

The *Collective Express*

May 2002



"Caring for Kids Since '72"

The Children's Collective, Inc. Celebrates the Grand Opening of the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex



The Children's Collective Inc. is proud to announce the grand opening of the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex for Family and Community Development! This brand new facility, located near the corner of Manchester and Vermont, hosts a High School, Child Development Center, and a Community Center to serve the residents of South Los Angeles.



The Children's Collective Inc. operates the Child Development Center, which is the new home for the infant/toddler program open since 1994. A new state preschool program has recently begun in the facility, and an after school program for children 5-8 is soon to follow.



The Y.O.U. Alternative High School is operated by LAUSD, and educates students who were not successful in standard high school programs. The Y.O.U. High School serves as an alternative learning environment and a second chance at education for these students. Enrollment for the 250 students is voluntary.

The Children's Collective Inc. is the lead agency in the Community Center, which is located in the same building as the Y.O.U. High School. Youth & Neighbors Excelling Together (YNET)/California Family Health Council (CFHC) provides a family health clinic which is open to the public on a drop-in basis. Many other services and programs are offered in the community center under the umbrella of the Family Development Network, including employment assistance, family resource referrals, youth advocacy programs, individual and family counseling, case management services, recreational

activities for youth and adults, and literacy classes, just to name a few.

What makes the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex truly unique is its new combination of services provided to the public. Under older models of community programming, clients were sent to separate locations for different types of social services. The Rita D. Walters Learning Complex is a fresh approach, where people of every age can come for all kinds of assistance, or just for recreation.

The Grand Opening of the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex for Family and Community Development was celebrated on April 29, 2002, coinciding with the 10 year observance of the civil unrest that gripped Los Angeles in 1992.

PHOTOGRAPHS

TOP
Community Center/High School, as seen from Manchester St.

CENTER
Child Development Center (front)

BOTTOM
Child Development Center (back)

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Memorial Day Editorial: The Smallest Casualties of War

Their experiences become front page headlines in our newspapers, lead stories in our evening newscasts, and the topics of conversations on our talk shows. They're the feature report in magazines and are often the subject of the university research papers. Though they are the focus of so much attention, it's not for what they did, but rather what has been done to them.

They are the smallest casualties of war: the War Against Children — our children. Their collective names have never adorned any national monument. Nor do they have a day set aside in their honor. Their time on this planet is often so brief and

their opportunity to explore life is seldom fully recognized.

They are the trailer park children from Manchester, Connecticut and the back woods people of Slier City, North Carolina. They are the "at-risk" residents of South Central Los Angeles and the "safe" citizens of Littleton, Colorado. They experience traumas — sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally, often times both — that leave them scarred for life.

It has to be a cruel and humbling fact to anyone when we find that a child in America is neglected or abused every 11 minutes, and that a child or youth is killed by a gun every 2 hours. It has to unsettle us when we hear that 10 million children in the United States lack health insurance, and that offspring of opulence become mass murderers. These are not regional issues. Nor are they political, or restricted to a particular race, religion or social background. They are, unfortunately, a very present part of the reality of life for many of our children.

Who can say which child whose body has been maimed by neglect, whose spirit has been scarred by belittlement, and whose life has been extinguished by abuse might have grown up to find the cure for cancer, to touch the world through the arts, or to simply be a good and valued friend.

The future of this nation is in direct proportion to each and every child having full opportunity to develop her or his talents. Part of that development lies in a healthy child living within a safe and secure environment; a nurturing and encouraging home-life; and a challenging and rewarding education — both in and out of the classroom.

H.G. Wells once wrote that civilization is the race between education and catastrophe. Our commitment to our children will determine the winner of the race, secure a stable future for our communities and make the war against our children a footnote in the pages of history.

Bulletins

May Calendar of Events:

May 5- Cinco De Mayo

May 14- Mother's Day

May 17 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Health & Resources Fair
Avalon Carver Community
Center (4920 South Avalon
Blvd)

May 18- Armed Forces Day

May 27- Memorial Day

New Statistics on Child Poverty in California

The LA Times recently reported the results of a survey done by Kids Count, a project which tracks the well-being of the nation's children. Kids Count also used the Census 2000 Supplementary survey to compile their data. The new statistics are:

*The number of California children living in poverty increased by more than 430,000 over the decade ending in 2000.

*Nearly 1.8 million of California's children (or 20%) now live below the poverty level, compared with 1.4 million (18%) in 1990.

*In a ranking of the 50 states, in which rank #1 represents the state with the lowest percentage of children living in poverty, California ranked #37.



Serving Children Since 1972: A Children's Collective Retrospective

In July of this year The Children's Collective Inc. will celebrate its 30th anniversary. In anticipation of that event, let us take a look back to review the history of our beloved organization.

The Children's Collective, Inc. was the brainchild of Executive Director Dr. Jackie Kimbrough, while she was still a graduate student in psychology at UCLA. In 1972 Kimbrough won her first planning grant of \$25,000 from the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, which enabled her to hire 7 people and begin operation.

At that time The Children's Collective Inc. was a research organization which examined the development of prosocial behavior of children in family day care. The research alerted Kimbrough to the need for developmentally stimulating child care for the poorest citizens of Los Angeles. In response, Kimbrough steered The Children's Collective Inc. towards providing direct child care services.

The first preschool operated by The Children's Collective Inc. opened in January of 1974 in Ujima Village. Although The Children's Collective Inc. no longer uses that location, the program was so successful, and the need for childcare was so pervasive, that The

Children's Collective Inc. has since opened similar preschool programs in 8 other locations throughout South Los Angeles.

Throughout the past 30 years, children have remained the same. But the needs of their families have continued to grow. "Poverty has a much worse face now than when we began in the 70s," says Dr. Kimbrough. In the 1970s the low income families served by The Children's Collective Inc. were generally working class and upwardly mobile. Most parents were skilled laborers, secretaries, and members of the service industry who were trying to establish themselves financially. Today's poor families seem trapped by poverty, with families subsisting on minimum wages from service industry jobs that offer no future of financial stability. The result of such poverty is social problems, (such as teen pregnancy, illiteracy, and substance abuse) that affect the family environment.

"The child can't thrive unless the family thrives. So we decided to help the family," says Dr. Kimbrough. Over the last 10 years The Children's Collective Inc. has expanded its



Dr. Jackie Kimbrough and the late Councilman Gilbert Lindsey breaking ground at the King/San Pedro preschool in 1976

programs to offer a wide range of services to support the family of each child. Through the Family Development Network, The Children's Collective Inc. provides case managed referrals, youth advocacy, counseling, and employment assistance. The Coalition for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention is The Children's Collective Inc.'s effort to prevent teen pregnancy. Proposition 10 provides assistance for special needs children, and supplies child care training for our staff and for parents. Workforce Investment Act programs offer training for parents as well as drop-in child care for their children.

The Children's Collective Inc. now cares for 4,000 unduplicated adults and children in South Los Angeles through its child care facilities and various family assistance programs.

The Children's Collective Inc.	
1972	2002
7 staff members	126 staff members
serving 100 children	serving 4000 children, youth & adults
research oriented	service delivery oriented
0 child care centers	9 child care centers
1 Dr. Jackie Kimbrough	1 Dr. Jackie Kimbrough



Leaders at the Learning Complex

Meet Deborah Callahan

The Youth Opportunities Unlimited Alternative High School, operated by the Los Angeles Unified School District, will be under the leadership of Principal Deborah Callahan. The 31-year veteran of the LAUSD is eagerly looking forward to the challenges and rewards that this new facility will bring for her students.

“It will be a godsend to get in that place and operate a real school facility for our children,” says Ms. Callahan. “When they walk on the campus, the expectation level will be raised because the resources will be higher. Our faculty will have state of the art equipment to provide our kids with, deservedly so, the intellectual tools they will need to compete with their counterparts in any other high school within this city. I have no doubt, though, that these kids will rise to meet that level of expectation, and succeed. Our staff is dedicated to that end for each and every one of our students.”

Indeed, no one could be more dedicated to the success of young people than Callahan. She has had a long and distinguished career in the education of high school students, and was responsible for organizing and implementing the first district-wide Options graduation, which has grown from 79 graduates to 800 graduates each year. She has been the Principal of the Youth Opportunities Unlimited high school since its inception in 1991

Meet D’Ann Morris and Melissa Mills

The community-based Health Clinic, operated by Youth & Neighbors Excelling Together (YNET)/ California

Family Health Council, Inc., will be administered under the leadership of Project Director, D’Ann Morris. Melissa Mills will serve as the on-site Clinic Coordinator.

“We will be providing reproductive health services and counseling as well as other selected health care services for all high school students, campus faculty, and surrounding community members at large,” says Ms. Morris.

In addition, as the Coordinator, Ms. Mills will be directing the clinic to open the doors of opportunity for the high school students to participate in other YNET program activities such as their Rites of Passages Program, Male Healthy Choices, Los Angeles Youth Congress, and their annual Youth Summit.

“This rather ambitious project, well needed within our community, is one that I am very proud to be a part of,” adds Morris. These services are provided as a result of funding from the California Endowment.

Meet Mary Ann Moore

Mary Ann is the Site Supervisor for the Child Development Center. She has been an integral part of The Children’s Collective Inc. since she joined the organization as a teaching assistant at the Willowbrook Preschool in 1983. Over the past 19 years Mary has been a Lead Teacher in the pre-schools at Willowbrook and King/San Pedro, and Site Supervisor of the Y.O.U Infant/Toddler Program since 1994.

The Y.O.U. Infant/Toddler program first opened in a one room bungalow across the street from its current location. At that time the parents served were primarily students at the Y.O.U high school. With the move to the Rita Walters Child Development Center, the programs were expanded to serve more children and parents from the surrounding community. A state preschool program was added for children 3-5 years of age, as well as an after school program for children 5-8. Now the facility

allows The Children’s Collective Inc., to care for more than 60 children from birth through early elementary.

Mary Ann is pleased with the expansion of the site and its services. When asked about her favorite aspects of her job, she spoke enthusiastically about the children. “Its fun to watch the babies grow from infants to toddlers and then enter the preschool. It’s been a good experience to see continuity of growth and development.”



Deborah Callahan (top left); Mary Ann Moore (top right); Melissa Mills and D’ Ann Morris (bottom)



Mark Ridley-Thomas Councilman District 8

The Rita D. Walter Learning Complex has finally become a reality. The driving political force that brought the Complex to its fruition is Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, of the Eighth District. TCCI spoke with him about the Complex and what it means to the community.

TCCI: What is unique about the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex?

Councilman Ridley-Thomas: The Rita D. Walters Learning Complex serves as a kind of project we need to replicate throughout the City of Los Angeles. The idea of providing educational opportunities for young people and social services for families in the same center is a genuine effort to make a real difference in this community. It's a unique approach to making sure every obstacle in the lives of the people who come here can be overcome.

TCCI: Following the 1992 upheaval, many people and organizations voiced concern for the residents of South Central, but once the ashes were cold, they faded away. What was it that enabled you to stay the course for this Complex's completion?

Councilman Ridley-Thomas: There was disappointment when more organizations and businesses did not step up to the plate to make change after the civil unrest. But, I never wavered in my belief that we would complete this project. The City of Los Angeles was committed to creating a unique learning environment that would truly serve the residents in this area. I pledged to make a difference after the civil unrest and this project is an important reminder that, despite the

Q&A

challenges, change occurs when we keep our eyes on the ultimate goal.

TCCI: You're the driving force of the political machinery that is making this happen; yet there is no indication of your influence for people to see. Why Ms. Walters name and not yours to adorn the building?

Councilman Ridley-Thomas: I think Rita Walters is the right person to name this project after.

TCCI: I understand she was an effective force in the School Board and the 1st African American woman to sit on the City Council.

Councilman Ridley-Thomas: Yes, and her commitment to education reform and high standards is what we need; not just in the City of Los Angeles, but throughout the nation.

Lillian Kawasaki General Manager Community Development Department

TCCI: What would you consider to be the key element in the collaborative investment of what is now the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex?

Ms. Kawasaki: The key element for a successful collaboration begins with the establishment of a common vision that all partners commit to, all the while maintaining mutual respect for all parties at all levels of involvement. Once this is done, all parties must remain in constant communication in order to keep things on track.

TCCI: What needs to be done to assure that the Complex is not just a structure of bricks and steel but the structure for service, reform, education and training that it has been designed for?

Ms. Kawasaki: The human element is first and foremost. The Complex's purpose is to serve the community, focusing on youth and their families. The success of the Complex is dependent upon a capable, motivated and determined group of personnel and volunteers committed to achieving victory. We believe we have those dynamics in place with partners working, with The Children's Collective, Inc. serving as the lead agency.

Anthony Ephraim Facilities Manager Rita D. Walters Learning Complex

TCCI: What are your responsibilities at the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex?

Ephraim: As Facilities Manager, I ensure that this facility is maintained at its highest level, and that it has state of the art equipment for our agencies and our youth to use. I oversee the facilities so that programs and program components can operate in coordination, thereby facilitating their success.

TCCI: This is the 8th Youth and Family Center opened by the Community Development Department. What makes this one stand out?

Ephraim: It stands out in size alone. Add to that the uniqueness of how the facility has chosen to operate within the framework of services provided by The Children's Collective, the LAUSD, and the medical clinic. Also, the Complex stands out in its time in history, considering that it opens on April 29, 2002, 10 years after the Civil Response of 1992.



A Conversation with Rita D. Walters

On April 4, 2002, Rita D. Walters, former School Board member and 9th District Councilwoman, sat down with The Children's Collective Inc. to discuss education, her inspirations, and the new buildings which bear her name. The following is an excerpt from that interview:

TCCI: Explain to us the origins and the significance of the Learning Complex.

Walters: The Federal Government and the Urban League first came to me when I was a member of the School Board. They explained that they had a program that would target the poorest of the poor, who needed many kinds of assistance in order to be self-sufficient, as well as those who were already self-sufficient and just needed a helping hand. Over time this evolved into the alternative high school, the Child Development Center, and the Youth and Family Center of this Complex.

The services to the families and youth here are so important. To begin with, quality child care is hard to come by in this city. Here the parents who are trying to get themselves economically straightened out can have a place where they can bring their children, go to their jobs, and rest easy knowing that their children are in a beautiful setting, experiencing quality care. The high school is significant because it is a last chance, another chance for kids who haven't made it in regular programs. There are so many youngsters out there who just need one more chance. This represents that chance.

You can't give up on people. You never know what diamonds are lying around that just need polishing. Consider Sidney Portier's life as an example. He was an illiterate when he came to the United States. He came here as a 16 or 17 year old immigrant without reading or writing skills. He wanted to achieve something, and he taught himself to read and to write. He started out as a dishwasher and he learned every step of the way. And look at him now. Who knows which of these children will do like-wise.

TCCI: What advice would you give somebody considering a career in teaching?

Walters: It's a worthwhile profession. I don't think there's any other profession that is as rewarding as working with children. And I think that when we look at all the different professionals in society – they all had good teachers. Nobody can get from zero to ten without good teachers. They must have a good education. They must have a deep seated respect for learning and a commitment to lifelong learning. Learning is a lifelong process, and

the sooner we instill that in our children, the better they'll be.

Frederick Douglas, at 10 years old, was a slave bought as a companion to a little white boy of like age. The mother was teaching her son to read and write, and was teaching young Fredrick along with him. The boy's father, the master, came in one day and observed this and demanded that his wife stop teaching Fredrick to read or write. When the wife asked why, he said, 'Because you teach a slave to read and write, it unfits him to be a slave.'

Frederick Douglas heard that and he determined at 10 years old that someday he was going to be free. It took him until he was 19 years old but he kept on very quietly learning to read and write. We all know what a great orator and author he became. What a wonderful man. He was a philosopher. He worked with Thoreau and others of that genre. He was a leading abolitionist. He forever dedicated himself to the betterment of his people.

TCCI: He is an excellent example of how powerfully education can transform one's life. What was your starting point on your path?

Walters: Well I think it was just the gradual accumulation of teachings from both my family and the school system. I grew up in the segregated school system. My family had a deep respect for education and encouraged it. You had to go to school. You had to work hard. You had to get good grades. And in a small community where we were, a small black community, the teachers and the principals lived side by side in the neighborhoods with the students and the parents.

TCCI: And your whole community encouraged education, and self-improvement?

Walters: Yes. There was always at the core the struggle to be free, the struggle to achieve, and the struggle to live free as an individual in a nation that declared itself home of the brave.

TCCI: How do you want to be remembered? What do you think will be history's impression of you?

Walters: Well I hope it will be an impression of a person who cared about people, who loved children, who really



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incorporated education into every facet of her life and tried to make life better for others. I think that's a mission that we all have.

I try to encourage teachers to always think of their students as their own children. Treat them like they would their own children. What you want for your own children is what every parent wants for their children. We may have different ways of expressing it, but the bottom line is we want our children to do better than we did. And we want them to be good upstanding citizens and loving people.



Shirley Tyus introduces toddler Morgan to Rita Walters

You Go, Shirley!!

Shirley Tyus recently announced her retirement as of the end of April. For 15 years Shirley has delighted children as a teacher with The Children's Collective Inc. in the Willowbrook and Florence preschools and the Infant/Toddler Center. She will be deeply missed.

"Shirley brings a tone of down-home Texas reality to everyone who meets her. Every place she goes she makes people feel instantly at ease. Our former Mayor Richard Riordan once visited our Infant/Toddler Center. When he first arrived he acted a bit stiff, but Shirley took charge of him and in minutes he seemed right at home in the middle of South Central Los Angeles in a room full of babies!," says TCCI Executive Director, Dr. Jackie Kimbrough.

But Shirley will also be missed by the children who love her. Each morning she is the first to enthusiastically greet and embrace the toddlers. Preschoolers who are no longer in her class frequently stop by the toddler room to say "I love you, Miss Shirley!"

In a field where love and genuine affection are the rule of thumb, her love and genuine affection stand above the rest. No one can replace Shirley Tyus.

After 15 years of dedicated service, Shirley Tyus' retirement is well deserved. She has many years of relaxation, time spent with family, and travel to look forward to. Congratulations, Shirley, on this new chapter of your life!

Collective Gains \$1.5 Million for Job Training

In a bold demonstration of his commitment to California's children, Gov. Gray Davis has awarded The Children's Collective, Inc. \$1.5 million dollars as part of the Workforce Investment Act. These funds will allow The Children's Collective, Inc. to train Welfare-to-Work clients and other dislocated workers in child care careers. The funds will also provide child care for clients seeking employment and training at the WIA One-Stop Career Center sites.

"This is a significant award," says TCCI Executive Director, Dr. Jackie Kimbrough, "since child care services have typically not been a focus of the Governor's 15 % Discretionary WIA award. The award is a reflection of the high quality of our job training programs and our One-Stop child care programs currently operated by Natasha Mahone and her staff."

"What this funding translates into," notes Family Development Network Coordinator, Francine Bailard, "is service for 4,800 children. We will be able to open childcare centers at four different One-Stop Career Center sites. We will be able to increase the productivity and efficiency of job seekers by caring for their children. We will be able to offer 18 college units of early Childhood Education classes at One-Stop sites, in collaboration with Community Colleges and One-Stops. We will, in short, be better able to service our community by providing it with the basic tools for self-reliance and financial independence."

Obesity: Childhood Epidemic

American children are getting fatter, and African Americans, Hispanics, and Southerners are getting fatter the fastest. Between 1896 and 1998, the number of overweight children jumped by more than 50 percent among whites, but by more than 120 percent among African Americans and Hispanics. By 1998, one out of five African American and Hispanic children were overweight (vs. one out of eight white children). And one out of six kids living in the South were overweight (vs. one out of ten from the west).

What to do: Make sure that kids participate in a sport or other physical activity they enjoy. Serve kids healthy foods, especially fruits and vegetables. And limit the quantities of junk food they eat.



“Person” of the Month

Usually, this column is devoted to one individual. But because this month’s issue features the grand opening of the Rita D. Walters Learning Complex for Family and Community Development, we decided to do something a little different. This month we have chosen as “The Person of the Month” the essence of The Children’s Collective and its symbol, the butterfly.



The butterfly is a part of The Children’s Collective Inc.’s copyrighted logo designed by Staffer DonDixon almost 30 years ago. Without the funding to hire a graphi artist, our own staff member captured the symbol of innocence, freedom, and youthfulness in his butterflies surrounding a child’s wagon. The butterfly represents the children and the beautiful metamorphosis of childhood itself. It represents the tots who enter our care as caterpillars, and the preschoolers who evolve into young butterflies

The butterfly also reflects the staff of The Children’s Collective Inc., who are charged with the understanding that children have the potential to fly as high as they dare to believe in themselves. And that the strength of their wings is, in many ways, in direct proportion to how much we let them know that we believe in their abilities. This is why we at The Children/s Collective Inc. nurture each child that enters our care, so that they can reach the maximum development of their talents, and fly as high as as free as a butterfly. And that is why we choose the Essence of early Childhood Development and its symbol, the Butterfly, as our **Person of the Month**.

What a Retreat!

On the weekend of April 20-21, 2002 The Children’s Collective, Inc. held the 1st Annual Child Development Training Weekend at the Embassy Suites Palm Desert. Over 25 child development staff members were treated to a relaxing and informative weekend in the sunny surroundings of Palm Desert. The training program Saturday April 20th consisted of an interactive presentation on providing quality Customer Service to parents and children, led by Professor Jackie Newsom of Pheonix University. With the training program completed by early evening, the staff had a wonderful time relaxing by the pool, shopping, and dancing the night away. After a good night’s rest, staff was back in training Sunday morning in a session with Ms. Alexis Estwick from Sullivan International, Inc. who discussed career advancement as well as regulations which govern child care centers. Informative and thorough, the presentation by Ms. Estwick reiterated to all those in attendance the importance of quality care.

Special thanks to all those who made the Child Development Training Weekend a success, including Dr. Kimbrough, Bess Mayo, Program Assistant Daisy Jardon, and all of the Site Supervisors.

New Sites Opening Soon

Several new child care facilities are due to open under the direction of The Children’s Collective Inc. within the next few months. First on the list is a state-sponsored part-day pre-school which will open at Greater Bethany. As soon 24 children are enrolled in the morning preschool, the facility will open and 24 more children will be enrolled for afternoon classes. An infant/toddler center due to open on the campus of a local school is next. 14 children will be cared for full-day in that facility. In addition, The Children’s Collective Inc. is currently considering 3 more child care facilities throughout South Central Los Angeles which we hope to open by the end of the year.

Interested parents can contact Regina Mayo at the Rita D. Walters Child Development Center at (323) 750-3205 for enrollment of their children.

Quotes of the Month

“Can we all just get along?”

-Rodney King

“The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.”

-Vince Lombardi

