

CHILDNET NEWS



SUMMER 2009 ISSUE

5150 East Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach, CA 90804-0550



*Robert Di Stefano, President/CEO
and Kathy Hughes, COO*

A NOTE FROM ROBERT DI STEFANO, PRESIDENT AND CEO...

I don't have to tell you all that we find ourselves in the most challenging of times. Our volatile economy brings anxiety to both our supporters and to the people we serve. No one seems to be able to tell us how bad the economy really is, making things even more scary. Someone once said, "Perception is the editor of reality," so if we think it's bad, it's bad. One thing is for sure if you are on the bottom rung of the economic ladder, it doesn't take much to make

it really bad for you. Our families are facing problems with housing, medical care, parenting skills, child care and mental health which can devastate an already fragile family situation. Thanks to your help they are making steady progress, but today more than ever the number of people we reach is limited to the generosity of all of you.

A further impact of these tentative economic times is uncertainty about special event attendance. We have taken a conservative approach and cancelled both the Romantic Interlude and the Festival of Chefs for this year. We hope that our supporters will understand the very difficult choices we made and consider donating anyways, eliminating our having to take the risk of an event that does not raise funds.

Although dwindling financial resources and a growing demand for services are forcing us to redouble our efforts to maintain the high quality of services ChildNet has always provided, we are doing it. We are buoyed by the knowledge that throughout history, our most difficult times as a community have resulted in some of our most creative and entrepreneurial thinking.

Since 1970, ChildNet programs have served the region's most vulnerable residents through an array of services. We continue to be guided by our mission: to provide safe homes, education and counseling to vulnerable children and families and to emphasize personal responsibility and a strong family unit.

I am pleased to announce that the ChildNet Board of Directors recently created the new leadership position of Chief Operations Officer which has been filled by Kathy Hughes. Kathy has a twenty-three year history with our organization beginning as a Team Supervisor for the Long Beach Youth Home up to her most recent position as Vice President of Community Based Services. Kathy will be responsible for all ChildNet program operations, including Education, Mental Health, Foster Care, Adoptions, Wrap-Around and Family Support Services. She will also oversee facilities operations and program marketing. Kathy's absolute dedication and extensive work experience will continue to benefit those we serve.

I extend a personal invitation for you to come see ChildNet in action with a tour of our facilities. If you would like more information on how you can get directly involved, please contact our offices at (562) 498-5500.

FEATURES INSIDE

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- Join the ChildNet Legacy Society

and more!...



HELPING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

www.childnet.net

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FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES/WRAPAROUND

ChildNet's Family Support and Wraparound Services have continued to provide much needed help and assistance to families. With the aid of encouraging and passionate staff, our families are reaching their goals of self-sufficiency and reunification. Our program offers temporary support with rent, food, clothing, furniture and basic necessities. This help allows the families to continue to strive and make progress toward achieving their goal of self sufficiency. The difference we make in the lives of those in need is sometimes hard to measure. Here is just one of the many thank you cards received from a family expressing their gratitude and appreciation.

Dear ChildNet Staff.

Words can never express my gratitude for your kindness. Thank you for being there for me and my family... Just when we needed your help the most. May God continue to bless you and the organization in your endeavors to help so many families.

*Sincerely,
Rachel*



SPECIAL EDUCATION

It was an eventful and wonderful school year! **Zinsmeyer Academy** excitedly welcomed two new staff members, Tiffani Bowen and Elissa Finch. Both have been a wonderful addition to the special education program. The music, drama, art and basketball programs that are not often found in nonpublic schools have also continued to thrive because of donor support. The **basketball team** wrapped up their season and a luncheon, complete with awards and trophies, was held for them. Our academic and behavior incentive program was also a big hit with the youth complete with visits to the Long Beach Aquarium, ESPN Zone and restaurant tours! In addition to extra-curricular activities, students took the California High School Exit Exam and state mandated testing. Parents and family were invited to attend Open House on March 18th to see the hard work the students put in during the year. On June 9th Zinsmeyer hosted a promotion ceremony complete with a carnival after for the students to celebrate the end of the school year.

The 2008-2009 **Vista Ridge Academy** enjoyed a successful year with many student accomplishments and special events. In collaboration with our highly valued **PeaceBuilders** partners, the Vista Ridge students had the opportunity to learn about many different career options. The **PeaceBuilders** program is managed by **PeacePartners, Inc.** owned and operated by John and Michelle Molina, and provides violence prevention and character education for at-risk youth. The Molina's have been generous supporters of ChildNet programs for many years. Through their **PeaceBuilders** program, guest speakers visited the Vista Ridge campus and shared their work experience with the youth. Students were excited to learn about the various career options available to them. On June 9th, Vista Ridge Academy proudly hosted a ceremony for graduates and celebrated the end of another wonderful school year.

**All names of children and their guardians have been changed to protect the privacy of the family.*

FOSTER CARE

Have you considered welcoming a foster child into your home? Every month ChildNet turns away 80-100 children who are in need of foster care homes because we simply don't have enough qualified foster families. Now is the time to get involved. You have the power to do something positive that will help change the life of a young person in foster care. Kristina and Alex Vargas are a shining example of everyday people who have become heroes to the foster children they serve. Read on to see how they have made a difference.

The love and encouragement of foster parents, Kristina and Alex Vargas have transformed the lives of Paul and Anthony. These brothers are active in athletics at Cabrillo High School and have flourished since living with the Vargas family.



Both boys have won 1st and 2nd place medals in various wrestling tournaments and at school, they have maintained good grades throughout the year. Their overall commitment and positive attitude toward getting things done, whether it be school work, house work or anything

else proposed to them, is overwhelmingly impressive. They are focused and motivated. Paul has taken the initiative to advocate for himself at school, when he feels that he needs extra help or is having a problem with a teacher. He takes the appropriate steps and calmly addresses his questions and concerns to the appropriate individual. Anthony has expressed an interest in getting a job, which he feels will help

him feel more independent and, someday, able to help his birth father with expenses. Both boys have expressed an interest in attending college after graduation. Paul has not expressed an interest in any particular field, but Anthony appears to be leaning towards Computer Science. They are fortunate to have such dedicated foster parents to help them succeed in life.

All children deserve a safe, happy life.

Help make a difference in the life of a child today.

Call 1-800-945-KIDS for more information about becoming a foster parent.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

In February, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) formed a new treatment team which focuses on early childhood. With so many referrals of preschool age children, in large part due to our relationship with Head Start of Long Beach, we deemed it necessary to form an entire team to focus on this population. This team will receive intensive specialized training in PCIT (Parent Child Interaction Therapy). This therapy focuses on enhancing the relationship between young children and their caregivers while teaching parents effective child management skills. The play therapy room at BHS is being equipped with the right tools needed for this therapy. BHS also recently added services to the MAT (Multidisciplinary Assessment Team) program. We will be working in conjunction with the Department of Children and Family Services when conducting these assessments in order to best serve these clients. We are thrilled to offer these two new programs.

Group therapy is another area that has been enhanced in 2009 in order to better serve our clients. Not only will we continue to conduct therapy groups on site at BHS, but we have begun to provide groups on site at Long Beach Unified schools. So far we have started a Positive Social Skills group at one elementary school and a Coping Skills group at one of the high schools. The group we are currently facilitating on site at BHS is for foster youth to help them develop appropriate coping skills to deal with the various transitions in the foster care system.

ChildNet continues to provide counseling services to 10 schools in the Long Beach Unified School District. Coupled with the new programs and enhanced services that we are offering, we are also providing new and exciting trainings to our staff. BHS is offering an array of clinical trainings for our clinicians and supervisors as well as a series of staff trainings regarding interaction styles, communication and temperament in order to learn to work more effectively as a treatment team, which will directly relate to positive client care.



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Alegria Foundation - The ChildNet Endowment Fund

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HELPING FAMILIES HELP THEMSELVES...

Ricky was referred to ChildNet because of severe school problems that were going to result in a foster home placement. Ricky and his mother live in Long Beach and were in desperate need of assistance when they began to take part in ChildNet's Wraparound Services. Their home was small and in disarray, Ricky's mother was overwhelmed, and Ricky had severe problems functioning within the home, school and community.



As soon as the family began services, they utilized the 24/7 crisis support Wraparound offers. The Wraparound treatment team made daily visits to the family and also spoke regularly with them on the weekends. In addition to needing support, the family lacked the finances to provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, and cleaning supplies. The Wraparound team stepped in to provide the family with food on a regular basis, cleaning supplies and helped to teach the family basic skills to improve their home environment.

However, we didn't stop there. As Ricky's basic needs were being addressed, the Wraparound team began to focus more on the severe behavioral problems he exhibited. He was referred to therapy to address his emotional needs. To help create order and discipline in the home, Ricky's mother decided to implement an incentives program for positive behavior encouraged by our staff. Unfortunately she could not afford to provide rewards. The Wraparound team, seeing this need, purchased small prizes for Ricky's mother to use so she would be able to develop and implement her rewards program.

The family had a desire to move into a bigger apartment; however they were battling severe financial hardship. The Wraparound team assisted the family in finding a larger apartment in a safe area. The Wraparound team provided the family with money for rent and the initial deposit. Ricky's mother was even provided with a job as the apartment manager. This allowed her to make a small income, while not having to leave Ricky or pay for child care. While Ricky's mother continues to struggle to make ends meet financially, she has become much more knowledgeable about how to manage her money. Now, when Wraparound assists the family financially, Ricky's mother knows how to develop a payment plan to repay the loan.

The family has made significant progress toward their goals. Ricky has been referred to a new school and is progressing well. Ricky's mother has become much more proficient in handling crises on her own, and only contacts the Wraparound team as a last resort, as she learned to utilize local community resources for help and support.

It is through the generosity of ChildNet supporters that our services are able to reach out to more families like Ricky's. Thank you for helping us provide hope and healing to the youth and families in our community.



SCHOLARSHIP FUND

At ChildNet we believe every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. The difference between triumph and tragedy, success story and statistic come about when someone takes the time to offer support for a young person enduring a difficult family situation. Donations to our **Scholarship Fund** are just one avenue the youth at ChildNet are enabled to achieve their dreams. A recent recipient, Michelle, wrote a touching letter of gratitude upon the notice of her scholarship award. These scholarships would not be possible without the generosity of donors like you.

Dear El Dorado Woman's Club,

Hello, my name is Michelle. I received a \$500 scholarship from your organization through ChildNet. I want you to know that I am truly grateful. I appreciate the scholarship as it helps me further my education goals. I am studying Criminal Justice, and Forensics at Cal State Dominguez Hills. I plan to graduate in 5 years (hopefully 4), with 2 B.A.'s in those fields, then I will return to school to obtain my masters. I eventually plan to open my own law firm, and forensics lab. I am studying 2 majors, and 2 minors. My minors are Business Management, and African Studies.

With the help of your scholarship, you put me one step closer to achieving my goals. Thank you for your generosity and kindness. I hope in the future I am able to show how your scholarship has helped me achieve my dreams. Thank you and please pass my gratitude on to everyone at the El Dorado Woman's Club.

*Very truly yours,
Michelle*

HIGHLIGHTS



PeaceBuilder of the Month
Pam Hayes,
ChildNet Therapist
at Vista Ridge Academy

John and Michelle Molinas's **PeacePartners, Inc.** recognizes a "**PeaceBuilder** of the Month" each month of the year to honor **PeaceBuilders** who go beyond all expectations. These extraordinary individuals work unselfishly to build peace in their homes, schools and communities. Their positive impact makes the world a better place for all of us. This past November Ms. Hayes was honored as **PeaceBuilder** of the month because of her constant modeling of the **PeaceBuilders** Principles for the staff and students at ChildNet's Vista Ridge Academy. Congratulations Pam Hayes for being recognized as a woman who keeps her vision in mind, knows the importance of positive role-modeling and is resolute in her mission to help the staff and students at her site build peace!



FRIEND OF HEAD START PAT KANAKIS, CHILDNET BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Pat Kanakis, ChildNet Community Liaison, was honored with the "Friend of Head Start" award this year at the Head Start Conference in San Diego on January 28, 2009. Head Start recognized Ms. Kanakis as an extraordinary partner to Long Beach Unified School District that not only supports the population referred to ChildNet, but works tirelessly to serve all the Head Start families. Dr. Linda Perry, Long Beach Unified School District Director, praised Pat Kanakis for her determination to make a difference in the lives of some of Long Beach's neediest clients. Her dedication to visiting centers, supporting families in crisis and providing network links with the LA County mental health community is noticed by many in the Long Beach community. Please help us, along with Head Start, celebrate Pat Kanakis!

Pictured Above Left to Right: Shirley Murray, Disabilities and Mental Health Manager of Long Beach Head Start; Pat Kanakis, ChildNet Community Liaison and Dr. Linda Perry, Long Beach Unified School District Director

OUTLIVE YOURSELF! IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THOSE YOU HELP JOIN THE CHILDNET LEGACY SOCIETY



ChildNet's "Legacy Society" is always seeking new members to give the gift opportunities to children without them. Participation in the "Legacy Society" allows individuals to make lifetime gifts and see their philanthropic dollars at work. Remembering ChildNet in your estate and tax planning will ensure a difference is made in the lives of at-risk children and families today and into the future. A carefully planned lifetime gift through ChildNet's "Legacy Society" offers many benefits to the individual donor, which depending on the type of gift vehicle used may include:

- Income tax savings and possible capital gain tax avoidance with the gift of an appreciated asset
- Reducing and/or eliminating estate and transfer taxes
- Providing additional income to the donor and surviving spouse
- Retirement planning
- Creating a legacy that lasts beyond the donor's lifetime

Let ChildNet's professionals help you plan your gift to the future.

Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed!

**PLEASE SUPPORT CHILDNET AND JOIN US TODAY.
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