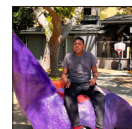




WHAT'S INSIDE:



From Preschool
to High School



A Message from
Pete Caldwell



Welcome to our
New Board Members

we care news

Fall 2023

Daniel's Life-Changing Path from Preschool to High School



This past August, as Daniel's dad Phil Rainey drove his family to Daniel's graduation from Mt. Diablo High School, Phil had memories of driving a much younger Daniel on the same route toward his first school experience.

Phil marveled at how that day completely changed Daniel's path.

When the Rainey family adopted Daniel, Phil stayed home for the first year to care for him. He worried about finding a preschool that would understand Daniel's abilities. When the Regional Center referred Daniel to We Care, Phil was hesitant.

But when he met We Care's caring and compassionate staff, his worries started to fade and had vanished by the end of Daniel's first day. Phil saw that the teachers were going to provide the specialized attention Daniel needed and deserved in a safe and loving environment. Though not very talkative, Daniel expressed his emotions freely and began to look forward to going to his classroom daily. We Care started helping Daniel become more sociable and played a pivotal role in teaching him sign language to augment his speech development. This skill helped to bridge the gap to where he is today - talking up a storm!

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Bob Sachs
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Marc Greenberg
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Iona Da Costa Pereira

Mike D'Orazi

Dirk Fitzgerald

Glenn Garabedian

Kazuo "K" Gray

join

the We Care Community:

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

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A message from:

Pete Caldwell, Executive Director



Dear We Care Family,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family doing well and enjoying the fall!

More often than not, my notes to you here are about WHAT we're doing – but I'd like to take a bit of your time now to talk about WHY we do what we do.

- **First, the early years from birth to six are a critical period of rapid brain development.** Neural connections form at an extraordinary rate, shaping a child's cognitive, emotional, and social abilities. There is never a more important time to intervene to stop abuse, neglect, and other damaging childhood experiences, and no better time to create changes in how young brains – and families – work.
- **Second, early childhood intervention gives children the basic skills necessary for successful learning in later years.** It helps ensure that they enter school capable of focusing, and having good interactions with teachers and peers. This early boost not only improves academic performance, it also creates a positive attitude toward learning.
- **Third, investing in early childhood intervention yields incredible long-term benefits for our community.** Research repeatedly shows that the costs associated with remediation, special education, and addressing issues in later years are substantially higher than the costs of early intervention. By identifying and addressing challenges sooner, the community can save resources and improve outcomes for children and their families.

And all of this is in the context of extraordinary need.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have presented significant and consistent research in the past few years showing that over 15% of children under the age of six have a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

In Contra Costa County, that means over 10,000 children.

For We Care, that is a daunting – and deeply motivating – number. We are doing our best every day to address the problem, and the support you've given to help has created massive good. We cannot adequately express the gratitude we have for all the ways our community rallies around these kids.

Please enjoy this newsletter and thank you for staying engaged with us.

Sincerely,

Pete



Daniel's Life-Changing Path from Preschool to High School (continued from page 1)

Phil remembers how We Care's teachers cared for Daniel as if he were their own. The teachers were true partners with the family, mirroring what was taught at home, and encouraging Daniel to push his limits. They also taught Daniel to enjoy school and new experiences. In fact, one of Phil's favorite memories of Daniel's time at We Care was a ride on a pony. It was Daniel's first introduction to an animal and the joy on his face was indescribable.

Almost like the joy on Daniel's face as he accepted his high school diploma.

Phil watched with extraordinary pride, remembering the incredibly bittersweet moment 15 years earlier as Daniel received his preschool diploma from We Care. Today, Daniel's future is filled with dreams and possibilities. He is a happy and outgoing young man who aspires to become a chef and a school bus driver. What sets him apart is his unwavering determination. Phil emphasized that "Because of We Care, Daniel doesn't think about his limitations."

We Care is thrilled to have been part of the Rainey family's story. We know the next chapter will be nothing short of amazing – just like Daniel.

"We Care helped my son discover his creativity and capabilities, and to build the foundation for the remarkable person he is today. The staff at We Care are true heroes who made a lasting impact on our family."

— Phil Rainey

Advocacy Corner

The work We Care does enables children dealing with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) to heal, build resilience, and break the cycle of adversity, ensuring a brighter future for them and future generations. Please consider helping us change the trajectory for these children by engaging in the following activities:

- Educate yourself by thoroughly understanding ACEs, their devastating impact on children, and the importance of early intervention mental health services in mitigating their effects.
- Raise awareness by talking about the prevalence and consequences of ACEs.
- Lobby for policy changes by engaging with local, state, and national policymakers.
- Celebrate achievements by recognizing your actions and how they have affected change.

Accessing mental health services can profoundly impact the lives of children dealing with ACEs and the lives of their families. Reach out for support as you embark on an advocacy journey — we can help you as you help some of our community's most at-risk children receive the support they need to thrive.



Welcoming We Care's New Board Members: Kazuo "K" Gray and Mike D'Orazi

We Care is delighted to welcome two exceptional individuals who recently joined our board of directors, Kazuo "K" Gray and Mike D'Orazi. Their diverse backgrounds, extensive community experience, and shared dedication to positively impacting the lives of at-risk children and families make them important additions to our board.

A Financial Leader Committed to Making a Difference

Kazuo "K" Gray brings a blend of financial expertise and community involvement to We Care.



Starting in the call center at Mechanics Bank with no intention of a long-term stay, K's unexpected discovery of a passion for finance and banking launched him into a rewarding career. Today, he serves as the branch manager of Mechanics Bank's Concord office, where he values the opportunity to interact with the community, and assist nonprofits like We Care in managing their finances efficiently and thoughtfully.

K's journey to We Care was inspired by his belief in our mission. Having personally experienced the challenges of highly emotional situations in his family and childhood, he understands the critical value of We Care's services.

As someone with meaningful ties to the community where he grew up, works, and raises his family, K leverages his business acumen, local network, and experience serving on boards and committees of various nonprofits to ensure that We Care can continue to reach even more at-risk children.

Bringing the Spirit of Community to We Care

Mike D'Orazi's journey towards joining our board is deeply rooted in his lifelong dedication to community service.



As a retired fire chief from both the Alameda and Ashland Fire Departments, Mike understands the importance of building strong local connections. He has witnessed firsthand the awe and respect in the eyes of children who visit the firehouse, leaving an indelible mark on his heart.

Throughout his career, Mike prioritized fostering relationships, recognizing that a fire department's role extends far beyond firefighting. Under his leadership, these departments initiated meaningful programs and interactions that improved fire services and enriched countless individuals' lives.

Mike's perseverance to making a positive impact didn't end with his retirement.

He continues volunteering to support at-risk children, and We Care became the perfect opportunity to extend his reach. With experience coaching youth and volunteering with child development centers, Mike brings insight and expertise to our organization.

Please join us in extending a heartfelt welcome to K and Mike. We're sure their ideas and backgrounds will make a significant impact on the lives of the children and families we serve.

