



A Message from
Pete Caldwell



Interactive Play
Therapy



Meet Our New
Board Member

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we care news

Summer 2021

Making a Difference with Preschool and Daycare Consultation Services

Preschool is a time for making friends, learning new skills, and having fun.

But some children's special needs are not always obvious, which can turn a fun experience into one that makes the child feel stressed and unhappy. With the right resources and support, caring adults can identify these problems and find help for children who are struggling.

The problem may be something the child does or something they cannot do. Sometimes children feel sad, shy, angry or aggressive. They may have conflict with their peers or feel overwhelmed. Sometimes they can't control their feelings and this may show in their behavior.

This was exactly the case with Jackson, but thanks to a referral by his school admin, his mom Rana was able to reach out to We Care to engage our Preschool and Daycare Consultation services*.

With parental consent, mental health consultants observe the child and then meet with the child care provider to determine the best way to help. In addition, consultants meet with parents, make referrals, and follow the child's progress as needed. Each child's needs are met in the way that works best for them.

This critical resource, developed and administered by We Care, has been highly successful for over 20 years through funding from First 5 Contra Costa. Due to long-anticipated revenue decreases of tobacco-tax income for First 5, the program is "on its own" as of January 1, 2021.

This program is arguably one of the most effective ways to halt the impact of early childhood education failure, and it's only through the grants from local foundations and the generous support from our donors that we are able to continue these efforts.

With children returning to in-person school, these services are needed more now than ever. If you are interested in supporting this program

with a donation, please visit www.wecarechildren.org/donate-2

*To read Jackson's Story, see the We Care Stories page on our website at www.wecarechildren.org



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A message from:

Pete Caldwell, Executive Director



Dear We Care Family,

After the extreme difficulties of the last 18 months, I hope this newsletter finds you well, enjoying the summer, and getting back to activities you enjoyed before the pandemic.

At We Care, we're getting back to the things that make us happy too – full classrooms, face-to-face therapies, and seeing colleagues in the real world!

And after responding to the immediate needs brought on by COVID, we're now moving forward on long-term planning, new programming, and figuring out what we've learned. It's an exciting and motivating time, and we're fully focused on helping the families we serve get back on their feet as well.

Perhaps nothing exemplifies this better than our July 1 launch of “Everyday Moments / Los Momentos Cotidianos.” As the lead of a 5-agency consortium, we secured funding from California’s Mental Health Services Act to deliver critical services to at-risk families countywide. We’ve created a program that addresses the healthy social-emotional development of babies and young children by building skills in parents to address their children’s social and emotional needs.

These types of programs reduce later incidence of youth and adult mental health problems, and connected issues like school expulsions, truancy, homelessness, incarceration, suicidality, and mental health-related hospitalizations.

Specifically, this program for families with infants or children up to 5 years old includes three components:

- 1) Family Engagement and Outreach
- 2) Early Childhood Mental Health Home-Based Support
- 3) Parent Education and Empowerment

We couldn't be more excited to be starting these new services and I'll update you as efforts progress!

So please know that We Care is coming out the other side of these past many months because of the talent, tenacity, and agility of our staff and volunteers, and – so critically – the extraordinary support of people like you.

Thank you for all you do to help us reach the children and families who need our help the most!

Best,


Pete



When Selina and Joe Rodríguez made the decision to start fostering, with the end goal being adoption, they never could have imagined the joy, and worry, it would bring. It was a decision that changed their lives forever.

Soon after the Rodríguezes were approved as foster parents, a three-year-old boy named Joshua was placed with them. As they worked through Joshua's transition from his former foster family to their home, they met once a month with a team of social workers. The team would check in to see if there were any improvements in the behavioral issues Joshua had previously exhibited.



Although Joshua's issues were beginning to improve, the social workers knew that, because of the trauma he had experienced, unless he was able to learn to manage his emotions through play therapy, the behaviors would return. The social workers referred the Rodríguezes to We Care, where they were assigned a Behavioral Specialist and a Family Therapist.



When We Care's Family Therapist, Candice, first began interacting with Joshua in the Rodríguezes' home, Selina admitted she had doubts. She remained open-minded, but at one point drew Candice aside and voiced her doubts directly. Candice explained that children express their feelings through play. She said it may look like they were just having fun, but she was actually helping Joshua work through remembering his past, and finding a healthy way to deal with its effect on him.

After hearing this, Selina was able to observe Joshua begin to act out what he had experienced, even things that she and Joe weren't aware of. Through the interactive play therapy, and over time, Joshua began to express his feelings with words, pictures, and colors – and he even began to understand what those feelings meant.

Before We Care, Selina and Joe were very concerned about Joshua's future because of his post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. But We Care provided the opening to allow Joshua to realize that even though he has faced so much trauma, he could talk about it and not feel ashamed.

After their time with We Care ended, Selina and Joe continued to use the tools they'd learned to keep building on Joshua's progress. Today, he is a happy, creative, eight-year-old who is very inquisitive and loves to figure out how things work. Selina and Joe have faith that he will someday make a positive impact on the world – or maybe even change it altogether. For parents who worried that their child may not be able to participate in society, that is an astonishing feeling.

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Join the We Care Community:

Email: ewilliamson@wecarechildren.org to be added to our email or mailing lists

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18 months after Joshua was placed with their family, Selina and Joe were able to complete the adoption process. Today, after five years with the Rodríguezes, three years with We Care, and one year of a pandemic, Joshua knows that his forever family is not going to leave him. The Rodríguezes couldn't be happier – and they are all looking forward to whatever the future holds for them!

“I love Miss Candice at We Care!”
— Joshua

We Welcome Our Newest Board Member - Iona Da Costa Pereira



We Care would like to welcome our newest board member – Iona Da Costa Pereira. Iona received her bachelor's degree from UC Davis and her master's degree from UC Berkeley, and for the past 16 years she's worked in the accounting and finance field. She is a licensed CPA currently working as the Head of Accounting for a startup called Dynamic Signal. Iona lives and works in the Bay Area and loves being part of this community.

Iona has always enjoyed volunteering and has spent time as a mentor with Build (a nonprofit that helps young people start their own businesses) and Vision Literacy (a nonprofit that helps adults with English as a second language). These experiences led her to look for other ways to give back. When she learned more about the work that We Care does, and saw how dedicated the staff and volunteers are, it really drew her in.

In just her first few months, Iona has already become an important part of the board. Her volunteer experience, combined with her accounting and finance background, add value to board discussions about nonprofit best practices. Iona truly believes in the importance of early intervention for young children in order to set them up for future success.

“I am so happy to serve on the board. It gives me a great sense of fulfillment to be part of contributing to We Care's mission to help at-risk children in our community.” – Iona Da Costa Pereira

Early Childhood Education Gives Kids a Head Start

In the last issue of We Care News, we introduced you to our new Advocacy Corner, and we promised to keep you updated about opportunities to make your voice heard and help get good things done!

One extremely important opportunity for advocacy that we want to share is something near and dear to our hearts at We Care – **Head Start**.

Many of our early childhood programs follow the Head Start model, which includes a national commitment to give every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, an opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

Currently, key decision-makers in Washington DC are debating legislation and other initiatives that affect this work, and the National Head Start Association (NHSA) is urging local communities to get involved.

You can help by taking a minute to tell your representatives that expanding access to early childhood education must begin with Head Start and Early Head Start.

The NHSA has created a simple tool on its website that you can use to reach out directly to Congress.

To send a message today, please [click here](#) or visit www.nhsa.org

Together we can make a difference – thank you!