



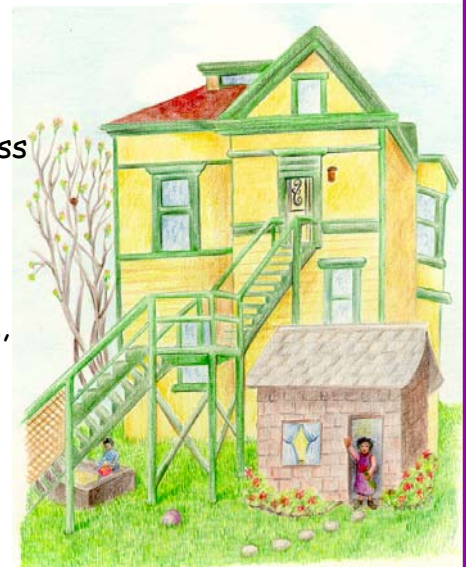
Nourishing and protecting the light within each child



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

Spring 2007

Dear Friends,

In the warmth of an early spring, the daffodils and tulips are in full bloom all around our two beautiful homes. The children enjoy the sunshine during their outdoor play time in the mornings and afternoons, their happy voices drift on fresh air and sunlight into the open windows. The spring fills us with hope for the future as seeds planted in a previous cycle begin to yield their colors. The children of Sophia Project also fill us with hope for the future. They embody transformation and potential. In previous newsletters we have described the many ways that our children heal. In this newsletter we will describe the challenges and the healing of our mothers.

Having come to Sophia Project, the mothers of these children now feel the possibility of a future in which they and their families can transcend the limitations of extreme poverty and turn their hopes into positive reality. For our mothers it is a challenge to make ends meet and learn to sustain a healthy home. Families who have suffered homelessness and poverty also suffer many setbacks in their emotional, relational, and inspirational life, as well as disadvantages in educational and social opportunities. For these families it is an admirable achievement to alleviate and sometimes reverse the wide array of impacts these disadvantages have on their own and their children's lives. Despite these powerful counterforces, they are determined to create a stable home and family for their children. Some of them, such as Ana whose story is told below, aspire toward a professional career. All of them can now imagine and work toward greater possibilities for their children.

The road to stability is long and arduous, and the fear of falling into desperation again weighs heavily upon those who do not have a safety net to hold them in tough times. Sophia Project is the net that holds when everything else is strained to the breaking point. Two ways we offer economic support to our parents in times of critical need is through direct gifts of food, clothing and household items and through short-term, no-interest loans.



Small Loans Make a Big Difference

Page 2

Each month at least one family will need financial help from Sophia Project. Often it is dental expenses, medical, or other emergency expenses that have to be met to maintain the normal responsibilities and rhythms of daily life. Our families do not have the cash resources to pay a large bill in a timely fashion, but they can absorb the expense if given a little time. Sophia Project lends these families the money they need to meet their obligations immediately. The ability to pay off a large bill or receive a no-interest cash loan in a month that has had reduced income relieves a great deal of pressure and anxiety for the mothers in the program. Their fear is greatly reduced and this enables them to focus on their children and their work. Outside of Sophia Project the loans to our mothers, when available at all, carry a crippling interest rate. To date these small loans have always been completely repaid.

Dependable Child Care Enabled a Sophia Project Mother to Go Back to School

Andre's* mother, Ana, who is already a certified nursing assistant, wants to go back to school to become a nurse. She wishes to increase her earning potential and she has a desire to have greater responsibility and more challenge in her work. Before coming to Sophia Project she had managed to take some nursing classes but after Andre was born she needed to work nights to earn more money. During this first year of Andre's life she toggled together childcare so that she could sleep a bit during the day. Everyday Andre would go somewhere different than the day before. He did not have a stable rhythmic structure in his daily life and his mother became increasingly exhausted by the instability and difficulty of constantly arranging places for him to stay. At 24 years of age the dream of becoming a nurse was already beginning to look impossible. Now that Andre is in Sophia Project's daily program his mother has begun taking classes on some days while continuing to work at night. By taking classes slowly but steadily she anticipates being able to complete her degree in three years.

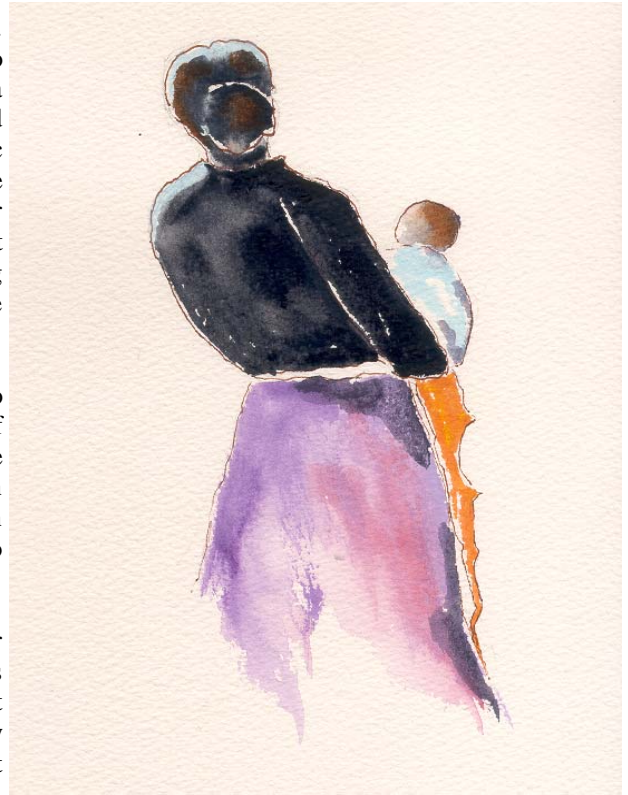
*The accounts are true, but all of the names have been changed to insure the privacy of our families.

Gail's Story

A little over a year ago Gail was living in a van with her five children. Even under these extremely stressful conditions she managed to maintain a steady job at a charity store where she learned about Sophia Project. Soon she brought her three youngest children, ages one, two and four to our daily programs. Shortly after, her name came up for a public housing unit. This provided her with a roof over her head but the conditions are difficult: the gang activity, in front of her building, for example, forces her and her five children to enter and leave her apartment through the basement. She is still struggling with these housing conditions. Then a few months after coming to Sophia Project the place she was working changed hands and she lost her job.

Gail's own childhood was abusive and violent. She needed support to process her painful experiences. She had been to counselors but none of them had been able to provide her with the safety and containment she needed to move through her trauma. Sophia Project helped Gail find an appropriate therapist and supported her in taking her medication regularly. Gail has stabilized and she has the support she needs to continue on her healing journey.

For several months Gail came to Sophia Project every day with her children. During that time we helped her reorient her life in several ways including guidance in basic homemaking skills (she was already a great cook) such as creating a budget, maintaining a cleaning and laundry schedule and general organization of the household, child development and parenting techniques.



Gail then started classes to prepare for her high school equivalency test. After a year of classes and 5 hours a week of tutoring at Sophia Project, Gail passed her test in February. She has been offered a part time job as the teaching assistant for the GED prep class; she starts next week. With her GED in hand she applied to the local community college and is now taking several computer classes for positions in the medical records field. Two of her three older children, one of whom was in the Sophia Project daily programs, have qualified (with the promise of tutorial help and family support from Sophia Project) for scholarships to a local Catholic school.

By her own evaluation Gail feels she has made a lot of mistakes with her children before she had the support she needed to get on her feet. From our perspective Gail has made heroic efforts to keep her family together and safe during extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances. In only one year she has gone from being homeless to being housed (she is actively looking for safer housing), passing her GED, getting a job, taking college courses, and even starting a savings account. Gail is just twenty-four years old. She is bringing order into what was an overwhelmingly chaotic life. She is determined to transform herself and to instill in her children a sense of self respect.

Gail tells us it is amazing to her that a place like Sophia Project exists. She says she feels like she never had a real chance before and that now Sophia Project is giving her the chance of a lifetime.

We are deeply grateful to all of you for making this chance of a lifetime possible for Gail and her family and for all the children and families we serve.

Fine Glass and Ceramics Sale

In conjunction with
The Association of Clay and Glass
Artists of California

Open to the Public
Saturday, April 28, 2007

Fort Mason
Golden Gate Room
San Francisco, CA

10am-5pm



A benefit for Sophia Project

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 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

Windsong Bergman, Rachel Brandell, Sarah Deurloo,
Sophie Jaggi, Heidi Mercer, Becky Rowland and Derek Rugsaken.

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

Directors

Carol Cole
David Barlow

Board of Trustees

Robert McDermott, PhD
President
Lishelle Blakemore
Frederica von Stade Gorman
Kathy Gower, PhD
Patricia Kenny-Schliebe
Sy Kaufman
Deirdre McDermott-
Santos, FNP
Janet Paroo
Steve Pickle
Denise Shephard
Steve Zipperlin

Advisory Board

Woody Carter
Executive Director
Bay Area Black United Fund
Mark Finser
President
Rudolf Steiner Foundation
Father David Lowell
Executive Director
Raphael House Family Shelter
Clemens Pietzner
President
Triskeles Foundation
Pamela Rosenberg
General Manager
Berlin Philharmonic