

One Mother's Journey to Secure a Better Future

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As a single mom, Valerie works hard as a nursing assistant at a local hospital. After 10 years in the same position, she finally made the leap to go back to school and pursue a nursing degree. Her goal was to build a better future for her and her daughter. The last thing she expected was that she'd end up homeless.



Valerie's decision to go back to school meant she had to reduce her work hours and her living expenses. A fellow nurse offered to rent an extra bedroom to Valerie and her daughter at half the cost of their own apartment. The hospital willingly changed her schedule to the weekend shift, so she could attend classes during the week.

Everything seemed to be working out, until she had a disagreement with her roommate. "She told us the next day we had one month to move out," Valerie said.

Without enough money to afford a deposit plus first- and last-month's, rent and with nowhere else to go, Valerie moved all of her belongings into storage and called a local family shelter for help.

"I didn't tell anybody at work what had happened. I didn't want them to know we were homeless," she said.

She put her classes on hold and spent her days calling around looking for housing she could afford. "I was crying and hating myself for my own mistakes," she remembers. Yet, her work as a nursing assistant helped keep her motivated, "I have my health, and I have choices and opportunities in my life."

After a few months of living at the shelter, Valerie received a call from Sara, a case manager at Wellspring Family Services. Sara helped Valerie find low-income housing that she could afford while going to school.

In addition to housing, Sara helped Valerie overcome some fears about connecting more deeply with her community. "Isolation is something that families who become homeless often experience."

Six months later, Valerie and her daughter are settled into their new apartment. They enjoy walking to her daughter's elementary school and they've found a community at church that has become like a family to them. She's back in nursing school too.

"She is a nurturing and attentive mother who always puts her daughter's wellbeing first," said Sara. "Yet she never lost sight of her goal to become a nurse. She knows education will help raise her and her family out of this situation permanently."

Donations—large and small—helped make Valerie's success possible. Because of your support, Sara was able to help Valerie find housing she could afford while attending nursing school. Your donations mean a lifetime of opportunity for Valerie and her daughter and the 505 homeless and at-risk families we helped through our Housing Services in 2010.



The Kids Helping Kids Coin Drive Contest is back! We're planning a summer full of activities for the whole family. See page 3.

Join us for our Powerful Change Luncheon



Photo courtesy of Getty Images.

Tuesday, April 26

Registration begins at 11:30 am

Lunch & Program: Noon - 1:30 pm

**Sheraton Seattle Hotel
1400 Sixth Avenue**

Thank you to our Premier Sponsor



**Davis Wright
Tremaine LLP**

RSVP at www.wellspringfs.org

Join 1,000 other advocates, supporters and leaders in our community for the most meaningful lunch you'll have this year. You'll hear the voices and stories of children whose lives were changed by Wellspring Family Services and how we can work together to change today's challenges into tomorrow's happy endings.

We're Honored to Welcome Guest Speakers:



Steve Raible, KIRO 7 News Anchor and our Luncheon emcee for 14 years!



Mike Lowry, former Washington State Governor and Co-Chair of National Alliance to End Homelessness will share his national perspective on family homelessness.



Russ Young, Board Member at Wellspring Family Services and Communications Director for Boeing Commercial Airplanes will share his reason for standing behind our mission.

Congratulations to our Parenting Expert

Louise Harris, a therapist in our New Parents Services program, recently received the Bringing Baby Home Gottman Educator of the Year award for 2010.

Since 2005, Louise has taught Bringing Baby Home classes to more than 200 couples at our Bellevue office, where she also works as an infant/child therapist.

"Helping new parents identify when they are becoming emotionally and physically overwhelmed and teaching them calming, time out techniques makes them more confident and responsive parents once the baby is born." Louise explains. *"Couples have told us that the classes allowed them to strengthen their relationship and prepare for the changes that a new baby brings to the family dynamics."*



Learn more about Bringing Baby Home classes on our website www.wellspringfs.org/parenting



kids helping kids

Get out your penny jars, start planning your lemonade stands and get ready for another summer of collecting coins for our Kids Helping Kids Coin Drive Contest. Caspar Babypants (*a.k.a. Chris Ballew of The Presidents of U.S.A.*) is offering another original song to one lucky winner. Submit your donations by September 1, 2011 for a chance to win!

Premier Sponsor:



More information at www.KidsHelpingKidsSeattle.org

Events for the whole family!



Calling all kids and families! Coming soon to a neighborhood near you, an evening of music by kids' rock star Caspar Babypants & classic movie shorts! Join us for these special "Fun-raisers" to help homeless children in our community.

When & Where

Friday Evenings, 6:30 - 8:30 pm:

- May 6: Mount Baker Community Club
- May 13: Mercer Island Presbyterian Church
- May 20: Sunset Hill Community Club, Ballard

Tickets

Tickets are \$15 each for kids and adults (kids under age 2 are free)

Go to www.wellspringfs.org to buy tickets.



Dads & Daughters Night

Join Kids Helping Kids and Caspar Babypants at this special family night at the Storm game!

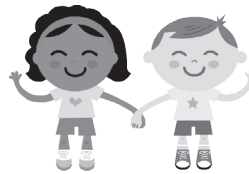
When & Where

Friday, June 17 at Key Arena

Caspar Babypants concert starts at 6 pm, Game starts at 7 pm

Tickets

Go to www.KidsHelpingKidsSeattle.org to buy premier seats to benefit Wellspring Family Services.



Rainier Valley Parade

Saturday, August 20, 11 am

Join Kids Helping Kids as we march down Rainier and celebrate our combined efforts to help kids!



Photo courtesy of Will Austin

Did you hear the news?

Rena Mateja Burr, the inspiration behind the Kids Helping Kids Coin Drive Contest, and her mom were just named "Superheroes for Washington Families" by ParentMap magazine! Read about it at www.ParentMap.com.

ParentMap Honey

sweet deals for a good cause!

Sign up now for ParentMap Honey at www.honey.parentmap.com/a/wellspring and your deal purchases will benefit Wellspring!

Q&A with Nancy Sclater



During Nancy Sclater's presidency at The Rotary Club of Seattle, she led the Club to make a commitment to Wellspring Family Service's vision of preventing and ending homelessness for families with the development of The Rotary Support Center for Families. Now, 5 years later, Nancy is a regional leader in the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County. She shared her insight with us as a new Governing Board Member of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEHKC).

Q: Why is the issue of homelessness so important to you?

A: Homelessness is a visual reminder of how some in our community live without the most basic needs. As our economic base grows it must include all members of the community. It is the responsibility of the business leaders to make sure that all parts of the community are strong, but especially families. Our very future depends of providing a strong base for our children.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Governing Board of CEHKC?

A: Through our centennial project to help build The Rotary Support Center for Families, we learned that Rotarians are very concerned about the homeless, especially families living on the streets. We also learned that our members wanted more information on the causes and how to affect a change permanently. For me, the work of the CEHKC is an extension and a continuation of our Rotary project.

Q: What are you most impressed by since joining the Governing Board of CEHKC?

A: Issues of homelessness are complex and require a broad spectrum of solutions. CEHKC has representation from our broad and diverse community. To be successful and sustainable, the dialogue and the planning must be comprehensive.

Q: What are the greatest assets the business community adds to this conversation?

A: Our business leaders are known for innovation, especially when funding is tight. They bring ingenuity and energy to the table. They're also a well-respected voice in Olympia and throughout our region. To have their support is incredibly empowering and validating to this effort.

Q: We're now five years into the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. Are we making progress?

A: Yes, across all of King County they've made huge in-roads in building affordable housing as well as

creating necessary collaborations and efficiencies in the system. We need to keep moving ahead.

Another important part of the equation is addressing the root causes to prevent homelessness. The committee is working hard to be proactive when we see pockets of opportunity. For example, veterans returning from war come home with many challenges. Funds and services are being directed to this population to help in their transition back into our community.

Q: What concerns you most about the many causes that contribute to homelessness?

A: The lack of healthcare is alarming. Accessible healthcare can not only prevent and treat disease resulting in long term cost saving, but medical interventions can also address challenges that could ultimately lead to homelessness. Catastrophic medical costs can bankrupt a family. Mental health issues are far more effectively addressed before a crisis. Adequate healthcare would go a long way in preventing homelessness – a critical strategy.

Advocating for Families and Children in Olympia



influence policy and budget decisions that affect families and children in our community. They shared the experiences of

Over the last several months our staff, volunteers and former clients have met with State Legislators and testified at committee hearings to

our housing staff and families we serve who are facing severe challenges in keeping their families and children housed, due to recent cuts in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. They also spoke in support of proposed changes to Tenant Screening procedures and encouraged lawmakers to maintain current funding levels for child care subsidies.

Pictured in front of the Capitol Building are Tracy McPhee, board member; Derek Taylor, Housing Specialist; Rich Wagner, board member; Richard Carter, former client; Zenobia Africa, volunteer; Ruthann Howell, CEO/President; and Lillian Hochstein, VP of Development & Communications.

Dear Community Partners,

I am writing to ask you for help, so that the voices of homeless children can be heard in Olympia and throughout our state. I urge you to call, visit or email your legislators by April 18 and ask them to invest in our State's Housing Trust Fund and to support Working Connections Child Care subsidies.



Our state legislators are faced with extremely tough decisions right now about how to balance the budget and uphold the responsibilities of our state. While it is necessary to balance the state budget with short-term, budget gap decisions, we cannot be short-sighted. We must weigh the long-term outcomes these cuts are having on our state's greatest asset—our kids.

Even though our agency does not directly rely on state funding, the 3,500+ homeless and low-income children we served last year do. With each decision made in Olympia, we must gauge the force that blow will have on the families we will help this year. From the frontlines, we're witnessing the bleak reality this perfect storm is creating for children in our community.

For example, recent changes in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program have resulted in 11,000 children in Washington State losing the means for their parents to pay the rent. These families will ultimately be forced to choose between food, water, heat or housing—just to survive. With little warning, families who just escaped the trauma of homelessness are watching the resources that allowed them to find stability disappear: income, child care subsidies, school lunches, food stamps and health care. The real tragedy is these families were on their way to becoming self-sufficient, and the decisions to cut these resources will send them spiraling back into poverty, homelessness and ultimately more expensive government programs.

As a direct result of our state's depressed economy, the number of homeless families continues to rise. Last year alone, requests for housing spiked so high we had to turn away 710 homeless families—with 1,600 children—because we are over capacity! This year our housing managers predict the situation will worsen—with 50% of low-income and homeless families we are serving having no means to pay their rent. And these frightening trends are not just happening at Wellspring. Our nonprofit colleagues are reporting similar demands on their services.

Historically when communities experience crisis, the tendency is to turn to the nonprofit sector, or as the Governor suggests, we are asked to 'step up'. The nonprofit sector is the safety net for our state and we 'step up' every day. We are a sector known for operating with sparse overhead, while facing the highest demands. The reductions we are all witnessing are of such a magnitude that neither nonprofits nor private philanthropy can fill them.

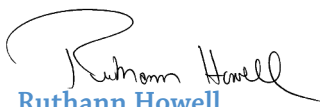
In Washington State, children between 0-6 years old are the fastest growing sector of our homeless population. We already know this population will suffer a lifetime of challenges: lack of education, increased mental health issues, and a higher risk of generational poverty, homelessness and domestic violence. The human and economic tolls of these decisions are great—now and for the future of our state.

I believe a true reflection of how we're doing as a state is how we care for our future—and that's our children. We are a state known for innovation and compassion and helping our most vulnerable citizens. I know our community doesn't believe in letting our children suffer—homeless, hungry and out in the cold— when we have the power and the moral imperative to prevent this from ever happening.

In order to keep the future bright for all children in our state, families need housing and child care subsidies to allow them to work and provide for their basic needs. The Housing Trust Fund and Working Connections Child Care are two programs that are absolutely vital to keeping families housed, productive and self-sufficient.

Thank you for standing behind our mission and for advocating on behalf of vulnerable children and families in our community. Please let your legislators know how vital The Housing Trust Fund and Working Connections Child Care are to children and families.

Sincerely,


Ruthann Howell
CEO/President

Please tell your legislators how vital The Housing Trust Fund and Working Connections Child Care are to children in Washington State.

**Call the Legislative Hotline:
1.800.562.6000**

More information at www.leg.wa.gov

Who's Helping Wellspring

Thank you!



- **9-year-old Maddie** for donating 370 books to help other kids at Wellspring learn to read!
- **Sandhurst Co-operative Preschool** for hosting a clothing drive of baby, toddler and maternity clothes to help homeless families at our Baby Boutique.
- **Corks & Canvas Events** for sponsoring a special "Art from the Heart" event with women leaders at Wellspring and in our community.

- **World Affairs Council** and representatives from Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Palestinian territories, Jordan and Egypt for visiting our program to learn best practices in stopping domestic violence and keeping women and children safe.
- **ParentMap Honey** for creating a buzz in the community and donating a portion of proceeds from all ParentMap Honey deals in March and April to our work with homeless children.
- **Seattle Council Member Mike O'Brien** for visiting our Rotary Support Center for Families to see in-person the importance of City funding for our domestic violence intervention services.
- Grants from **Horizons Foundation:** \$15,000 for Domestic Violence Intervention, **Microsoft:** \$20,000 for our services for low-income and homeless families, **Marguerite Casey Foundation:** \$5,500 for our Early Learning Center.

In Memory:

Longtime friend of Wellspring Family Services, **Doris Nelson**, passed away on March 26, 2011.

Doris became a friend of Wellspring through Rena Nofsinger who invited her to attend our 2008 Powerful Change Luncheon. After learning about our work with homeless children, Doris became a loyal supporter. We extend our condolences to her husband Andy and family.

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