education classes. Every time I talk with parents currently in our program as well as those from previous years, they tell me how appreciative they are for the opportunities that ASSF provides for their families. Yesterday while at Westwood I spoke to a former Stepping Stone mother whose child is now in first grade. She was very proud to tell me how well her son is doing in school. I am passing on their "Thank You" to you. Because of your support we were able to continue our program with 2 classrooms this year. We would love to have you visit Westwood Primary and see our program in person!

Paulette Harshberger

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CLASSROOM NOTES

Westwood Four-Year-Old Classroom

Janet Castaneda & Maria Flores

This year we started with ten new students and ten continuing students from our three-year-old class last year. It is wonderful to see how much everyone has grown over the summer break. The students have quickly formed a wonderful team and are very supportive of one another.

We are excited about the year ahead of us and it is hard to believe we have already completed two parent workshops and two home visits with each family. At school we see how well the families are working together. Last year's parents have really helped the new families feel welcome.

This past week in our parent workshop we spoke about what it means to work as a team. We did some fun team building activities to help make connections to how the Stepping Stone Foundation provides support. We wanted the parents to understand how much the foundation works to acquire the funding and all the benefits the program provides. We laid out all the components that make up the team and how Stepping Stone Foundation supports all these programs.

We spoke about the next fundraiser at the Alhambra District Office for the Community Partners Breakfast and how their children have been invited to sing for the group. They were very excited to have the opportunity for their children to participate in this fundraising event for the foundation.

When our class ended I asked each parent to answer the question, What does a Stepping Stone Program mean to you? Here is what many of them shared.... "The program gives our children and ourselves the opportunity to grow as individuals. It is opening doors for us and our children. It provides support and encourages us to further our education for our children's future. It helps us

(Four-Year-Olds continued on p. 3)

Westwood Three-Year-Old Classroom

Fran Smith & Veronica Dozal

As we start yet another school year, I'm very excited to see many of our former families adjust to the primary school. Westwood is their home school so the transition from our program to Kindergarten isn't so traumatic. Our former students (now "Super" Kindergartners), are familiar with the cafeteria, school hallways, routines, and of course the playground. Their parents are comfortable with office staff, teachers, and also understand the importance of being involved in their child's education. Many are regular volunteers assisting the School Volunteer Coordinator compile many work packets and materials for teachers. They are comfortable and proud of what they're doing.

This year we also have several former parents attending our GED/ESL classes. Several parents have told me how grateful they are for what A Stepping Stone Foundation has done for them. They can't repay the foundation with money – but they can repay the foundation by working hard and learning from the opportunities they were given while in our program. Without the foundation, they believe they would not have succeeded in speaking English, or gain the confidence to go out beyond their "comfort zone" and become involved in their children's education. They are truly grateful for all the opportunities they received with us, and wish more families could experience the same.

So... as we start the school year and I speak to the new families in our program, I challenge them to do their best in all that is being offered to them. I tell them of the MANY people, like you - the supporters of ASSF, who want to help them. I tell them that it takes a lot of hard work to make this program work. I tell them that it is "their" responsibility to attend class and be present! Just occupying a seat in class isn't going to help them gain their GED or learn how to speak English – but coming to class prepared and

(Three-Year-Olds continued on p. 3)

(Prez Bev Continued from p. 1) to function within the community. We are grateful for all of the volunteers that assist us each year and continue to support our efforts with their time and resources. Quite honestly, we could not do the work we do without YOUR support. It is my intention to continue building our volunteer network, and I would like to encourage you to contact us if you have an interest in volunteering. Just one day a year of volunteering can make a significant difference in your life and in the lives of children and families we serve. If you would like to partner with us, please feel free to call or e-mail at any time. Contact our Executive Director, Cynthia Gattorna cindy@steppingstone.org 602-670-0599.

Thank you to all of our friends, volunteers, donors, colleagues, and grantee partners for all you do. With your continued help and support, we look forward to continuing to learn, grow, and carry out our mission of developing the minds of our little ones and their families. Prez Bev

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Many thanks to the following supporters for their cash donations to A Stepping Stone Foundation this past fiscal year:(July 1, 2010-June 31, 2011).
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Find out more about A Stepping
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astepingstone.org

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~ Memorials ~

In Loving Memory of:

Tawny Backstrom	Marie Feltz
Keith Ragan	Jerry Landis

Upcoming Events:

***Christmas Angels begin their
2011 mission in November!***

Cena y Serenata 2012

March 17, 2012 5:30 PM

(**Four-Year-Olds** continued from p. 3) overcome barriers by furthering our studies and to focus on building a better life. As parents we are committed to excel and prove to our children that no matter what when you study you will have a brighter future. We are grateful for the Stepping Foundation for providing us so many opportunities."

Parents could not express enough how much this program means to them. I would like to personally thank you for what you do for our community. I am honored to be a part of the Stepping Stone Foundation and experiencing how we impact families each and every day.

Janet & Maria

(**Three-Year-Olds** continued from p. 3) ready to learn will! Just like our children, we want them to do the best that they can, so why would we expect to do less ourselves?

I know this will be another successful year with your continued support, and invite you to visit our class and meet those you are helping.

Fran & Veronica



Footprint News

Footprints Volume 10, Issue 2 2010-2011



for A Stepping Stone Foundation 2010
No Show Gala

This year, the Stepping Stone Foundation Board decided to try something new! They did some research and felt the time was right to try an annual giving campaign based on a no-show event.

Great care was taken to build a campaign that included email announcements, handwritten notes and of course the invitation to step up for A Stepping Stone! The \$100,000 goal is lofty, but necessary to fulfill our program commitments for this year. As this newsletter goes to print we have \$35,830. If we do not make our goal we will certainly be closing all our classrooms this May. We need your help! If you have not already donated or pledged to the Stepping Up campaign, please do so! If you cannot make a donation now, but could in the next 45 days, please pledge to do so. If you need to spread your donation over a few months, we can help with that as well! We had asked for donations by October 30, but will extend this timeline to November 30th. Please step up for Stepping Stone!

Thank You!

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 non-profit organization

See Tax Credit, Page 5

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, also, will rejoice 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 years old and under will be available beginning Sunday, November 21st through December 12th 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 (tag) to ensure that all recipients' gifts are somewhat equal. Each tag will contain the complete guidelines. Sorry, we cannot handle large items such as bikes.

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 it as a gift to the 2010 Christmas Angel Project.



Gifts should be delivered to Shadow Rock no later than 12pm on Sunday, December 12th, 2010.

A "Foot" Note from the Director

Some time ago during an Advisory Group meeting, one of our supporters, Debbie Carstens, asked if A Stepping Stone Foundation had considered obtaining a professional fundraiser to help us raise the charitable dollars needed to sustain our preschool with parent supports, and our scholarship program. I have held that thought in my heart and mind for almost two years, and now find myself not only agreeing with her, but recognizing the **urgency** of the need. Of course A Stepping Stone is not really in a position to hire a fundraiser at just this moment, so the next best thing is for me to educate myself to get the ball rolling. To that end, I attended the Association of Professional Fundraiser's 2-day seminar on the Essentials of Fundraising. What an eye-opener! This was an amazingly good investment of A Stepping Stone time and money. The seminar was full of practical information about how to begin a fundraising program and how to cultivate,

appreciate and retain funders. Their research maintains that the backbone of any successful giving plan is the individual donor--in fact almost 80% of all charitable giving in the United States continues to be from individual donations--more than Corporate Donations and Grants combined. Further, any fundraising plan begins with an annual giving campaign. As I write, we are about 1/3 of the way toward our \$100,000 goal for the Stepping Up campaign which we rolled out as a No-Show Gala. The invitation that was mailed to you was to encourage you to donate rather than attend an event this fall so all of your donation could be directed entirely toward our programs. The Board will have their annual gala back in place next fiscal year. In the mean time, of course, we will have our *Cena y Serenata* again on April 9th. We thank you for your continued support and tell a friend about us!

~ Cindy

Paulette's Corner

Our year is off to a great start. Each week when I visit the classrooms, I see growth in the children's abilities and confidence level. They all arrive at school with smiles on their faces and anticipation as to what their teacher has planned for them. Each new activity is approached with curiosity and a willingness to try. The joy on their faces when they master a new skill is a sight to see. If you would like to see that joy for yourself, let me know. I would love to take you on a tour of any of our classes.

Our parents are working equally hard in their classes. We have a few GED students who will be ready to take their final tests in the near future. Our ESL teachers report that their students are very committed to their studies and greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn English.

On Oct. 23 we had our first Read-In with our families at Fowler Elementary and the ladies from the Phoenix Jr. League. We appreciate their support of our program and the time they spend with our families. We have two other Read-In's scheduled this school year.

This year's Christmas Angel Program is in progress. Parents and teachers are filling out the tags which will hang on the tree at Shadow

Rock UCC starting November 21. Thank you to Linda and Steve Merrill for putting up the tree and to Shadow Rock for once again hosting it. We are very grateful for the support of the Jr. League of Phoenix. They have committed to fulfilling all the tags for our Fowler families as well as additional tags from another classroom. I would like to thank all of you who choose to take a tag and buy gifts for one of "our children". When our teachers explain the program to the parents they are amazed and very grateful that a group of strangers would be so generous to their children. I would also like to say an advance thank you to Mo Portley for his Santa visits to our classrooms in December. Those children who are willing, are able to get their picture taken with Santa. Seeing the wonder on their faces when he walks in the room is a joy.

Thank you again for your continued support of ASSF. I have the opportunity to see the results of your support on a weekly basis. It makes a huge difference in the lives of our families. **Happy Holidays!**

- Paulette



Left, volunteers preparing newsletter.
Right, home visit with family.



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Special Thanks To
Margie Talley for producing this issue!

Classroom Notes

News from Granada Primary

Our class is going strong. We have been learning about the difference between real and pretend. We used our imaginations to find pictures in the clouds and later painted with eye droppers to make blob monsters.

After reading the stories of "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Jasper's Beanstalk", we planted our own beanstalks to see how fast they would grow. The first ones appeared after 4 days. The children watch and measure them every day.

They are totally amazed at how fast they are growing and can't wait to take them home (Moms are too!).

The children are mastering English at a fast pace. They are reading everyone's name and are beginning to identify letter names and beginning sounds. We are working hard on our numbers and being able to identify quantities up to ten.

As we start November, the children are very excited about our upcoming field trip to the farm. It will be their first school bus trip and many have never seen a working farm. We will be studying farm animals and crops to get ready for it. We will also decorate class T-shirts to wear on our trips. Our parents have been working hard in their GED and ESL classes. Teacher

Lupe from Literacy Volunteers is proud of their progress and commitment to their studies. She has worked with many groups but says our program supports the whole family in a much needed way. She says our parents by far are the most motivated and they are therefore the most successful in the end.

Our parents send their thanks for all the work you do to make the program possible. They have been brining in spare change for Stepping Up For Stepping Stone, but wish there was more they could do to help.

With Sincere Gratitude,

Janice Milks and Veronica Dozal

Fowler Elementary

Ms. Amy & Ms. Ivonne would like to welcome you to the fall. We have been busy learning about the fall and the great changes in the weather. We had the opportunity to go to the pumpkin patch at the Desert Botanical Garden. The kids had a great time doing all the crafts. They really loved

riding on the hay wagon to the maze to chose their very own pumpkin. Along with the pumpkin patch, we also had a Read-In at the park on Saturday Oct. 23rd (see pictures, page 4). We had a great turn out and would like to thank the Phoenix Jr. League for everything they do for our classroom. We really appreciate all of

their hard work and time. November and December will be busy and short months for us. We have a field trip planned to the Children's Museum in November and a small program for Christmas in December. The year is going WAY too quickly!

~Miss Amy Aasen and

Miss Ivonne Diaz

News from Alhambra

In October we went on our first field trip to the Desert Botanical Gardens "Pumpkin Patch" Festival. This was a special family trip planned so students had their parent with them.

When we first arrived the children were so excited to see a great big red fire truck at the entrance to the festival. Everyone had a turn to climb aboard and pretend to drive the truck. Afterwards everyone participated in the many other activities available; arts and crafts, pumpkin bowling, face painting and ring toss.

The highlight of trip was a hayride that took us to a pumpkin patch, hay maze and petting zoo. The children excitedly searched around to find their very own pumpkin to decorate with their parent. We had lunch together in the Desert Botanicals cafeteria before heading back to school. The bus ride back was quiet as many students took the opportunity to nap. All had a great time!

This field trip gave the students the opportunity to have real life hands on experiences that are so very important for young children to make meaningful connections.

In our class we continued our learning by exploring pumpkins. The class first discussed the attributes of the pumpkins and made predictions of what they thought was

inside. It was exciting to see the anticipation on their faces as we cut open the pumpkin to take a look inside. The students helped clean out the inside and we saved the seeds to use for other activities.

The connection the students made from the field trip to the classroom enhanced their learning. They talked about what they saw and were excited about what they were learning in the classroom.

The families wanted us to express their thanks and appreciation to A Stepping Stone Foundation and all the generous contributors that make this program possible. They appreciate all the opportunities provided and shared that they feel like they are learning so much with their children.

A Stepping Stone Pre-school programs are one of a kind and would not be possible without your generous support. Thanks for all you do.

-Janet Castaneda

& Maria Flores





Our Junior League of Phoenix volunteers are awesome! They met with our Stepping Stone Fowler Expansion families this past October at a nearby park to read about the alphabet! It was a beautiful day and families were able to take advantage of the fair afterward.



Enjoying a book at the park



The children at Fowler rode a hay wagon for a visit to the pumpkin patch



Preschoolers Learn About Nature

Tax Credit, from page 1

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 \$38,000 was raised for the Foundation in 2009! 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 (make checks payable to ASSF) 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!

Waste Management Open 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 2011 Waste Management 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 2011 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. To make a pledge or for more details, go to:

www.birdiesforcharityaz.com

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



Working Poor Tax Credit

A Stepping Stone

F O U N D A T I O N

Founded in 1989 by William O. Smith



DONATION FORM:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Donation Amount: \$ _____

☐ Cash/Check ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AMEX

Credit Card #: _____

Expires: _____

Signature: _____

- ☐ Please send an information packet.
- ☐ I would like to visit a classroom.
- ☐ Please send information on volunteering or becoming a Board Member.

Please mail your donation before December 31st to:

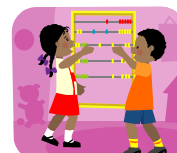
A Stepping Stone Foundation

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Phoenix, AZ 85080-7149

**Questions? Please call: 602.843.8281
Or Visit: www.asteppingstone.org**

Thank You for Your Support!





To find out more on how you can help A Stepping Stone deliver high-quality, free tuition preschool and adult education to families in need, contact the Stepping Stone office at:

**P.O. Box 87149
Phoenix, AZ 85080**

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**Footprints
Volume 10, Issue 2
2010/2011**

Upcoming Events:

- Christmas Angel Gifts Due by 12pm on December 12th to Shadow Rock Church
- Christmas Angel Sorting Party, December 13th at 6pm at Shadow Rock Church
- Tax Credit for the Working Poor Donations
Due by December 31, 2010.
- January Board Meeting, January 11, 2011 at 6:30pm at Shadow Rock Church
- Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College Dinner, March 22, 2011
- Cena y Serenata, April 9, 2011

Happy Holidays!



A Stepping Stone

FOUNDATION

FOUNDED IN 1980 BY WILLIAM O. SMITH

Footprint News

Footprints Volume 10, Issue 3

2010-2011

A Message from the

Board President

By Craig Hansen

Change

On behalf of the board, I want to thank all of you who have so generously donated your resources to keep the Foundation going strong. Without your help, we were looking at potentially closing our family literacy and preschool services entirely. We can now look forward to the possibility of closing only one or two classes (see Director's Footnotes, page 2).

As you will read in this newsletter, A Stepping Stone Foundation may have to change our capacity to deliver high quality, tuition free preschool to disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds and adult education for their parents. To our knowledge, A Stepping Stone Foundation is the only current provider of family literacy programs with daily preschool, adult education and home visiting all built into one program anywhere in the county—perhaps the state! We are optimistic that you can help us maintain this model of preschool plus intergenerational learning that currently doesn't seem to exist anywhere else in our community. Temporarily reducing our capacity is a positive and responsible way to continue to provide our programs, while significantly lowering the cost of a stand alone program. With our public school partners, we are able to educate one entire family for no more than \$6,500 for an entire school year.

Change is hard, but change can be good in light of the alternatives. Our thanks to all of you who will continue to support us despite inevitable change. We know that the Stepping Stone model works very well and we are encouraged that we may be able to continue to deliver it with our public school and other community allies.

-Craig



Fourth Annual

Cena y Serenata is April 9th

Please join friends from the Hispanic community led by Tio Tachias, Event Chair, and Tony Astorga, Finance Chair for Cena y Serenata to benefit Stepping Stone families. Translated "Dinner and Serenade," guests will enjoy a delicious meal catered by Alexis Grill at El Zaribah Shrine. A mariachi band will serenade guests with traditional songs and a cultural exchange group, *Estudiantina* from Alamos, Mexico, are featured entertainers. Afterward, guests can dance to the music of *New Image* band. There will also be a silent auction with all proceeds going to Stepping Stone Foundation. The semi-formal event will be held on Saturday, April 9th at the El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium at 5:30 pm with a no host bar. All are welcome at this event, but **reservations are required by March 30th!** Tickets are \$100 each. Please RSVP to the Stepping Stone office at: (602) 843-8281.

Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College

Annual Dinner is Tuesday March 22, 2011

As most of you know, each year A Stepping Stone Foundation offers college scholarships through the Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship Fund to any former preschooler who is planning to attend college. On March 22nd, A Stepping Stone Foundation will honor those students who will be awarded scholarships for the 2011/2012 school year at a special dinner at Shadow Rock Church. Please call the office for a reservation if you would like to attend. Tickets are \$35/each.

Many thanks to Stepping Stone Board member, Jennifer Sanchez, for chairing this event.

We hope you will join us in celebrating the Stepping Stone kids and their families as they prepare to pursue higher education. Call for tickets at: 602-843-8281.



Last year's scholarship winners and guests.

A "Foot" Note from the Director,

Cindy Gattorna

In the last issue of our newsletter, I vantaged populations that we serve is focused on the **urgency** of our greater than ever. As of today, I am not fundraising strategies and tactics. This sense of "do or die" has not gone away, but we have made progress. As I write, we are more than 3/4 of the way toward our \$100,000 goal for the Stepping Up campaign (\$84,600 in hand). On behalf of the Board and our children and families, I give your our deepest thanks.

Even so, if this funding year unfolds as last year, we will minimally be defunding two of our four site projects. Our three-year funding of the Fowler Expansion Project, thanks to the Ethyl and Kemper Marley Foundation, will be expended by May of 2011.

It was always our original hope that First Things First (FTF) funding would sustain that classroom with its parent supports beyond the Marley *Ramp-Up* grant. Since Prop 203 was defeated, it leaves First Things First money intact and the South Phoenix FTF Council will continue to fund preschool expansion in their region so Fowler should be able to continue on without A Stepping Stone. While it is never easy to defund a classroom, the three-year trend in decreased giving and grants clearly forces our hand to take drastic measures. It may be necessary to not only egress from Fowler, but from one of our Alhambra classrooms as well — possibly even two.

The need now for public support of early education, especially for the disad-

such as ours left anywhere in Maricopa Country. Please help us maintain a model of preschool plus intergenerational learning that currently doesn't seem to exist anywhere else in the county. Please know that we are moving forward at A Stepping Stone, making new friends, encouraging new donations and grants to keep our program model alive while we seek to shore up our long-term capacity so we will not periodically find ourselves in this same position of looking for emergency operational cash so we don't have to close classrooms.

I have told the board, if someone sits down and writes us a check for \$489,000 (our annual operating budget this year), we'd be in the exact same place next year if we don't change what we have been doing. We need to take in \$9 for every \$1 in individual donations we collected last year to fund our three sites and the foundation operations. This means new friends and new revenue stream ideas.

Please watch for a funders' breakfast before summer. It is in the planning stages as I write. We will be asking our friends — tried and true as well as brand new — to think about a three-year pledge.

With your help we CAN do it!

~ Cindy

Paulette's Corner

Good News! ALL of our families have returned to school after the winter break-the first time this has happened in many years. They have expressed to me in person and through thank you notes, their appreciation of the gifts provided to their children through our Angel program. I pass those "thank yous" and appreciation on to those of you who provided those gifts. They are also very appreciative of the

educational opportunities which A Stepping Stone provides for their families, children and parents alike.

A big thanks to the ladies of Phoenix Junior League. They helped with our Angel program by providing gifts for 86 children! They had a special wrapping party of their own and organized all of the gifts for the Fowler campus. They have also participated two "Read-In's" with our

See Paulette's Corner, page 3

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**Special Thanks To
Margie Talley for producing this issue!**

CLASSROOM NOTES

Westwood Four-Year-Old Classroom

Janet Castaneda and Maria Flores

These past few weeks we have had the wonderful opportunity to work with Stacy Dorsett a student teacher from Ottawa University in our classroom. This is what she has shared with us about the program and her experiences here with A Stepping Stone Program.

"The way this program impacts the parents is very significant and there is a high accountability for all the parents to learn along side their children. Watching how the parents work in the classroom with their children and what they are learning together is invaluable. The parent's involvement prepares their children's future education.

To witness the development and growth that occurs at such a young age really gives them a good start. This program is a building block to help children be successful in school and the kids love being here. This is a safe and loving environment that is nurturing them on a path for a love of school and learning."

Stacy only has a few more weeks with us but says she is already thinking of ways she can encourage parent involvement in her own classroom.

In February, Southwest Human Development will begin presenting a special eight week session of parenting workshops for our classes. These classes will focus on child development and ways parents can work with their children. During each workshop the parents will get the opportunity to work with their child and practice what they learned that day. We are excited to offer parents this opportunity to learn about how their interactions directly impact their children.

We are always mindful of those who make this program a reality for the families in the Stepping Stone community. We appreciate all you do and hope A Stepping Stone Foundation continues to be able to provide programs for those in need for many years to come.

God Bless and thank you for all you do,

Janet & Maria

Westwood Three-Year-Old Classroom

Fran Smith and Zulma

Each morning as I greet our students and their parents, I see the magic of what this program is about. These families are succeeding because of the opportunity they have been given through A Stepping Stone Foundation

On a recent home visit, we were welcomed by our student who was all dressed up and waiting for us. He was so excited to show us that he wrote "Fran" on the calendar I gave him. I also noticed how he wrote his name each day just as we do on our calendar in class every day. Mom says volunteering in the classroom helps her understand more about what her son experiences in school every day, and she is enjoying reading more because he wants her to read to him all the time.

On another day, one of the moms showed up for her scheduled volunteer day even though her son was home sick. She said her son was with a relative, and she didn't want to miss her volunteer day because it wouldn't be fair. This is a mom who is not only meeting her obligations with our program, but works 35 hours a week, while raising two young children. She has shared how difficult it is completing her obligations with a very busy schedule, but she tries extra hard because she knows how many people are working to keep this program going.

So...from our Super Four's we say thank you again for all your support, and we hope you can visit us sometime soon.

May God Bless, *Fran & Zulma*



Many thanks to "Santa" Mo Portley for visiting each classroom and reading with the children in celebration of Christmas

Paulette's Corner, from page 2

Fowler families. The final one will be held on March 26th. Thank you ladies!

Great thanks also goes to Stepping Stone Board Member, Bev Carroll, and her team that make the Angel program work so well. A warm thank you to APS Construction Division for taking many gifts as well. Shadow Rock Church and Preschool once again hosted a Christmas Angel tree and our annual Board sponsored wrapping party. The Shadow Rock Community provided more than half the Angel gifts. A huge thanks to them

all! Especially Rev. Ken Heintzelman who is so supportive of our mission. Finally, we send thanks and hugs to our friends at the Alhambra School District Office, who also helped with many tags.

With the future of A Stepping Stone uncertain, our teachers continue working hard to make this a great year of learning and growing for our children and parents. I want to thank them for their dedication to our program. They are the ones that make it all happen at our partner schools.

- Paulette



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**P.O. Box 87149
Phoenix, AZ 85080**

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Upcoming Events:

- February Board Meeting, February 8, 2011 at 6:30pm at Shadow Rock Church
- Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College Dinner, March 22, 2011
- Cena y Serenata, April 9, 2011



***Waste Management Open 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 2011 Waste Management Open (see brochure enclosed).

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, but please return your form to our office or pledge online. Following the 2011 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. To make a pledge or for more details, go to: www.birdiesforcharityaz.com, or call the Stepping Stone Office at (602) 843-8281.

Pledge Deadline February 6, 2011

Bittersweet Goodbye

Granada Four-Year-Old Classroom

Janice Milks and Veronica Dozal

As I look back at what the children were like when they first walked through the classroom door to what they have become now, I am so proud of them. They have worked so hard to get ready for kindergarten. They have grown and blossomed in so many ways; academically, socially, and emotionally. They displayed this so well during our Mother's Tea and again at their

(Continued on p. 3 MILKS GOODBYE)

A Message From Our Stepping Stone Foundation Parents

We would like to share with you how being part of the Stepping Stone program has helped us this year. We believe this opportunity is one of a kind and we feel very fortunate to have been a part of it.

It has been a unique opportunity to learn along with our children. We feel more confident to help them with their homework, and show them that reading is fun! Our children enjoy coming to school and that is very important to us.

Watching our children develop and working together with others has been wonderful. Spending time in the classroom gave us the opportunity to see how our children were learning. It provided us a model of how to teach with patience and dedication, which helped us learn too!

Attending GED and English classes has given us the motivation to do something for ourselves. For many of us, our goal this year was to learn and speak more English, and we did! We are able to understand more English, and feel more comfortable speaking it.

We will never be able to thank the program enough for everything it has provided for our families. It deeply impacted us to know so many good people are thinking about us and want a better future for our children.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we hope more families will be able to experience what we have.

From Mrs. Fran Smith's Parents



Fourth Annual Cena ¡Qué Exitó!

Were you there? More than 350 *damas y caballeros* attended the 4th annual Cena y Serenata benefit held April 9th. An unseasonable rain storm blew our wonderful patrons through the front door of El Zaribah shrine to dine on a delicious meal catered by Michael Zistatsis of Alexi's Grill, enjoy the unique musical performance of Estudiantina from Alamos Mexico, sip on Sol de Mexico Tequila donated by patron Frank Fierro and smile for the **Cox Communications** cameras who were there to help us produce a PSA based on the event and our award winning services. Al Molina placed the hand-picked pendant which **Molina Fine Jewelers** had donated around the lovely neck of the grand raffle winner. The venue combined the nostalgic feel of the large "hall" events our Cena founders remember with such fondness and our decorator, Hector Riojas, added simple elegance with his table decor. New to the event but no less enthusiastic was Petra Fimbres, who produced an eye-popping silent auction with unique and sentimental items. Many special thanks to **APS** and **BCBS of Arizona**, our presenting sponsors, who made this event possible. Additional kudos to gold level sponsors: **Helios Education Foundation** and **Wells Fargo**. Among dozens of other sponsored tables, **Urias Communications** also helped out with design for our publications and marketing, and **Univision 33** and Mary Rabago, our

(Continued on p. 4 CENA)

(Continued from p. 1 CENA Y SERENATA 2011)

Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College

PAINTING A PICTURE OF PROGRESS *"Every now and then one paints a picture that seems to have opened a door and serves as a stepping stone to other things."* A Stepping Stone Board Members awarded thirteen Billie Gannaway College Scholarships at our annual Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College event to: Navil Barbosa, Alyssa Burris, Brenda Reza Cuellar, Mariela Espinoza, Hector Medina, Rosa Nido, Angelica Pereda, Blanca Pereda, Gabriella Reyes, Itzel Ruacho, Guadalupe Sandoval, Vanessa Sandoval, Vanessa Tang. Enormous thanks to Jennifer Sanchez, (Cont. on p. 4 **BILL AND BILLIE'S KIDS**) (Continued from p. 1 **BILL AND**



2011 Billie Gannaway Scholars wait to claim their awards.

A "Foot" Note from the Director,

Have you been paying attention? Do you know how close A Stepping Stone Foundation was to closing its doors to early childhood education with family literacy? The Board and I struggled for many months late last year over how (if needed) to close this program if limited resources demanded it. Some of you know perhaps what's it like to stay awake at night and wonder with trepidation what tomorrow will bring. Many of us at ASSF endured those nights. By Christmas, my termination date was already tentatively set.

And then the miracles began to happen.

After weeks into our No-Show Gala campaign during which dozens of our patrons had sent in their valuable donations, we were languishing \$60,000 short of our fundraising goal. It was then that I received an amazing call from a donor that said he and his wife were disappointed in the response so far and they'd like to put up a \$10,000 challenge match. In the next three weeks, thanks to them and other very generous matches, our donors had **doubled** their response. It was this generous outpouring of more than

\$80,000 from our donors who understood how much they mean to our children and families that the Board and I decided we should begin planning for what to do if we received enough money to continue instead of what to do if we did not. So plan, we did.

Then another miracle occurred...

After much honest communication and a program visit, we received word that the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trustees had voted to fund a program grant proposal in the amount of \$50,000.

Now, some folks believe there are no miracles, only hard work and good luck. And maybe that's so, but in my heart of hearts these events weigh upon me as the real deal. Thank you for all for your miraculous support of A Stepping Stone where we will continue to give young children what they need to succeed in school and to give their parents the skills and motivation to support them.

Cindy Gattorna

Paulette's Corner

Another school year has ended. All the celebrations recognizing the accomplishments of our parents and their children have been held. It is wonderful to end the year on such a positive note. I have had the pleasure of watching 75 preschoolers grow in their self-confidence and abilities over the past nine months. Sixty of those children will enter kindergarten in the fall ready to take the next step on their educational journey. By watching their parents participate in the adult education portion of our program, they have learned that education is important and that you never stop learning. That may be the most important lesson they have learned this year.

A majority of the children in our three-year-old class will be retuning for a second year in our program. They will have another year learning and growing with Ms. Janet & Ms. Maria. Their parents will have another year to continue their education as well. Sadly, due to a lack of funding, we are closing our program at Granada Primary. Janice Milks has taught our families at Granada Primary for the past 19 years. Her assistant, Veronica Dozal, has

worked in our program for 12 years. They have

had a great impact on the success of hundreds of families during that time. Janice will continue teaching at Granada next year in kindergarten and Veronica will move to Westwood as Fran Smith's assistant. Their work with students and families continues.

The preschool classroom at Fowler Elementary will continue as was planned with funding from First Things First South Phoenix Council through the Arizona Department of Education. We are grateful to lead teacher Amy Aasen and her former assistant Ivonne Diaz for taking the lead on getting that program up and running three years ago with the help of the Kemper and Ethyl Marley Family Foundation. It has been a success and while no longer a part of ASSF, Fowler preschoolers will continue to grow and learn under Amy's guidance.

We look forward to serving families of three- and four-year-olds at Westwood Primary next year. Thank you again for your support.

Paulette Harshberger

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cindy@asteppingstone.org

Program Coordinator
Paulette Harshberger
Paulette@asteppingstone.org

CLASSROOM NOTES

(Continued from p. 1 MILKS GOODBYE)

End of Year Celebration in the way they performed for their audiences.

The parents have grown too. They have gained more confidence not only in themselves as a person but also in their own ability to learn and succeed. More parents this year had 90% or higher in fulfilling the five components of the program than ever before. Sixteen out of twenty received special recognition.

Parents and children gathered one last time (after the end of school year) for a special trip to the Children's Museum of Phoenix. It was such a wonderful day! Everyone had so much fun that they didn't want it to end. In fact, they decided to go to McDonalds for lunch before saying goodbye.

The end of a school year is always filled with mixed emotions, but in many ways this one is the hardest. After 19 years of serving the Granada community we have to say our final goodbye. I am very proud of all that was accomplished during those years. I know the program has made such a difference to our children, our families and the community.

The Stepping Stone Preschool program is very special because it works to improve the lives of all who gather there. It creates hope through education for those who might not have had this opportunity otherwise. It works. Just ask any of our families and they would be happy to tell you their story – the story with a more successful ending than they imagined for themselves without being a part of Stepping Stone.

I would like to thank the Foundation and all those who have been involved all these years for making it possible – not only for the children and families but for me.

Sincerely,

Janice Milks

Westwood Three-Year-Old Classroom

Janet Castaneda and Maria Flores

Our year passed so quickly and it was a wonderful experience watching three-year-olds grow. Everyone learned so much from each other and they became close friends. I am excited to share that ten families will return to our class next year and we will have ten new families. I know we will have wonderful models in our class next year to support our students' learning.

At the end of each year, we ask the parents to participate in an evaluation of the program to give them the opportunity to communicate how their experience was. I would like to share with you some of the things they told us:

"A Stepping Stone Preschool gave me the opportunity to learn along with my child".

Westwood Four-Year-Old Classroom

Fran Smith and Zulma Segura

As our school year comes to a close, we are filled with happiness and sadness. We're happy because we see how far our students have progressed, and know they will be successful in Kindergarten. We're sad because it's time to say goodbye to them and their wonderful families.

Throughout the year we celebrate the many accomplishments of our students. I am so very proud to announce a HUGE accomplishment of one of our parents. Carlos Jimenez successfully passed his GED test and has been awarded his GED certificate. Carlos has been a parent in our program for three years, and was determined to pass his GED before leaving our program. He is so thankful to ASSF for the opportunity he was given, and hopeful that many others will have the experience to follow him.

We celebrate another accomplishment of one of my parents. Carmen Lopez also has been in our program for three years. When I first met Carmen, she could not speak English. She understood some words, but was a little bashful to practice her English. Last week she was appointed President of our schools PTO. She was so happy to share her news with me we were both in tears!

So along with these accomplishments, I hope you will read a speech my parents wrote and read at this year's end of the year celebration in May located on the front page.

Sincerely,

Fran Smith

"I learned the importance of reading with my child everyday."

"My son became more confident this year and he enjoys going to school."

"I am thankful for all the many opportunities that the program has given us."

These parents all expressed how the program impacted them in positive ways and how important education is to their families. Many said how unique the Stepping Stone program is because of the opportunities it provides to parents and their children. They also shared how much they have learned and how much it has changed the way they interact with their children. As a teacher I feel honored to be a part of this community of learners. It is wonderful to see how the children develop throughout the year and watch the parents make deeper connections with their children.

It is ever present in my mind how much the Foundation has worked to make all of this possible. Without your support these families would not have these opportunities. Thank you for all you do and God Bless.

Janet & Maria



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Upcoming Events:

Strikes for Stepping Stone Bowling Event August 20, 2011 9:30 AM Registration

Call the office for details! 602-6843-8281. Please help us raise \$6,000 to put one whole family through our program for an entire year. This family friendly event is now in its third year and we need you!

emcee, provided a warm welcome. A special thank you goes to Diane Tooker, who sponsored two tables so Stepping Stone Families could attend. Other corporate sponsors followed suit. The Event Committee led by Tio Tachias included Tony Astorga, Finance Chair, Jennifer Sanchez and Martin Flores, co-chairs of the promotion team, Maribel Barrios, Dahlia Candelaria, Maria Cervantes, Gil Cano, Michael Hensley, Jesus Hernandez, Julio Herrera, Mary and Frankie-Jo Rios, Sev Rodarte, David Sandoval, Virginia Sterling and Lisa Urias and others previously mentioned in this article. Thanks to all of them and you, our supporters, we netted more than \$50,000 for A Stepping Stone Foundation children and families. ¡Muchísimas gracias a todos!

BILLIE'S KIDS)

Event Chair, and to her amazing committee: Judy Brengi, Bev Carroll, Maritza Hernandez, Carolyn Keagle, and Linda Pape. Without the generous support of Vanessa Tang's Uncle Kenny Leung (pictures), Office Max (student gifts), Purple Coyote (donated desert and cakes), Urias Communications (design work) and Shadow Rock Church (donated venue) this event could not have taken place. Other cash donors that make the scholarship and scholars' attendance possible are: Carol and Lawrence Brecker, Gladys and Jack Bobo, Joy and Con Englehorn, Jacqueline and Tom Pynn, and Urias Communications.