



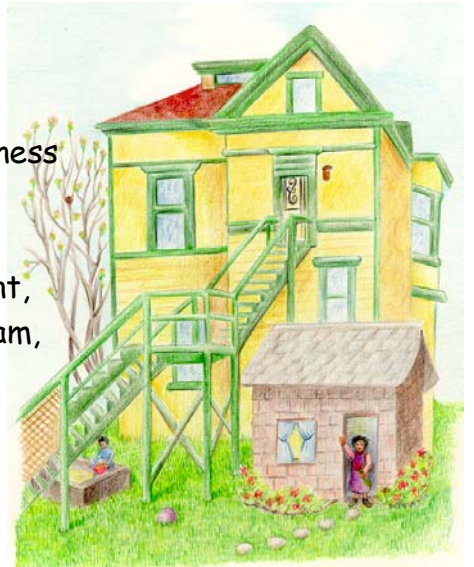
Nourishing and protecting the light within each child



Myrtle House

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



Sophia House

Fall 2007

Dear Friends,

At Sophia Project our core work is to ensure that our children are nurtured and that their physical, developmental and educational needs are met while providing their mothers with time, guidance and support to acquire new abilities to meet their children's needs and stabilize their families. We have found that this way of working, a wise education and intensive services provided by a live-in community of skilled and dedicated staff and interns, consistently brings about deep transformation. We use many measures of tracking the transformation of each child. We find it very helpful to look through the lens of the child's art work, as in Janie's story below. We also use a development assessment tool that we recently created. Following Janie's story you can read a short description of these two ways of observation.

When Janie was three years old, other children would protect their cheeks with both hands when they saw her coming because she was aggressive and would try to pinch the cheeks of every child she saw. She slept and ate very little, and screamed frequently. Janie had lived through continual chaos and witnessed extreme violence. Her speech was delayed, and she rarely smiled. Most of her interactions ended with snarling, spitting or her standard exclamation, "you're ugly!" When we first met Janie it was the second time within her short life that her family had been homeless.

After a few months in the Sophia Project program Janie let herself be soothed to sleep and she began to eat selectively but regularly. She was drawn to color in all forms but particularly to crayons and paint. At first she just threw the crayons but within a month she started filling page after page with pure color. Over the next two years, artistic activity continued to be healing for her. In a nurturing, rhythmic, ordered, and enriching environment she became free to heal herself, in large part through her art.

Even in Janie's most aggressive stages it was possible to see that inside the wounded angry child lived a very compassionate capable little girl. It was easy to love her even while feeling the strain and stress her behavior caused herself and others.

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After 3 years in our daily programs Janie won a scholarship to a parochial school. Now entering grade 4, Janie was an honor student from the beginning. Her teachers tell us she demonstrates a strong sense of justice. On the volleyball team, for example, Janie, who is a very good player herself, insists that the coach allow every child to play, even in a tight game. Her coach reports that Janie reminds him it really is how you play the game that counts. She tells him the other girls "need a chance to get better."

We still have the pleasure of Janie's company on respite weekends. One weekend last year, after not having the chance to visit for quite awhile, she arrived and immediately took out paper and colored pencils and quickly drew Sophia House. As she handed the paper to us she said "here, I know it by heart."

The most important part of our work is providing the conditions for Janie and the other children to heal. This part of our work takes priority over everything else. Janie's story illustrates the importance and effectiveness of intensive work followed by sustained relationship.

Thank you for your support. It makes it possible for Janie and others to know light, healing and compassion 'by heart', and so be able to pass it on to others.

With gratitude,
 Carol Cole
 Executive Director

Children's Art

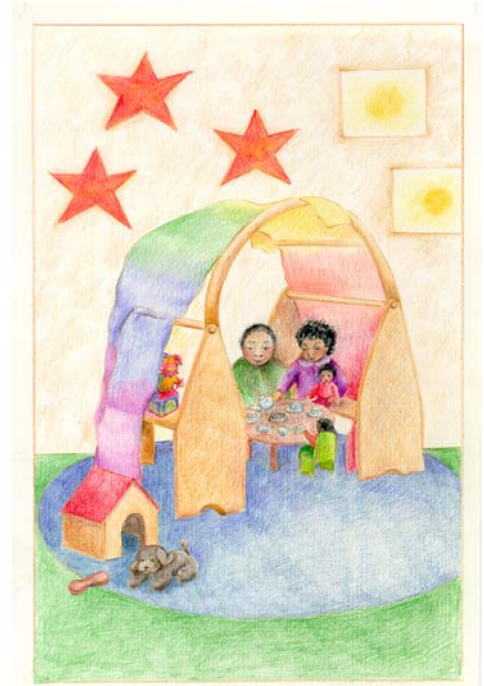
Healthy young children create pictures in relatively universal stages of development. Their drawings reflect their internal sense of self and its stage of development.

The ability to draw a face, for example, represents a developmental milestone in and of itself. The ability to draw a face with a body and limbs represents a further stage of development and shows a child's increasing awareness of his or her own embodiment. Later a child draws a house. A young child's drawings give a picture of the state of that child's inner self. When one of our children goes through a significant period of healing and makes a developmentally on-target picture, there is good cause to celebrate. This is just one reason Janie's picture of Sophia House, referred to above, gave us such joy. We didn't teach Janie to draw a house. Rather, once the impediments to her healthy development had been reduced, her knowledge of the physical Sophia House and how to draw it welled up in her naturally, and she began to draw it, complete and "by heart."

Documenting Our Effectiveness

Our staff and board are guided in their daily, weekly, monthly and yearly responsibilities by core principles that help us to navigate the regular stresses, challenges, and opportunities of the life of each child. One of these principles is the tag line you see below our name on the newsletter: "Nourishing and protecting the light within each child." Our staff holds this principle at the forefront as they respond to the needs and gifts which the children bring moment to moment, day by day.

Our work enables children and families to heal largely because we pay attention to the details and small works of each day. Transformation takes place one day at a time, with patience and insight, by single gestures that express the nobility and profundity of our daily efforts and relationships.



As Sophia Project has developed and expanded, we have been asked by others to document our results and the methods we use to achieve them. In addition to describing our program methods and staff trainings, we have designed an outcome measurement system that ties the needs of children and their families to Sophia Project's program methods and ultimately to change in the health, development, and well being of the children and their families.

We have created a set of twelve child indicators of development and four parent indicators of functioning which we use as an assessment tool at specified points in the children's and family's time in the program. The indicators include:



- physical development
- speech and language skills
- cognitive development
- psychological and emotional health
- social interaction
- play
- imagination
- resilience
- sense of belonging
- relationship to nature and the arts
- kindergarten readiness
- school adjustment and achievement
- housing
- financial viability
- household stability, rhythm and order
- developmentally appropriate parenting practices.

All of the work is anchored in capacities of transformation with an understanding that to witness and support transformation means transforming oneself. This focus on transformation underpins everything that we do.

Our Teaching Staff

A recently published study from Harvard University's Center on The Developing Child once again confirms the pivotal importance of enriched experiences in early childhood: "early experiences determine whether a child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior and health." The study found several program "effectiveness factors," all of which are practiced at Sophia Project, particularly those pertaining to children from low and very low income families. These factors include:

- Pairing parental support with high quality early childhood education
- Providing intensive services that particularly meet the specific needs of children experiencing toxic levels of stress.

High quality intensive services (such as those Sophia Project provides) can prevent the disruption of developmentally sound brain architecture.

Underlying the success of any program is the staff. As the study states: "children develop best when caring adults respond in warm individualized and stimulating ways." This requires self development, training and skill. Sophia Project has a rigorous in-service training program. In addition, this year we have become a site for the first year of a five year degree in curative education offered through Camphill Beaver Run (Glenmoore, PA).

Once again, this year's coworkers at Sophia Project are extraordinarily dedicated, mature, and kind. We are grateful they have devoted this year of their lives to the children and the community of Sophia Project. No matter how wonderful the approach and methods of the program, it must be transmitted through human beings who can work with the children and families in ways that bring about the healing which is so desperately needed.

Elegant Evening

Sophia Project's first fundraising event, "An Elegant Evening," was a smashing success! World-famous opera star and Sophia Project board member Frederica von Stade thrilled our guests with a wonderful performance. Members of the Association of Clay and Glass Artists exhibited beautiful works of ceramics and glass. Our generous guests contributed over \$100,000 to support the programs at Sophia Project, in addition to a new roof for Sophia House. Mark your calendars for the next "Elegant Evening," on May 2, 2008 at Fort Mason in San Francisco.

Sophia Project Part-time Staff Members

Jo Ellen Peterson—Development Director
Kate Hoppe—Executive Assistant

2007-2008 Full-time, Live-in Staff & Interns

Martin Alfred - 1st yr. Curative Education Diploma
Windsong Bergman - Teaching Assistant
Sarah Deurloo - Teaching Assistant
Jana Pazourkova - Curative Educator
Becky Rowland - AmeriCorps Member
Kristin Service - AmeriCorps Member
Jenny Ventura - 3rd yr. Waldorf Teacher Trainee
Tracy Weber - AmeriCorps Member

Pictures by Sharry Wright

Sophia Project is

*A Camphill Association of North America Affiliate
&*

*A Member of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of
North America*

Wishing you many peaceful and joy filled days
Carol Cole, David Barlow
and The Board of Sophia Project

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David Barlow

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