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***We Care gives
children with
special needs
skills for a better
start in life.***

**We Care
Mission Statement**

Pieces...Then Connection

Martha Casteneda, We Care Alumni Parent

I vividly remember the day a year and a half ago when our son Nicolas (Nico) was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He was two years old with a limited vocabulary. He could not say mama, dada, agua (water), or milk, but he managed to say one phrase (I don't know what to do!) I was 10 months pregnant with our second child, Camilo, and was devastated by what I heard. I struggled to understand the path that would await us. When the diagnosis was relayed, my husband, Juan, and I stared in disbelief and felt the impact as if glass was shattering into pieces. We did not know how to compose and bring ourselves together. We felt alone and scared.



Camilo, Juan, Martha and Nico enjoying We Care's Family Camp at Camp Arroyo last summer.

It was just one week before Camilo was born that Nico entered We Care's Explorers program. I accompanied him the first few days just to see how he was doing. I immediately saw him running in and not looking back. Difficult as it was for me to let him go, he needed to "explore" the adventure that was awaiting him. We Care opened their hearts to us. The door was always open to us and they accommodated our requests for progress report meetings and to volunteer in the classroom. The information we learned by observing in those early days was extremely important to our family. We were able to take home those instructional tools and apply them at home. We still sing those transitional songs from class together all the time!

The valuable information and support we have been given by the staff at We Care is immeasurable. They helped us begin to understand some of the complexities of autism and gave us tools to help us. Now, we've learned so much and so has Nico to the point where those challenging tantrums have decreased. He is now able to communicate and ask for what he wants. He is able to shift languages and use sign language when he does not want to speak. He has become a powerful individual capable of understanding what he needs and how to get it. He loves his family especially his little brother, Camilo, who loves to play with him. Camilo has a blast participating in all sorts of sensory activities that we've learned are so important for Nico. And now, Camilo uses sign language as much as Nico does!

The value of Early Intervention has impacted our lives and more importantly has impacted Nico. The diagnosis did shatter us into pieces but along the way, those pieces ended up becoming a network of support. We would not be who we are without the support and wealth of knowledge received from We Care Services for Children.

From the Desk of the President

John F. Jones, President/CEO

When it comes to economics, what I dislike the most is budgeting. Budgeting is never fun and in California's present situation it is a challenge even Albert Einstein and Archimedes would shrug their shoulders at. When it comes to supporting children in our "less than golden" state, it can be downright embarrassing. In a recent article in the San Francisco Chronicle, California was listed as 45th out of 50 states in health care for children and 49th out of 50 in spending for education. This would be easy to understand if we lived in a third world country, but California is the 8th largest economy in the world.



If California is so prosperous why do we treat our children so poorly? First of all, California has a problem with living on a budget or within our means. To address this challenge, do we risk our future by placing the burden on children, our most vulnerable citizens? The latest round of anticipated budget cuts proposes that very solution. Voter-approved initiatives are at risk of being repealed and threaten over one billion dollars worth of services for children under the age of 5. These funds are not the cause of the problem, nor did they create the deficit. In fact, they are exactly what our government should have strived for all along - self funded programs which live within their means. First 5 and Mental Health Services Act funds are being raided to pay for other holes in California's spending plans. This is how we typically reward highly successful programs, by reducing them so under-achieving programs can catch up. In the end we just end up with a consistent level of mediocrity.

I applaud our new Governor for his no-nonsense approach to reducing our financial problems. Putting our future at risk on the backs of children is just wrong. Between now and the June special election, it will be important for every child advocate to keep informed and pay attention to how our state plans to treat our children. Let me correct myself, I mean "not treat" our children. California can do better, we must do better, having the 8th largest economy in the world has to count for something.

Message from the Board Chair

Marc Greenberg, Chair, Board of Directors



As I contemplate my thoughts for this February newsletter, President Obama has given his "State of the Union" address, and I cannot help but be compelled to look at We Care's current affairs. I had the luxury of celebrating We Care's best Gala ever. In November 2010, We Care's 50th Anniversary Gala, with presenting sponsors Hitachi Data Systems and Tesoro Golden Eagle Refinery, was a resounding success. The event was sold out, with more than 250 guests, and we raised more this year than any other Gala in We Care's history. Despite unemployment, economic distress and state and federal budget cuts, We Care continues to serve those most in need.

However, it is not without sacrifice. Those services survive only with the continued support of individual donors like you, who give as little as a few to thousands of hard-fought, hard-earned dollars to those less fortunate and to an organization providing lifelines to families of children with special needs in a safe and loving environment.

As we cross into 2011, we take stock of 2010, and we consider our goals for the New Year. Please think about We Care as you plan your resolutions, and please consider continuing to both volunteer your time and donate your money to We Care's programs. In our community, the effects of autism and developmental and mental health challenges impact many families and children. Some are your friends and neighbors. Without We Care, these families would struggle and suffer alone. Thank you for all that you do and for the sacrifices you make to donate to We Care. We can't thank you enough.

Our 50th Anniversary Gala was the Best Yet!

On November 6, 2010, We Care celebrated 50 Years of making a difference to children with special needs and their families at our annual Little Stars Gala. This year's event, presented by Tesoro Golden Eagle Refinery and Hitachi Data Systems, was a HUGE success — raising more than \$100,000 for our children's programs. Thank you to all of our supporters, sponsors, and most of all our kids and their families for giving us the best reason in the world to do what we do.



This was the first time we had a theme for our Gala - The Sixties! Guests dressed in their finest Sixties attire, including Event Chair Nancy Wentling and her husband Dirk who donated photography services for the evening. (photo by Wentling Studio)



A sell-out crowd attended this year's Gala, with over 250 guests and 24 sponsors filling the room at the Contra Costa Country Club. (photo by Chris Nelson)



The auction featured some spectacular items this year, including a villa in Mexico and an "Instant Wine Cellar" with over 100 bottles of premium wines. (photo by Chris Nelson)



One of the highlights of the evening featured a live performance by the band Because: A Tribute to the Beatles. (photo by Chris Nelson)



A few of the amazing people who work at We Care - all dedicated to making a difference in the lives of children with special needs and their families. (photo by Wentling Studio)

As We Care celebrates 50 years of caring, take a moment with us to Imagine the next 50 years for families who pass through our doors. Imagine We Care's future. Join us on the journey.

WE CARE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

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Flag Flown over U.S. Capital in Honor of We Care's 50th Anniversary

December 21st was a special day for We Care, as a U.S. flag was flown over the nation's capital in honor of our 50th Anniversary. Vicki and Brian McCoy won the opportunity at November's Gala Auction, where the flag was donated by Congressman George Miller's office. Vicki, who is We Care's Developmental Services Program Coordinator, and her husband decided to use the unique opportunity as a way to "commemorate the excellence of We Care."

The McCoy's donated the framed flag and accompanying certificate back to We Care, where they are proudly displayed in President John F. Jones' office. Thank you Vicki and Brian for your many years of dedicated work and support of We Care and the work we do.



The Children of We Care

Learning, laughing, exploring and gaining skills for a better start in life everyday.



You Make It Possible!

Without your generous contributions, We Care Services for Children could not continue in our fight against child abuse, change the lives of children with developmental disabilities, or give parents of these special kids the support they need.

Thank you! (Donations received between September 1, 2010 and January 31, 2011.)

\$30,000 DONORS

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Meet Don Shaffer - A Champion for Children



Don Shaffer (in his Fraternal Order of Eagles fez) has been a powerful advocate for We Care since the 1970's.

The first time Don Shaffer remembers supporting We Care Services for Children was in 1977. A We Care volunteer asked him if his service organization, the Eagles, awarded any grants. It was the beginning of a thirty year legacy that, in Don's well-worn hands, continues today.

Don has been an active member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles since 1971, and has used his role there to work tirelessly in support of We Care raising thousands of dollars over the years for our children. He is a living example of their motto – "People Helping People."

Don, at 84 years old, is a man with great people skills. In 2004, he was elected to the California State Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall of Fame. He has also held many elected positions within the organization over the years, from secretary to State President. And although he is sure to nominate We Care regularly for grants at his local Aerie, he does not want to take the credit. He says, "I don't want to give the impression that I've done this all by myself – the Eagles have been with me every step of the way." In fact, Don was sure to mention that if it had not been for the Local, State and Grand Aeries, none of the grants would have been possible.

For Don, working to help others is part of why he joined the Eagles to begin with. In the 1970's, when a neighbor asked him, "Do you want to work for charities?" he leapt at the chance. And all these years later, he says his favorite aspect of Eagle membership is still being able to help those in need.

"I care for kids," he says. "We don't do enough for our kids today, and of all the people we should take care of it's the kids." He cares so much, in fact, that he is looking for someone to take over the cause when he is no longer able. He wants to be sure that the legacy of support he has forged over three decades can continue for years to come.

A Generous Grant from the Thomas J. Long Foundation Helps Keep Valued Programs in Place



Pictured left to right are Bob Coakley - Thomas J. Long Foundation Executive Director; Bill Guthreau - We Care Board Member; Sidne Long - Thomas J. Long Foundation Board of Trustees Vice President; John F. Jones - We Care Executive Director; Dirk Fitzgerald - We Care Board of Directors Vice Chair; and Cathy Fisher - Thomas J. Long Foundation Trustee.

On December 15th, 2010 We Care had some very special visitors from the Thomas J. Long Foundation. During the visit, we were presented with a grant check in the amount of \$30,000 in support of our We Chat and Developmental Play Group programs!

We Chat is an amazing program for children up to age five who would benefit from a small group speech and language program, but do not qualify for state or school district programs. Similarly, our innovative Developmental Play Groups program is designed for children up to age three. Both of these programs focus on the individual child, provide parents and caregivers with home activities and information, and will give any child an extra boost in preparing for preschool or kindergarten.

Through the generosity of the Thomas J. Long Foundation, **many families may now qualify for free or reduced tuition** for these amazing programs. For more information, please contact Darcie Azzolini at (925) 671-0777, extension 26. **9**



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OUR VISION

We Care will be one of the highest quality child development centers in California. We will have the most innovative, inviting and nurturing environments with well-qualified staff using the best practices for serving all children. We Care will accomplish this mission without losing the uniqueness of our expertise in working with children with developmental and emotional needs.



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Matteo, age 4

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Autism
Down syndrome
Learning Disabilities
Abuse
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