



## THE SOUTHSIDE SPIRIT

Southside Family Nurturing Center  
Winter/Spring 2011  
Volume 6, Issue 1

### Beyond Southside: A Family's Success

*Our Southside families are essential to the enduring spirit of this place. Recently Barb Olson spoke with one of our former moms and asked if we could share her story.*

Lela came to SSFNC over 20 years ago, following a referral from the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, where she had brought her daughter T.C for a weekend. She needed a break from parenting and was feeling alone and sad. In need of support and socialization, Lela was persistent in her efforts to be enrolled at Southside. She was a

single mom and did not have support from friends. Her family was far away; she was isolated and depressed. She came to Southside for help for herself and for a place where her daughter could interact with other children and grow in her skills. After her first year at SSFNC, her second child, Alicia, was born—both girls always had great attendance.

Lela was an active participant; available for home visits and attended most Family Days. Through parent groups, Lela's connection with other

moms and their similar struggles made a difference in her life. She says being in school made T.C stronger and helped her stand up for herself and deal more comfortably with conflict. Through continuous support from her Family Worker, Lela began to feel less alone with the issues she faced.

Today, Lela says her life is great: she's married, a homeowner, and her daughters are successful. T.C went to school to become a Toddler teacher, Alicia is planning a degree in music,

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Behind the Scenes: Melanie Schneider, Teacher/Family Worker

Melanie Schneider BSW, Teacher/Family Worker, started at SSFNC in 1996 as an intern. A senior at St Thomas, she accidentally found her way to Southside: she'd lost her initial internship and was referred to us by her advisor. After her internship, she was a substitute preschool teacher, was hired as a full-time teacher in 1998 and then as a Family Worker in 2006.

Melanie says she has stayed at Southside for over 13 years for the children, the parents and because she loves her coworkers. "It's what I know, it feels like home to me here." Over the years, she has seen many changes, but the most striking change has been the increase in our families' mental health issues and homelessness.

Here is one of her "Southside stories." During her tenure as a preschool teacher she worked with a group of siblings. They were bright and engaging but with severe emotional and behavioral issues—a consequence of all three being molested by their grandfather; their mother had apparently suffered the same abuse. All of the children were removed from the mom's home, the grandfather was sent to jail and mom began dealing with the trauma of her own childhood abuse.

Melanie remembers the last time she saw the youngest

girl; she had come to school before the move to her new foster home and was scared and sad. Melanie clearly saw that in society's attempt to solve this complex problem, this little girl had to face the loss of her home, her family and teachers whom she loved and the school where she felt safe. It was a difficult good-bye as Mel placed this sobbing little girl back in the car seat.

Years later that family would return to SSFNC for help. The mom had a new baby and had received therapy; she'd come a long way and was trying to reunite her family.

Melanie began to work with her again to help stabilize her family and regain custody of her older children. The youngest "sobbing child" did not reunite with her family at that time; she was just entering adolescence and was feeling the impact of all she had experienced. Despite their struggles, this family made amazing progress and they are doing well. Our belief is that with time, support and all of Mom's work some day soon that little girl will heal enough to reunite with her family.



Dear Friends,

This letter is an open *thank you* to all of Southside's Board members who have been so fervently supportive of the challenges we have endured over the past months.

This past fall, as we have done for many years, we held our Harvest Feast for Southside's parents and children. Due to the staffing changes we'd made last year we were faced with the daunting task of preparing and serving this meal for over 80 folks with less support than ever before. Southside's Board, along with several members of our staff, stepped up and took on the task of coordinating, cooking, and serving this meal to all of our families.

It was a wonderful event with every Board member participating. Some prepared turkeys and side dishes at home and brought them in for the main event on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Others peeled, sliced, and chopped alongside SSFNC staff on Wednesday evening and all day Thursday getting ready for the big celebration.

Some family members of our Board came as well to help us cook and prepare for the day; children made decorations for the dining room and served dessert. Spouses helped cook and brought special dishes for our families. One member of our Board brought flowers to decorate the tables and another helped us coordinate service on the day of the meal. It was an amazing collaboration of energy, talent, shared effort and good will. Side by side, our Board and staff served and supported our families and their children. We prepared a delicious diverse meal with turkey, curried chicken, fry bread and all the accompanying side dishes and fanfare. It was a wonderful way to end an otherwise challenging year.

Southside is blessed to have such an active generous Board and such dedicated and energetic staff, they all have my enduring gratitude.

*Barb Olson*, Executive Director

### From the Board

I believe all children – regardless of circumstances – should feel safe, nurtured, and loved. When a dear friend of mine told me about the work Southside Family Nurturing Center does for children and their families, I knew this was an organization with values in line with my own. And I knew I wanted to be a part of it.

I'm incredibly fortunate. My husband and I have two amazing children. We are happy and healthy. We own a home. My husband is employed. We've never had to worry whether we could afford to put dinner on the table tomorrow night.

But not everyone is that lucky. I've seen it firsthand during my two years on the Board of Directors at Southside. The families who walk through Southside's doors face severe



poverty. They often lack food and clothing. Many struggle financially and emotionally each and every day. And

their children are greatly affected by that poverty.

I am proud to work with an organization that helps these families create an environment where children can grow, feel safe, learn and prepare for school and life.

I know times are tough. We are all looking for ways to cut back. In spite of that, so many of you have chosen to continue to support the valuable work of Southside.

For that, I am truly grateful.

*-Kristen Powell, Vice Chair, Board of Directors*

### Support SSFNC All Year Long!

Individual and organizational financial giving is the lifeblood of Southside Family Nurturing Center as well as the vast majority of other non-profits. Traditionally, one time gifts have dominated as the way for SSFNC to receive these donations. In contrast, monthly giving, or year-long giving, allows SSFNC to have a predictable and consistent monthly income to support our important programs. This stable source of income is especially critical now, as we transition away from the monthly payments historically received from Hennepin County.

SSFNC provides an option for donors to become monthly givers and to continue to empower SSFNC to provide our services for our families on a regular basis :

- \$10 a month supports one Mom's Night event
- \$25 a month provides classroom diapers for a year
- \$50 a month provides one week of speech, occupational, and play therapy for our children
- \$85 a month provides one day of class for our 30 toddlers and preschoolers

Please visit [www.ssfnc.org](http://www.ssfnc.org) for more information.

### Meet Duke...

Many of you who receive this newsletter are familiar with the therapeutic practices the teachers use here at Southside. You may not, however, know about one of our volunteers who has made huge contributions to our therapeutic vision over the past couple years. He doesn't say much, but is a great listener. He loves to be hugged and brushed and given treats. His name is Duke and he is a Delta Society certified therapy dog who visits our classrooms with his owner Mindy each month.

For many of our children, this is a new experience. Most of our families rent or lack the space or finances to keep a pet in the home. Studies have been done on the health and social benefits of therapy animals. As a teacher in the classroom I see many of these immediate benefits. We have a number of children who have difficulty relating to peers in the classroom, but

open up significantly more when interacting with Duke.

One child in particular used to come to school with a very flat affect almost every day. He acted out in the classroom and never played with peers. The first time he visited with Duke, his face lit up. I had never seen him smile like that before.

Referred to us through the Humane Society, Duke has been a part of Southside for almost two years now and we couldn't be more excited about it. We hope



we will see much more of him in the future and that he will continue to brighten the lives of our children

here. For more information about therapy animal programs and the benefits they have on children, please visit [www.deltasociety.org](http://www.deltasociety.org).

*By Betsy Born, Teacher/Family Worker*

### What's New at Southside?

#### *The Caritas Vocal Ensemble—*

March 11 at 7:00 pm. Edina Community Lutheran Church. Tickets are \$15 each. All proceeds go to Southside Family Nurturing Center. Tickets are available at the door or online. For more information, please visit [www.ssfnc.org](http://www.ssfnc.org).

#### *Group Volunteer Projects—*

Need a volunteer project for your Boy Scout/Girl Scout/Youth Group, etc? Southside needs your help! Contact Julia Davidson for details on how *you* can make a difference at SSFNC.

#### *Spring Needs at Southside—*

Outdoor toys: plastic sand buckets, hand shovels/trowels, rubber playground balls, bubbles, empty spray bottles, kid-sized gardening gloves, etc.

Kid's sunscreen (50+ spf)

Strollers: umbrella and double

Passes to Eagles Nest in New Brighton

*(Continued from page 1)*

and her youngest son is still in school. Lela provides in home childcare and donates to Southside. Lela learned two valuable lessons through her years with Southside: there is help out there if you ask for it and it is possible to get the support you need. She passes on these lessons by offering support to other single mothers she knows. She ended our talk by saying that "Southside is a great program and it's important to keep it going."

### Tributes Received

#### *In Memory of:*

*Nancy Engle* by Bruce and Marcia Kading  
*Margaret Shepherd* by Dave and Bev Blinde  
*Agnes Regan* by Eileen, Regan and Aine McCormack, and Archival Solutions  
*Buddy* by Wally Davidson and Betty Lasker  
*Harvey and Dorothy Fleck* by Pamela Lambeau  
*Sandy Heikkinen* by David Heikkinen  
*George Richmond* by Sandra Richmond  
*Alica Anne Veien* by Richard Veien

#### *In Honor of:*

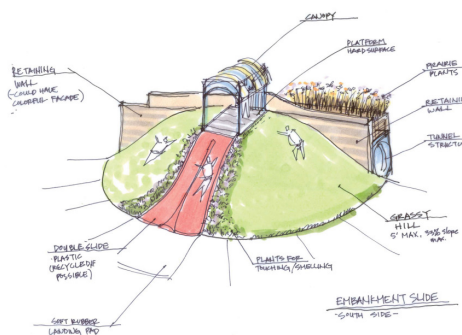
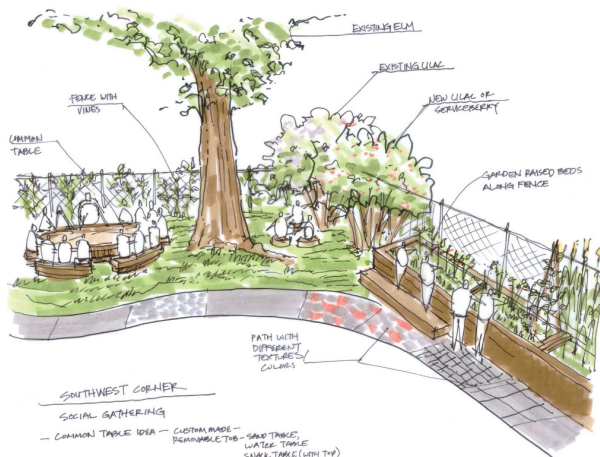
*Lloyd Rivard* by Scott and Terry Rivard  
*Holly, Kaj and Holly, Darren and Annalisa, Scott and Anna, Eric and Cheryl, Fran and Lisa, Jon and Lynn and their families* by Larry and Jean Christie  
*Julia Davidson* by Sandy and Doug Davidson  
*Linda and Marty Haugen* by Peggy Smith and John and Barbara Fox  
*Kristen Powell* by Dick and Helen Powell  
*Nonni* by Paul and Janet Barrett  
*Kim Stephan* by Kathleen Hagstrom and Anonymous  
*The Haugen and Smith Families* by Robert Fisher  
*Lane and Angie Urtel* by Karen Sawyer  
*Judie Mattison* by Anonymous



## Visions of Natural Playscape at Southside

Upon discovering that SSFNC's play structure no longer provided a safe place for children to play, it was removed from the area behind our building—an area now filled with nothing but dusty pea gravel. Grounded in our mission to create a safe and therapeutic environment for all children, SSFNC began to design the Natural Playscape. The design, created with pro-bono support from Nikki Schlepp, ASLA, calls for a gardening area, a track for bikes, quiet nooks, a hill to climb with a slide and spaces for children to develop their cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills. This Natural Playscape will allow the children to engage in play that is creative, uses their imaginations, and connects them with their natural environment.

With the design completed we hope to obtain the adequate funding to move into Phase 1 of the Natural Playscape



Project in 2011. With the help of staff, hired contractors and volunteers, this phase will include the removal of the pea gravel, placement of pavers and other ground cover, and planting of perennials and other plants. If this work is completed by September 2011, SSFNC can begin to integrate the Natural Playscape into our curriculum with daily use by the children.

Phase 2 will include the building of the embankment slide, tree steps and tunnel, common table with benches, chalkboard/easel wall, new wooden deck, music and art wall with a stage, and a lot more.

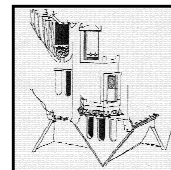
The Playscape will not be possible without the support of our volunteers and donors. Please contact Julia Davidson at 612-721-2762 for ways you can help or visit [www.ssfnc.org](http://www.ssfnc.org) to help fund this amazing project!



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*If you would like to be taken off of our mailing list, please contact our Development Director, Julia Davidson at [juliadavidson@ssfnc.org](mailto:juliadavidson@ssfnc.org) or (612)721-2762 x.241*

*Together with families and community, we nurture children, build on family strengths and find alternatives to violence. Since 1974 Southside Family Nurturing Center, located in the Phillips Neighborhood of South Minneapolis, has served culturally diverse families suffering the effects of child abuse and neglect. As one of the first private, nonprofit agencies to implement holistic family treatments in the state of Minnesota, SSFNC pioneered programs based on our belief that child abuse and neglect are treatable and preventable.*

*For more information about SSFNC, visit our website at [www.ssfnc.org](http://www.ssfnc.org) or call (612)721-2762*