



Serving children and families  
at risk for reoccurring homelessness  
through  
Early childhood education  
Childcare,  
Respite care,  
Arts programs,  
Child development classes,  
Family support  
and Festival Celebrations

Thanks to the generous care and support of many people we have just completed a wonderful year.

Signs of transformation and healing in the children and families are a constant source of inspiration. Some of the families have finished the program and have made big steps requiring strength of body and soul and the conviction that they can rely on the new capacities they have built up over the past one or two years. (1)

Carolyn and her twin daughters have been intent upon transforming the chaos of their lives. This summer Carolyn found the strength and courage needed to end a long-standing emotionally abusive relationship. And then there was a fire in which their apartment burnt down. As we talked over the options, Carolyn said, "It is as if I am now fully awake. I can see what I can do, I feel a lot better about myself, the girls are happy and easy to take care of now, I know what to do with them. I think I am ready to make a new start. Do you think I can do it?" With the help of the Red Cross the family has moved into a better neighborhood. We stay in close contact. Carolyn has one good part time job and is looking for another. On our last phone conversation the girls told us they have been teaching their new friends the 'Sophia House games' like string games, drawing stories, and "Chinese" jump rope. "But" they add, "We better come to Sophia House for Halloween cause we can't do that by ourselves."

Other families stay in the neighborhood and make changes here, one step by courageous step. Having learned at Sophia House the importance of daily life Joan now has a dinner table where most evenings she eats with her children. "The neighbors can't believe I am still doing it," she laughs. Some of her neighbor's children join her family for a 'sit-down' dinner. "They'll be making their folks do it too one day" she smiles. Painfully this new order does not suit all of her extended family and some do not come around much anymore. "I miss them," she tells me, "but we have to do this now, the kids don't need to act like nothing matters." Other changes too have come about such as bedtime stories instead of falling asleep by the TV. Her four year old insists on an orderly environment if only around her own sleeping space. These may sound like small and insignificant changes but it is important to remember that they happen in extremely cramped quarters amid daily struggles with violence, poverty and depressingly overwhelming obstacles. And these small changes are happening in many families in several neighborhoods.

Our children and families are in a position to transform some of the most intractable problems of our society. As they become well and unfold their true being they become agents of change within the harshness and chaos that fermented many of the problems. It is a blessing to watch and we are very grateful for your support that makes it all possible.

(1) The following accounts are actual but the names have been changed



## Early Childhood Education

The children arrive each morning between 6:30 and 7:00. After breakfast they begin their play and activities in a Waldorf based nursery. The program fosters the children's inner activity through the use of their own imagination and fantasy. Through supported play the children quite quickly begin healing their individual wounds while growing in inner strength. Our children's lives have been fragmented. The families have moved from place to place becoming increasingly isolated from the world around them. The children have little or no sense of the whole or how things are related. They do not have a sense of belonging. Through play, guided activities, the environment and teacher interaction we support the children in building and repairing relationships to nature, color, form, story, song and to one another. Gradually they begin to heal and gain a sense of belonging.

Sara joined us last year. She had leukemia and had spent much of her first two years in the hospital. As of last May she was declared in complete remission. The doctors had not held much hope for her and are delighted at her recovery, as we all are. Sara is now healthy and happy and making up for lost time.

Lucia, almost 4, has also made dramatic changes. When she arrived last year she was listless with vacant eyes and very little muscle tone. It is such a joy to see this little one now so happy, playful and full of energy. Her mother, who has found housing quite far from Sophia House brings her the long distance every day. No one values the change in Lucia more than her mother and she will do whatever she can to have her little girl here as long as possible.



## Respite Care

We have more demand for respite care than we can meet. In addition to working with several high need families several times each year we also provide emergency care. Now a new form is making its appearance. Last year we had several mothers request that they be able to come with their children. When asked why, one mother Vivian said, “I just want to see why she loves it so much.” It was a wonderful to see them have some protected stress-free time together enjoying every day life. At the end of the weekend Vivian said, “I am happy. They are only simple things you do. Sulee and I can do them too. You are like a family who knows old ways for us.”

## Before and After School Program

In addition to homework the children have artistic activities, including painting, story, molding, handwork and baking. In the early morning they often see the younger children engaging in creative play. One morning a boy was acting out the George and the Dragon story in which George transforms the evil dragon into a good dragon. Nine-year-old Kelly looked up and said with a thoughtful smile, “yeah, we gotta change lots of things to good, right?”

## Family Support

We have started a college fund for the children. The parents give \$10 a month. Thanks to the generosity of Camphill Beaver Run and Ellie Wood we are able to match that amount for each child. It may not sound like much but it will be enough for community college. And it has had a major impact on the self-esteem of the families. With tears in her eyes one mother said “It is hard to believe that we are a family that is saving for college.” The children who are old enough to understand are delighted that they will be going to ‘college,’ that mysterious place where many interns go when they leave (graduate school in fact).

## Intern Program

The work of Sophia Project depends upon the interns who live and work at Sophia House for one year. In that time they learn what it means to accompany the families as they heal. The interns work directly with the children in a Waldorf early childhood program. They are able to participate in the children’s development and to marvel at their incredible capacity to heal given the appropriate conditions, conditions that the interns learn to create.

This year the interns are Belinda Owen who joins us for a second year, Martin Alfred and Jasmin Bradley. We have an ongoing need for people wishing to serve in this capacity.

## Community Growth

Anna Sands, a qualified Waldorf Early Childhood teacher, has joined Sophia Project as a permanent member. Anna has served as an intern at Sophia Project for the past two years.

In March Sophia Project received recognition from the Camphill Association of North America that “Sophia Project works out of the impulse of Camphill.”

Inspired by the strides the children and families are making, there are two separate groups of people, one in Pittsburg the other in Rhode Island who have expressed serious interest in starting a Sophia Project. We will do all we can to help make this possible.

## The Future.....Is Now!

In last year's newsletter we spoke about a capital campaign begun by Sy Kaufman and Denise Shephard to pay off our mortgage. Primarily due to a generous gift from the Omidyar Fund we have completely paid off the mortgage on Sophia House. We are very grateful for all that this makes possible. We are actively looking for a second house in this neighborhood. In the second house we plan to create a program just for children birth -3. This will allow more space for children 3-5 in the present early childhood program. The new house will also provide more space for respite care and housing for more coworkers to staff present and future programs. Once we secure a second house we will seek 2 more permanent coworkers.

Sophia Project and Raphael House continue to collaborate on the children's programs. As the extent of that collaboration lessens we bid good bye to board member Michael Ennis who served for three years as the Raphael House representative. We are grateful to Michael for the sound advice he has offered to Sophia Project in its first years of growth and happy for the continued support of Raphael House. We also say goodbye to board member Sharry Wright who has faithfully participated in the program every week for three years, bringing many gifts, including nutrition for body and soul and beautiful handwork. We miss her and look forward to our less frequent but equally warm times together.



We joyfully welcome new board members Janet Paroo, a long time friend of Camphill Soltane, and Frederica Von Stade who regularly leads the children in singing, both are wonderfully generous friends of Sophia Project. We send our thanks and gratitude to the members of the Anthroposophical Society in America, Christine Zecca Foundation, Frederick & Doris Bristol Foundation, Freitas Foundation, Hyperion, Microsoft Matching Gifts Program, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Rudolf Steiner Foundation, The Camphill Communities in North America, The Pierre & Pamela Omidyar Fund, Y & H Soda Foundation, Karen Apana, Pam Cohn-Takahama, Mary Davidson, Robert & Louise Hill, Seymour Kaufman, Donald and Shelly Burt Meltzer, Margret Metraux, Pamela Rosenberg, Aaron Stern, and the many individual donors who give their vital support, our wonderful enriching volunteers, especially Ann Gressani and the East Bay Waldorf School parents, Sharry Wright, the hand work group, the Secret Santa's and for the abiding support of Ellie Wood.

A word about photographs: in consultation with the families at Sophia House the board has decided not to use photographs of the children or families in our literature. Instead we will use artistic renderings. As one mother put it "when we were homeless it was not so important but now we are almost getting normal and we will just be a part of the neighborhood... so if you don't have to." In order to ensure that the children and families will continue to feel this is a safe place to heal and grow without risk of shame or exposure to the larger community, now or years from now, we are happy to honor this wish.

Pictures by  
Eric Beumer and Sharry Wright

Wishing you many peaceful and joy filled days,

Carol Cole, David Barlow  
and The Board of Sophia Project

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