

## Bittersweet Goodbye

### Granada Four-Year-Old Classroom

Janice Milks and Veronica Dozal

As I look back at what the children were like when they first walked through the classroom door to what they have become now, I am so proud of them. They have worked so hard to get ready for kindergarten. They have grown and blossomed in so many ways; academically, socially, and emotionally. They displayed this so well during our Mother's Tea and again at their

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### A Message From Our Stepping Stone Foundation Parents

We would like to share with you how being part of the Stepping Stone program has helped us this year. We believe this opportunity is one of a kind and we feel very fortunate to have been a part of it.

It has been a unique opportunity to learn along with our children. We feel more confident to help them with their homework, and show them that reading is fun! Our children enjoy coming to school and that is very important to us.

Watching our children develop and working together with others has been wonderful. Spending time in the classroom gave us the opportunity to see how our children were learning. It provided us a model of how to teach with patience and dedication, which helped us learn too!

Attending GED and English classes has given us the motivation to do something for ourselves. For many of us, our goal this year was to learn and speak more English, and we did! We are able to understand more English, and feel more comfortable speaking it.

We will never be able to thank the program enough for everything it has provided for our families. It deeply impacted us to know so many good people are thinking about us and want a better future for our children.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we hope more families will be able to experience what we have.

From Mrs. Fran Smith's Parents



## Fourth Annual Cena ¡Qué Exito!

Were you there? More than 350 *damas y caballeros* attended the 4th annual Cena y Serenata benefit held April 9th. An unseasonable rain storm blew our wonderful patrons through the front door of El Zaribah shrine to dine on a delicious meal catered by Michael Zistatsis of Alexi's Grill, enjoy the unique musical performance of Estudiantina from Alamos Mexico, sip on Sol de Mexico Tequila donated by patron Frank Fierro and smile for the **Cox Communications** cameras who were there to help us produce a PSA based on the event and our award winning services. Al Molina placed the hand-picked pendant which **Molina Fine Jewelers** had donated around the lovely neck of the grand raffle winner. The venue combined the nostalgic feel of the large "hall" events our Cena founders remember with such fondness and our decorator, Hector Riojas, added simple elegance with his table decor. New to the event but no less enthusiastic was Petra Fimbres, who produced an eye-popping silent auction with unique and sentimental items. Many special thanks to **APS** and **BCBS of Arizona**, our presenting sponsors, who made this event possible. Additional kudos to gold level sponsors: **Helios Education Foundation** and **Wells Fargo**. Among dozens of other sponsored tables, **Urias Communications** also helped out with design for our publications and marketing, and **Univision 33** and Mary Rabago, our

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## Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College

**PAINTING A PICTURE OF PROGRESS** "Every now and then one paints a picture that seems to have opened a door and serves as a stepping stone to other things." A Stepping Stone Board Members

awarded thirteen Billie Gannaway College Scholarships at our annual Bill and Billie's Kids Go To College event to: Navil Barbosa, Alyssa Burris, Brenda Reza Cuellar, Mariela Espinoza, Hector Medina, Rosa Nido, Angelica Pereda, Blanca Pereda, Gabriella Reyes, Itzel Ruacho, Guadalupe Sandoval, Vanessa Sandoval, Vanessa Tang. Enormous thanks to Jennifer Sanchez,

(Cont. on p. 4 BILL AND BILLIE'S KIDS)



2011 Billie Gannaway Scholars wait to claim their awards.

## A "Foot" Note from the Director,

Have you been paying attention? Do you know how close A Stepping Stone Foundation was to closing its doors to early childhood education with family literacy? The Board and I struggled for many months late last year over how (if needed) to close this program if limited resources demanded it. Some of you know perhaps what's it like to stay awake at night and wonder with trepidation what tomorrow will bring. Many of us at ASSF endured those nights. By Christmas, my termination date was already tentatively set.

### *And then the miracles began to happen.*

After weeks into our No-Show Gala campaign during which dozens of our patrons had sent in their valuable donations, we were languishing \$60,000 short of our fundraising goal. It was then that I received an amazing call from a donor that said he and his wife were disappointed in the response so far and they'd like to put up a \$10,000 challenge match. In the next three weeks, thanks to them and other very generous matches, our

donors had *doubled* their response. It was this generous outpouring of more than \$80,000 from our donors who understood how much they mean to our children and families that the Board and I decided we should begin planning for what to do if we received enough money to continue instead of what to do if we did not. So plan, we did.

Then another miracle occurred...

After much honest communication and a program visit, we received word that the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trustees had voted to fund a program grant proposal in the amount of \$50,000.

Now, some folks believe there are no miracles, only hard work and good luck. And maybe that's so, but in my heart of hearts these events weigh upon me as the real deal. Thank you for all for your miraculous support of A Stepping Stone where we will continue to give young children what they need to succeed in school and to give their parents the skills and motivation to support them.

*Cindy Gattorna*

### *Paulette's Corner*

Another school year has ended. All the celebrations recognizing the accomplishments of our parents and their children have been held. It is wonderful to end the year on such a positive note. I have had the pleasure of watching 75 preschoolers grow in their self-confidence and abilities over the past nine months. Sixty of those children will enter kindergarten in the fall ready to take the next step on their educational journey. By watching their parents participate in the adult education portion of our program, they have learned that education is important and that you never stop learning. That may be the most important lesson they have learned this year.

A majority of the children in our three-year-old class will be retuning for a second year in our program. They will have another year learning and growing with Ms. Janet & Ms. Maria. Their parents will have another year to continue their education as well. Sadly, due to a lack of funding, we are closing our program at Granada Primary. Janice Milks has taught our families at Granada Primary for the past 19 years. Her assistant, Veronica Dozal, has

worked in our program for 12 years. They have had a great impact on the success of hundreds of families during that time. Janice will continue teaching at Granada next year in kindergarten and Veronica will move to Westwood as Fran Smith's assistant. Their work with students and families continues.

The preschool classroom at Fowler Elementary will continue as was planned with funding from First Things First South Phoenix Council through the Arizona Department of Education. We are grateful to lead teacher Amy Aasen and her former assistant Ivonne Diaz for taking the lead on getting that program up and running three years ago with the help of the Kemper and Ethyl Marley Family Foundation. It has been a success and while no longer a part of ASSF, Fowler preschoolers will continue to grow and learn under Amy's guidance.

We look forward to serving families of three- and four-year-olds at Westwood Primary next year. Thank you again for your support.

*Paulette Harshberger*

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## CLASSROOM NOTES

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End of Year Celebration in the way they performed for their audiences.

The parents have grown too. They have gained more confidence not only in themselves as a person but also in their own ability to learn and succeed. More parents this year had 90% or higher in fulfilling the five components of the program than ever before. Sixteen out of twenty received special recognition.

Parents and children gathered one last time (after the end of school year) for a special trip to the Children's Museum of Phoenix. It was such a wonderful day! Everyone had so much fun that they didn't want it to end. In fact, they decided to go to McDonalds for lunch before saying goodbye.

The end of a school year is always filled with mixed emotions, but in many ways this one is the hardest. After 19 years of serving the Granada community we have to say our final goodbye. I am very proud of all that was accomplished during those years. I know the program has made such a difference to our children, our families and the community.

The Stepping Stone Preschool program is very special because it works to improve the lives of all who gather there. It creates hope through education for those who might not have had this opportunity otherwise. It works. Just ask any of our families and they would be happy to tell you their story – the story with a more successful ending than they imagined for themselves without being a part of Stepping Stone.

I would like to thank the Foundation and all those who have been involved all these years for making it possible – not only for the children and families but for me.

Sincerely,

*Janice Milks*

### ***Westwood Three-Year-Old Classroom***

Janet Castaneda and Maria Flores

Our year passed so quickly and it was a wonderful experience watching three-year-olds grow. Everyone learned so much from each other and they became close friends. I am excited to share that ten families will return to our class next year and we will have ten new families. I know we will have wonderful models in our class next year to support our students' learning.

At the end of each year, we ask the parents to participate in an evaluation of the program to give them the opportunity to communicate how their experience was. I would like to share with you some of the things they told us:

“A Stepping Stone Preschool gave me the opportunity to learn along with my child”.

### ***Westwood Four-Year-Old Classroom***

Fran Smith and Zulma Segura

As our school year comes to a close, we are filled with happiness and sadness. We're happy because we see how far our students have progressed, and know they will be successful in Kindergarten. We're sad because it's time to say goodbye to them and their wonderful families.

Throughout the year we celebrate the many accomplishments of our students. I am so very proud to announce a HUGE accomplishment of one of our parents. Carlos Jimenez successfully passed his GED test and has been awarded his GED certificate. Carlos has been a parent in our program for three years, and was determined to pass his GED before leaving our program. He is so thankful to ASSF for the opportunity he was given, and hopeful that many others will have the experience to follow him.

We celebrate another accomplishment of one of my parents. Carmen Lopez also has been in our program for three years. When I first met Carmen, she could not speak English. She understood some words, but was a little bashful to practice her English. Last week she was appointed President of our schools PTO. She was so happy to share her news with me we were both in tears!

So along with these accomplishments, I hope you will read a speech my parents wrote and read at this year's end of the year celebration in May located on the front page.

Sincerely,

*Fran Smith*

“I learned the importance of reading with my child everyday.”

“My son became more confident this year and he enjoys going to school.”

“I am thankful for all the many opportunities that the program has given us.”

These parents all expressed how the program impacted them in positive ways and how important education is to their families. Many said how unique the Stepping Stone program is because of the opportunities it provides to parents and their children. They also shared how much they have learned and how much it has changed the way they interact with their children. As a teacher I feel honored to be a part of this community of learners. It is wonderful to see how the children develop throughout the year and watch the parents make deeper connections with their children.

It is ever present in my mind how much the Foundation has worked to make all of this possible. Without your support these families would not have these opportunities.

Thank you for all you do and God Bless.

*Janet & Maria*

Return Service  
Requested

To find out more on how you can help A Stepping Stone deliver high-quality, tuition-free preschool and adult education to families in need, contact the Stepping Stone office at:

**P.O. Box 87149**  
**Phoenix, AZ 85080**

**Phone: 602-843-8281**  
**Fax: 602-843-6498**

**Or visit us on the web at:**  
**[www.astepingstone.org](http://www.astepingstone.org)**

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## Upcoming Events:

### Strikes for Stepping Stone Bowling Event August 20, 2011 9:30 AM Registration

Call the office for details! 602-6843-8281. Please help us raise \$6,000 to put one whole family through our program for an entire year. This family friendly event is now in its third year and we need you!

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(Continued from p. 1 **CENA Y SERENATA 2011**)

emcee, provided a warm welcome. A special thank you goes to Diane Tooker, who sponsored two tables so Stepping Stone Families could attend. Other corporate sponsors followed suit. The Event Committee led by Tio Tachias included Tony Astorga, Finance Chair, Jennifer Sanchez and Martin Flores, co-chairs of the promotion team, Maribel Barrios, Dahlia Candelaria, Maria Cervantes, Gil Cano, Michael Hensley, Jesus Hernandez, Julio Herrera, Mary and Frankie-Jo Rios, Sev Rodarte, David Sandoval, Virginia Sterling and Lisa Urias and others previously mentioned in this article. Thanks to all of them and you, our supporters, we netted more than \$50,000 for A Stepping Stone Foundation children and families. ¡Muchísimas gracias a todos!

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(Continued from p. 1 **BILL AND BILLIE'S KIDS**)

Event Chair, and to her amazing committee: Judy Brengi, Bev Carroll, Maritza Hernandez, Carolyn Keagle, and Linda Pape. Without the generous support of Vanessa Tang's Uncle Kenny Leung (pictures), Office Max (student gifts), Purple Coyote (donated desert and cakes), Urias Communications (design work) and Shadow Rock Church (donated venue) this event could not have taken place. Other cash donors that make the scholarship and scholars' attendance possible are: Carol and Lawrence Brecker, Gladys and Jack Bobo, Joy and Con Englehorn, Jacqueline and Tom Pynn, and Urias Communications.

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