



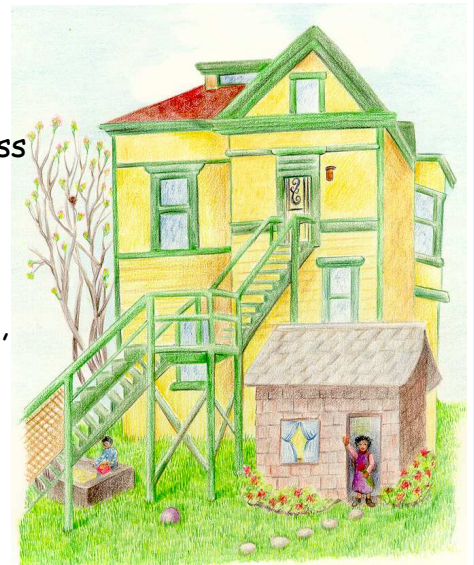
Nourishing and protecting the light within each child

Serving children and families
at risk for reoccurring homelessness
through

Early childhood education,
Infant and Toddler development,
Before and After School program,
Respite care,
Arts programs,
Child development classes,
Family support
and Festival Celebrations



Myrtle House



Sophia House

Dear Friends,

Together we help the children and families we serve to know their unique value and to gain the capacities they need to become accomplished and caring adults. We help them to strengthen their feeling of dignity and we provide skilled guidance in a nourishing and protected environment.

August is the start of the new school year. At this time we are also joined by new interns. This year five of our six interns, ages 19-27, have come to Sophia Project through AmeriCorps. Over the next 10 months they will help create the conditions necessary for the children to heal from traumatized lives. Each intern is given a specific child or group of children for whom they are particularly responsible. Under the supervision and guidance of Carol Cole, they will assist in assessing the needs and developmental steps of each child and record the children's progress using specific tools designed for this purpose.

During the week before the children arrive, the interns are led through a five day intensive orientation in which they learn, among other guiding principles, the importance of making a warm functioning home together. This is essential for the mothers, many of whom have been homeless for much of their lives. The mothers need to be a part of a functioning home in order to have the experience themselves of what they are trying to create for their children. The interns also develop a greater appreciation of the importance of the physical beauty of the houses and gardens. Beauty itself is healing and it also sends a clear message to the children and mothers that they deserve a space that is beautiful and well cared for. This is an essential experience for increasing self esteem and self confidence.

As the children and mothers in our programs have lived with constant fear and high levels of stress, they have had very little time to cultivate relationships to the world around them. Typically they do not have a connection to the riches of nature, art, music, books, or celebrations. Hard life experiences have often taught our children the necessity of aggressive survival skills. The mothers and fathers are struggling to learn new skills. In our work it is crucial that the staff and interns are also engaged in deepening their relationships to the world, ennobling daily life, and learning new skills. In this way we not only model ways of being but also join our children and families in creating an enriched inner and outer life to replace the inner and outer poverty that daily challenge our children and mothers.



Results

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We have repeatedly seen that this intense way of working—a wise and healing education within a loving community—brings about deep transformations. The **future** impact of some capacities that are gained can be hard to measure. The value of other capacities is in what they **prevent** in later life, also difficult to measure. But there are many that are tangible results now. These include the following:

- The children who have been in the early childhood program are all participating well in school. Their teachers regularly remark upon the children's social skills and the harmony they bring to their respective classrooms.
- All the families who have been through the program remain housed.
- We received an award from the Bank of America for excellence in neighborhood renewal.
- We are frequently recommended as a resource for other agencies to learn about 'best practices' for the population of children we serve.
- There are many instances of the children and families acting as agents of change in their own environments. Jack*, one of the few fathers in the program, was heard talking to another neighbor urging him to take the anger management classes he had taken with our support and encouragement. "It really helps man, really. You should do it."

*The accounts are true, but all of the names have been changed to insure the privacy of our families.



Infant Toddler Program

This program serves children birth-3 and takes place at Myrtle House, from 6am-6pm, Monday through Friday. When the children first join us the trauma they have experienced is often expressed through numbed passivity or a painful silence. Their trauma typically stems from frequent moving from place to place, an extremely stressed mother, broken rhythms of sleeping, eating and playing, poor nutrition and exposure to violence. Each child is warmed inwardly and outwardly, and each child comes back to life. Monica, now 2, was very somber both at home and with us, but now, slowly, she is changing. As her life becomes more predictable and full of warmth we see her smile many times a day—and what a smile it is! Monica's smile brightens her entire face and sends sunshine deep into the hearts of everyone around her.

Early Childhood Program

The 3-5 year old children attend their more structured program at Sophia House. At 3 ½ years Adam's speech was still very unclear and he had other worrying behaviors such as extreme inwardness. It was difficult to have him assessed as he was very fearful of strangers and particularly of doctors or clinicians of any kind. Adam needed more specialized intervention than we could provide. After accompanying his mother to many appointments we finally found a specialist willing to come to Sophia House and an assessment was made there. Adam now has a special speech class in addition to his Sophia Project program. He is very cheerful and making good progress. The county specialist is impressed by our program. In her estimation the Sophia Project work with Adam and his family has kept him from some very likely psychological problems. The predictable rhythm of the

day, enriched environment, nutritious food, developmentally appropriate curriculum and skilled, warm adults have given Adam the foundation he needs to work on his speech and to overcome potential psychological challenges.

Respite Care

There is always more demand for weekend respite care than we can provide but with two houses we can now accommodate both longer stays and more frequent short stays. Tania, who was removed from her mother because of her mother's addiction, has been a part of respite care since the beginning of the program. Tania has experienced a series of foster care situations, in one of which she suffered deprivation and abuse for 3 days. We were instrumental in closing the house, but she experienced severe damage. Tania has a more permanent home now. Through the years she has stayed with us sometimes for a few weeks, sometimes just a day. Sophia Project is a place of refuge for her and a touchstone in a fragmented life. We attend her school events and she is with us for special occasions. Tania knows she can count on us. With thanks to all of you, Tania and many other children can have what is too rare in their lives—sustained, warm and healthy relationships.

In addition to birthdays, Christmas, Easter and other celebrations, a few times a year we have events in which many

neighbors participate. At our back to school event this year 60 children from very low income families received back packs and school supplies. Over the months we receive various donations such as canned food in quantities that allow us to share more widely. On such occasions we put everything we have in the yard, neatly sorted. Families take what they need. People come from the halfway house and senior center both within 2 blocks and some of our mothers take food, diapers and other supplies to people in great need living nearby but unable to come themselves. In this way we and our mothers can help to meet the needs of neighbors not in our program. This is one more way in which the support you give ripples out further and further from a strong center. Thank you very



Scholarship Awarded to Our School Age Children

This year two of our children were awarded scholarships to a local private school. The award was based equally on academic achievement and social cooperation. The two girls are with us in the early morning for breakfast and lunch-making before we take them to their bus stop. This is a wonderful opportunity for these girls. The school, which requires strong parent participation, is happy to accept them providing we continue to be a support to the family. We are delighted to have the children in a safer and academically strong school and the school has expressed an interest in taking more of our children in the future.

Save the Date

On April 27 and 28 Sophia Project will host our first fundraising event. It will be a unique high visibility show and sale of pottery and glass, co-sponsored and juried by the Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California. Held in Landmark Building A at Fort Mason in San Francisco, the invitation-only preview will be on Friday evening, April 27 from 6-10pm. The evening's highlight will be a performance by Frederica von Stade. Outstanding works of art will be for sale, and a silent auction, wine and hors d'oeuvres will round out the evening. On Saturday, the 28th, the show is open to the public at no charge. Please phone (510)268-3916 for further information.

Sincere gratitude to all of our donors, supporters and dedicated volunteers.

Special Heartfelt Thank You to...

Therese Hauer and to those who joined Therese in giving to Sophia Project in memory of her beloved husband Harry Hauer.

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 Baumer, Ellie Wood, and Sharry Phelan Wright

Sophia Project Staff Members

Jo Ellen Peterson—Development Director
Serena Elize Flores—Executive Assistant
Anna Sands—Waldorf Certified Teacher

2006-2007 Interns

Jasmin Bradley—Senior Intern, Windsong Bergman,
Rachel Brandell, Sarah Deurloo, Sophie Jaggi, Heidi Mercer, and
Derek Rugsaken.

Sophia Project is a:

*Camphill Association of North America Affiliate &
Member of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association
of North America*

Wishing you many peaceful and joy filled days
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and The Board of Sophia Project

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