



# WESTCOAST CHILDREN'S CLINIC

*The future promise of any nation can be directly measured by the present prospects of its youth. — President John F. Kennedy, February 14, 1965*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jay Espovich

*President*

Ann Culver Bassi

Steve Fleming

Barbara Hardacre

Emily Loeb, PhD

Emily Morfin, MFT

Matthew Quint, JD

Charles Schwab, Jr.

Leah Swan

## ADMINISTRATION

Stacey Katz, PsyD

*Executive Director*

Melek Totah, MBA

*Chief Financial Officer*

Jan Chambers, MD

*Medical Director*

Eric Kelly, MFT

*Director of Information*

*Technology*

April D. Fernando, PhD

*Director of Research &*

*Training*

Kelley Bryan Gin, PsyD

*Director of Clinical Services*

Richard Coleman, MFT

*STAT Program Director*

Barbara L. Mercer, PhD

*Assessment Program Director*

Hasse Leonard-Pagel, PhD

*Outpatient Therapy Program*

*Director*

Margaret Nettles, PhD

*Intern Training Program*

*Director*

## SUPERVISORS

Nicola Croll, PsyD

Diane Ehrensaft, PhD

Kair Gebauer, LCSW

Jan Gregory, PhD

Andrew Haber, MD

Jessica Herbold, PhD

Roberto Lazcano, PhD

Lenny Levis, PhD

Rick Maisel, PhD

R. Kevin Moser, PhD

Caroline Purves, PhD

Audrey Rosenberg, PhD

Susan Sekler, PhD

MaryBeth Thomsen, PhD

Dear Friend:

November 2008

By the time you receive this letter, we will have exercised our political choices in a landmark presidential election. The power and privilege to choose, gives us the chance for change. Now we need to marshal our collective power to reach out and make a difference for the children who are left out of the political process -- decisions thrust upon them, standing at the end of the line waiting for families to adopt them, good schools to go to, and even food to eat.

Throughout the months of campaigning, we've heard about choices and change, and what's at stake for our children's future -- the ability to go to college, get a good job, have a home. Even more important for a child is a safety net, so when they stumble, there's someone there to help them get up.

In the last few months we've come face-to-face with calamities in private and public financial systems. We have witnessed the largest financial bailout in the history of the United States. Our economy, seemingly on life-support, has many in survival mode, and others nervous about their financial present and future. If we are not feeling it for ourselves, we feel it for someone worse off than we are.

This current loss of confidence in the structures and institutions we once thought of as solid is hopefully a temporary state for most of us. However for foster children, and for those at risk of falling into foster care, for the children who live on the edge between safety and abuse, shelter and homelessness, this despair can be a more permanent state of mind. Whole communities live on this edge, and have long felt the pain of a broken economy. Whole communities have seen their schools close, their jobs disappear, and their ability to care for their children challenged. It is the children who suffer most when their families live under the stress of these conditions day-to-day.

Most of us are familiar with what is at stake for at-risk children, but there is often disagreement about what helps. **One thing research clearly shows, however, is the need for at least one important person in a child's life -- someone to talk to when things fall apart and to help them see themselves and their possibilities differently.**

**WestCoast Children's Clinic provides children with that important person.** For each of the 1,600 children who come to WestCoast Children's Clinic -- from the child who comes to the Assessment Center in his first

hour removed from his family, to the teenager attending a group in the Foster Youth Development Program, or the 10 year-old at risk of losing her foster family because she is so challenging – we offer this: A person to help restore their sense of hope and faith, someone who can listen when no one else can. The children we serve find their way to us in the thick of ongoing challenges; they live with day-to-day uneasiness, some not knowing where they will sleep that night, or what to call the people they have just moved in with. Don't these children deserve the same opportunities, choices and chances we were all taught to believe in?

WestCoast is also committed to creating transformative opportunities outside the therapy room that will live on after our clients' time with us. Toward that end, we hosted an event last spring with Bill Cosby, Dr. Neil Altman, and a panel of former foster youth. Over 60 foster youth attended. They talked about their lives and offered support and practical guidance for moving out of foster care. The day remained true to our mission: providing ongoing support and encouragement for a group of children often left out. (Please see attached.)

What choices do we have when things around us are going to pieces? We have hope that the days to come will be better than the days behind. We have the support of our friends and family. But, what can the 500,000 children who grow up in foster care hold onto? Half of them will never go home again. They live with the everyday worry about who is going to take care of them. Will they see their bags at the front door the day they turn 18 and be homeless, as the majority of foster youth are within a year of leaving care? What choices do they have as things fall apart? Sadly, we all know the few choices available to them play out poorly for themselves and others.

With the economy in a tailspin, we need your support more than ever. Your contribution is a grass-roots campaign against outcomes all-too familiar, and too costly – jail, unprepared parents, homelessness. **It is also the concrete support for the belief that everyone deserves at least one person to talk to. That, in and of itself, is an act of social import that changes children's lives.**

Thank you for your help.

Wishing you peace in the New Year,



Stacey Anne Katz, Psy.D  
Executive Director

*P.S. Please see enclosed - last year's accomplishments, an Essence article featuring Bill Cosby's visit to Westcoast, and one youth panelist's reflections.*

**[To donate now to the WestCoast Children's Fund, click here.](#)**

# KICKED OUT

When children in foster care turn 18 in California, they're abruptly forced to fend for themselves. Luckily, a recent bill and the efforts of activists like Bill Cosby could help smooth their transition into adulthood

BY WENDY L. WILSON

Shade Daniels was actually excited when she was first placed in a foster home at age 14. Although she had no idea what to expect, she hoped it would be more stable than her life before then. "When I got there I thought, *Great, this is supposed to be the family I never had,*" Daniels recalls. But instead of having one big happy family, Daniels was suddenly pulled into a chaotic pool of strangers. "It definitely wasn't the worst, but it was a precursor of what was to come," the Oakland native says.

She ultimately moved into eight foster placements. Most of them were overcrowded group homes where she encountered girls fresh out of juvenile hall or even working as prostitutes.

Still, life in foster care was better than being on her own. By the time she "aged out" of the system in 2007, Daniels, with the help of a teacher, was headed to Clark Atlanta University.

But unlike most college students, who return home during their summer break, Daniels had nowhere to go. At 20, she is too old to receive housing or any other benefits from the foster care system in California. In fact, on her way back to Oakland this summer, she was left scrambling to find a shelter to stay in until her summer housing came through from a nonprofit agency. "A lot of people see me as a success story. What they don't realize is that I can still end up homeless," says Daniels. "I'm going to have to find my own housing every summer until I earn enough money to get my own apartment."

An estimated 26,517 young adults exit the foster care system each year, according to a 2006 report by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Many become homeless or end up in prison. The Institute for Higher Education Policy issued a report in December 2005 outlining the difficulties young people in foster care face in achieving higher education, and recommends extending eligibility for educational and housing services through age 24. "Emancipating out of the system is nothing more than an overwhelming feeling of fear," says Daniels.



Each year, thousands of young adults leave foster care.

“Psychologically, they are constantly dealing with the pain of being left, having no love, wishing for love...” —Bill Cosby

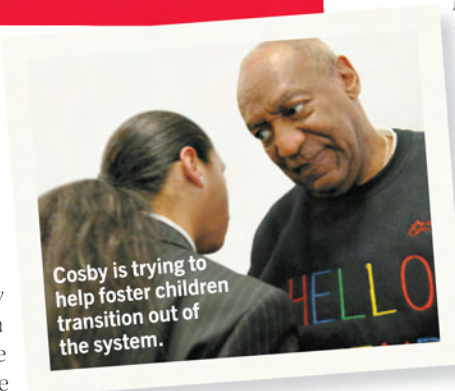
Actor turned activist Bill Cosby says he understands what these teens face. He pressed teens to stay positive when he sat on a panel this year with young adults such as Daniels who had gotten too old for the system.

"Here is a room full of people who have been removed from what should have been a typical, normal home," he said to a group at Oakland's WestCoast Children's Clinic in April. "Psychologically, they are constantly dealing with the pain of being left, having no love, wishing for love..."

According to Neil Altman, Ph.D., who consults at the WestCoast Children's Clinic and is an adjunct professor in the postdoctoral program in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis at New York University, aging out of foster care is an underrecognized

crisis. "In my experience, kids will get into trouble around the time of emancipation, as if they were saying, 'Don't drop me—I still need help,'" says Altman.

There's some hope. In May 2007, a bill introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) aims to make the federal government extend aid in all states until teens are 21. And agencies such as the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association offer educational and health counseling. Similar programs are helping youngsters like Daniels become functioning adults. This semester she'll attend Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, a more economically feasible choice for her. She's hoping to one day be an advocate for children in foster care. "I'm proud of where I come from, even though there is a lot of pain in it," she says.



BOY, HARALD SUNDI/GETTY IMAGES; COSBY, MARGARET SILVERMAN



WESTCOAST CHILDREN'S CLINIC

## REFLECTIONS

If I could sum up the forum in one word: Inspiring. I think that the practical information and advice was on point. The panelists, especially Mr. Cosby, was able to articulate the steps to achieving success very eloquently. What I loved about having Mr. Cosby on the panel was that I think he helped some of the youth see how possible their goals are. How he explained to the boy at the forum who wanted to work in construction that most community colleges have academic programs and trades for constructions and that he can probably attend for free. I would assume that most people knew this but the look on the boy's face said otherwise. Mr. Cosby really helped the youth see the reality in their dreams. However, with all the advice and strategic steps conveyed, what I found most inspiring was when the youth stood up and told their stories. It was so beautiful to me. I know that youth in the system don't often get a chance to speak their mind and especially not towards their peers so I thought it was extremely moving when the youth stood tall and spoke up. As a panalist, I must say that the moment that sticks out in my mind of the whole event (except for when Mr. Cosby gave his own story and related it to us) is when the young woman stood up and talked about her feelings of hopelessness while residing in a group home. When she said that she felt hopeless and began to cry, all of the titles that I had tried to hide under here at Clark Atlanta just disappeared. I was no longer Sade Daniels, Mr. Golden State at Clark Atlanta or college student. When she said that, I forgot all the things I'd used to hide my upbringings and remembered the feelings that I had in group homes. I remembered those feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness and the fact that I had no one to help me leave that state. What made me even more sad was that I could not give her any advice to help her. I don't know how I overcame that. I'm not even sure if I have yet. I know most people would say something like 'Your not the only one going through this and others are going through worse' but who takes pleasure and knowing that other people feel the same pain or worse? That doesn't make people feel better about their situation. I don't know. But the fact that I couldn't give the young woman any advice on how to conquer her hopelessness made me feel pretty hopeless.. Anyways, all in all, I think the event was a success on so many different levels. I think that the youth left feeling inspired and maybe even a little more determined to be more than what's expected of them. I know I did.

Sade Daniels  
OBAMA '08





## WESTCOAST CHILDREN'S CLINIC

### What We Did...2007-2008

#### Foster Youth Development Program

To address the need for flexible and varied support for young adults leaving foster care, Team Leaders provide individual and group therapy, as well as skills building to help youth in college preparation, securing and maintaining housing and a job, and developing household skills. Last year three Team Leaders drove 38,000 miles throughout the Bay Area to provide 2,300 hours of supportive therapy services to 30 youth.

#### Therapeutic-Collaborative Assessment Program

Psychological testing helps children and adolescents better understand their struggles and clarifies the best ways to help them. Last year 200 hundred psychological assessments were conducted by 10 clinicians traveling 16,700 miles to provide over 6,800 hours of service to children and adolescents.

#### Clinic and Mobile Community Based Psychological Services

To address the emotional needs of children and families, clinicians provide community based therapy and supportive services across the Bay Area. Last year 22 clinicians drove 130,000 miles and provided 20,000 hours of service to over 250 children and families.

#### Emergency Trauma Relief and Psychological Support: Screening, Stabilization and Transition (STAT) Program

The STAT program provides immediate and on-going response to the trauma experienced by children who are removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. Last year, STAT clinicians screened 1,200 children and delivered 9,000 hours of care. They also drove 55,000 miles providing transition services for 750 children and youth, communicating vital information to new caregivers regarding the children and their needs, helping and supporting them to successfully take care of them. Due to the success of this program, Alameda County requested that we extend our hours of operation. Since summer, 2008 WestCoast clinicians provide service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year round.

#### Intern Training Program

To prepare pre- and postdoctoral psychology students for service as community psychologists, interns are embedded within all clinical programs, providing therapy and support to children and families, psychological testing and consultation. Our internship programs are members of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) and the California Psychology Internship Council (CAPIC). Last year our seven predoctoral interns and three postdoctoral fellows provided 2,500 hours of therapy to 90 clients, 1,800 hours of psychological testing to 63 clients, and 326 hours in STAT services.