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Dear Friend,

The past several years have introduced stresses and challenges that—difficult in the best of times—can seem insurmountable. For many, psychological services are only a phone call away. But in these hard times, fewer and fewer of the truly needy can access or afford those services. At WestCoast our belief is this: All children and families should have access to services that will help them lead a healthy and productive life.

As a parent, I know that if my younger child was assaulted, or my older girl was struggling with depression, or if either were to begin abusing drugs, I would do anything to get them the help they needed. For many children and families, the resources to get help simply aren't there. Without the various forms of support provided by WestCoast, children and families would have to suffer alone with the trauma of abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, mental illness, the grind of being poor, the death of a parent, or the chaos that so often accompanies living with alcohol and drug addicted parents. WestCoast plays a crucial role in the community by providing services that would not otherwise be available.

As WestCoast begins its twenty-fourth year, it stands out as one of the few places where families can access highly trained clinicians regardless of their ability to pay. Most of our clients do not have private insurance. And the few clinics that accept Medi-Cal insurance and low fees place such restrictions on the kind, amount, and length of therapy that the therapy itself may fail. At WestCoast we go to great lengths to make therapy work for any given child or family. This may involve intervening on a child's behalf to prevent an expulsion from school, attending case planning meetings with social workers, family conferencing, meeting with teachers, or advocating in court for foster children.

This commitment to doing whatever it takes is part of the unwritten mission of WestCoast, but it comes with some sacrifices. All of our staff accept much less pay than they would elsewhere because of their commitment to our mission. Our talented interns choose to give their time and skills to WestCoast in spite of the fact that other clinics offer much higher stipends. Even with these sacrifices, we have to rely on our donors to keep our doors open.

In the past year, WestCoast has faced many difficult questions. Should we continue a mission based on a precarious financial model? Could we modify our model and remain true to our mission? Countless discussions led us back to our founding values: WestCoast's commitment to vulnerable children and families, without regard to financial status, is the heart of our existence. This important recognition leads us to you. More than ever, we need your help to continue working with the children and families who come to us.

Formerly, as an intern, I was drawn to the agency's stellar reputation as a training clinic, and returned because WestCoast is a community bound by the challenge and commitment to delivering the best services to those with the least resources.

Your support allows us to maintain our commitment to the community of children and families that come to us filled with hope and expectations for more peace and a little less trouble in their lives.

With sincere thanks,

Stacey Katz, PsyD
Executive Director