

the Sprout

News from Forty Carrots Family Center

SPRING 2011

Faith, Courage & Dr. Seuss Young Mother Finds Inner Strength, Inspiration Through Literature & Forty Carrots

Keyvionne loves to read. She is drawn to inspirational books, particularly the works of Maya Angelou. And then of course, there is Dr. Seuss—a lot of Dr. Seuss. Every night, she reads *The Cat in the Hat* to her children, complete with signature special effects and noises.

“I’ve learned that I still have a lot to learn.” — Maya Angelou

It’s not necessarily the life Keyvionne imagined as a teenager. She admits she was in “a rush to see the world,” always eager to move on to the next stage of life and her ultimate goal to become a lawyer.

She hit a glitch in the 10th grade.

After learning she was pregnant, Keyvionne dropped out of high school, convinced that the best option for her budding family was for her to get her GED and begin work. However, at her mother’s urging, Keyvionne returned to high school at the Cysis program for pregnant and parenting teens.

While enrolled at Cysis, Keyvionne attended Forty Carrots parenting classes, a pregnancy group in which the teenagers would gather each week with Forty Carrots parenting educators to discuss pregnancy and early parenting issues.

After her daughter, J’Miyah, was born, they attended Partners In Play (PIP) classes. Keyvionne would spend the first portion of the class discussing child development, age appropriate play and early discipline strategies with the other parents. Then J’Miyah and the other children

would join the group for one-on-one uninterrupted play together, where the parents would follow the child’s lead in play and exploration. Keyvionne enjoyed the comfortable atmosphere of the classes and found great support.

“We learned a lot,” she said. “I remember learning the different stages and what comes next, what to expect.”

And for a while, for Keyvionne and J’Miyah things were “on a good start.” Keyvionne graduated with her class, began work as a CNA and enrolled in paralegal classes. She had her own car, and her own place. She even spread her wings and lived out of the state for a while.

Shortly after returning to Sarasota, Keyvionne found herself in a relationship with a young man she had known for years. At first things seemed great. They were happy and expecting a child together.

But that changed quickly. Keyvionne found herself increasingly isolated from family and friends and at the receiving end of domestic abuse. On the outside, everything appeared normal. Keyvionne continued to work. J’Miyah was growing and developing. It was only when no one else was around that the abuse occurred. Keyvionne blamed herself, often wondering what she had done to deserve the abuse.

“The need for change bulldozed a road down the center of my mind.” — Maya Angelou

Shortly after her son Preston was born, the abuse



Keyvionne ,
J’Miyah & Preston

reached an alarming and life threatening point. Keyvionne was in a seemingly hopeless situation and fighting for her life.

At a time when many would give up, Keyvionne kept fighting, searching for an escape and desperate for a way out, knowing she had to for her children. When that opportunity finally came, Keyvionne fled to her mother’s house – jobless, shoe-less and with nothing more than the clothes on her body. She placed a call and charges were filed.

Her life was no longer in danger, however Keyvionne soon found herself fighting again for the two most important things in her life: her children. As a result of the incident, J’Miyah and Preston were removed from Keyvionne’s custody.

After being placed in several foster homes, the children landed a more stable living situation with Keyvionne’s mother. This enabled Keyvionne to maintain a strong relationship with her children while working through the steps to regain custody. One of Keyvionne’s requirements was to complete a parenting course. When shown the list of places

Keyvionne’s Story—continued on page 3

It’s Never Too Early to Learn from Nature

It was a garden that brought young Mary Lennox from her lonely shell in the 1909 children’s classic *“The Secret Garden.”*

A century later, researchers have discovered gardening can do far more than unlock a child’s imagination. Recent studies show children exposed to gardening at a young age often do better in school and in social interactions.

“Our gardens are producing an exciting array of plants, but even more importantly, they are cultivating healthy attitudes in the children,” said Susie Wells, director of the Preschool at Forty Carrots. Teachers, students and parents are enjoying class gardens thanks to a grant last year from The Community Foundation of Sarasota County - Sarah Greer Mayer Fund.

Four classes of preschoolers have taken part – individually and as groups – in nurturing a variety of vegetables and flowers.

Because children love to dig in the dirt and explore, they are natural gardeners. The gardens not only pique the children’s interest and curiosity,



Preschool parent Mike Krouse, shown here with daughter Claire, installed irrigation and donated plants to help cultivate the gardens.

but also instill a respect and connection with nature. Additionally, gardening fosters life skills, like patience, as they wait for the first tiny shoots of a plant to emerge from seeds they planted into the dirt with their own two hands.

Teachers implement further lessons using literacy, math and science by reading recipes, measuring ingredients and witnessing their tomatoes turn into yummy salsa.

They’ve also learned something about life and loss, as freezing temperatures this winter damaged some of their treasured plants or crops (despite attempts to drape them with protective coverings).

“One of the most valuable things to me,” Wells said, “is watching the cooperation and community building taking place both inside and outside of the classroom. Everyone is working together to help our gardens grow.”

Preschool registration for Fall 2011 has begun. To learn more about our five-star NAEYC-accredited preschool, call 365-7716 to schedule a tour or visit fortycarrots.org.

Donor Spotlight Lindy Smith

It was the early 90s, when Forty Carrots was still in its infancy, that Lindy Smith realized what a vital service the fledgling nonprofit brought to the community.

She had known its director, Betsy Kane-Hartnett, for a few years – their children were attending the same grade school at the time – and was vaguely aware of the warm friendly building on Tuttle Avenue with its innovative parenting programs and unusual name.

But it wasn’t until state welfare workers misunderstood a complaint involving a friend, and removed the young mother’s children from her home, that she came to understand Forty Carrot’s underlying mission.

“She was out in the cold by herself, her children in foster care, with no one to help her get them back,” Lindy said, recalling the hopelessness her friend felt at the lack of

Donor Spotlight—continued on page 2



Dear Friends

I am delighted to report that 2010 was a banner year for Forty Carrots. Financially speaking, we were able to close the books on our 3-year \$1.3M Capital Campaign, repay all monies previously borrowed from our operating reserves, hold preschool and parenting center tuition and fees, and still offer 88% of the 1,700 families we served free early childhood and parenting education.

Program-wise, we expanded our reach into Manatee County by offering classes at SOLVE (a residential program for young, homeless, pregnant women) while continuing to provide parents throughout Sarasota County with information, skills, and support at CYESIS at Riverview and North Port High Schools, First Step Mothers & Infants Program, 8 County Libraries and The Kane Campus on Tuttle Avenue. Our NAEYC-accredited Preschool earned a 5-star rating through the local Look for the Stars program, and we presented our 8th annual free Speaker Event to a very appreciative audience. All this was made possible by a devoted board, dedicated staff, hard-working volunteers, generous funders, and successful fundraising events. Thank you for your involvement; thank you for your support.

As you know, offering high quality early childhood and parenting education classes throughout the community requires constant fundraising, and so as we mark our 18th year of serving families, I ask for your renewed commitment to Forty Carrots so we may expand our reach and deepen our impact. I look forward to seeing you on the dance floor at The Firefly Gala on March 26th (I was in college when KC and the Sunshine Band first performed their hit songs so I can't wait!) and I look forward to raising a glass to you at Wine, Women & Shoes on November 4th. Two parties, one purpose...ensuring positive outcomes for our community's children.



Many thanks and warm regards,

Betsy Kane-Hartnett

Betsy Kane-Hartnett
Executive Director

Welcome to our new Advisory Board

A New Brain Trust of Experience, Talent & Heart

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Our Mission

Forty Carrots Family Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening families through educational programs for parents, children and professionals in the field.

Announcing Forty Carrots' 9th Annual

FREE Community Speaker Event

featuring

Michael Rich, MD

The Digital Dilemma

What's a Parent to Do?



Monday, September 26, 2011



Sponsorships for 2011 now available

fortycarrots.org • 365-7716



Thank you for supporting Forty Carrots' 2010 Community Speaker Event

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A heartfelt thanks to Speaker Event Chair Retta Wagner for leading a group of amazing women who helped educate families & professionals on the power of play!

Donor Spotlight — continued from page 1

resources in the community to help her work through the judicial system and reunite her family. When she heard it would be six months or more before her friend could complete a court-ordered program and appeal to get her children back home, Lindy, a mother of twin girls herself, shared her sadness.

"I could feel her heartbreak and fear, and then I remembered Forty Carrots. I don't think they even had a program at the time to help parents in her situation, but they must have heard the desperation in my voice and wanted to help out."

Forty Carrots was able to craft an individualized program that would help Lindy's friend address the court's concerns and education requirements in a more concentrated, professional environment. Six weeks later, the family was reunited.

"It was amazing what they did for my friend and her family ... I'll always be grateful for everything they did."

Today, Lindy remains one of Forty Carrots' most ardent supporters. Her company Aladdin Equipment has been a steadfast corporate sponsor of Wine, Women & Shoes – Forty Carrots' premier fall fundraiser – and Lindy personally is a passionate and supportive advocate.

Not coincidentally, it was from Lindy's call that long ago day that the Parenting Basics program was born at Forty Carrots. Thanks to grant and donor support, Parenting Basics helps at-risk families – many court-ordered – become more knowledgeable about children and parenting, communicate respectfully and manage their children's behavior in positive, non-hurtful ways.



Forty Carrots Family Center embraces diversity and does not discriminate on any basis.

A Capital Success!

Auction of Janet Kane’s Jewels culminates campaign

A private auction of Janet Kane’s jewelry raised \$250,000 and wrapped up Forty Carrots Family Center’s \$1.3 million capital campaign.

Forty Carrots kicked off its Capital Campaign in May 2009 when the organization purchased the property from the Kane Foundation. In recognition of a dramatically reduced selling price and 16 years of free rent, the Board of Trustees named the property The Kane Campus.

A grant from the William G. Selby and Marie Selby Foundation in May of 2010 capped the first phase of the campaign.

Other major supporters of the capital campaign include: Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Wall Street Live, Publix Super Markets Charities,



the Chadwick, Dart, Davis, Githler, Jemison and Steinwachs families, and Bank of America Client Foundation, Frederic W. and Margaret E. Kurtz Fund.

About 100 people attended the private auction at the home of Kim Githler Nov. 30 to celebrate the life of Janet Kane and raise funds for her three favorite charities.

The sale of Janet’s jewels and other treasures raised roughly \$330,000 – \$250,000 of which went to Forty Carrots’ building fund.

“My mother was an extraordinary woman who led a blessed life in so

vision of a traditional family is shattered and her son will never have a chance to play catch with his father, she has no further contact with Preston’s father.

And just like any other parent, Keyvionne has goals and dreams for her children. In the short term, she is looking forward to J’Miyah learning all the new skills that come in the next few years. She dreams of Preston attending a quality preschool, like Forty Carrots. She wants them to graduate high school and college. She hopes they will realize “they can always call on me,” just as she knows she can always call on her mother. And with great emphasis, she explains she wants them to “take time to grow up. Don’t be in a rush to see this world. Be the age you are.”

She hopes her story will be an inspiration to other girls in her situation. She imagines telling them “You didn’t do anything. You don’t deserve this.” Or offering advice such as “Reward yourself, don’t down yourself.” She wants to teach her daughter to never give up or give in, and teach her son how to treat a woman with respect. She says that the first way he will learn that is through role modeling and the encounters he sees in his daily life.

Keyvionne still dreams of becoming a lawyer, but her dreams are sprinkled with other images. She wants to be able to provide opportunities for her children that she didn’t have growing up. Not necessarily grand scale things, such as an occasional family vacation, but daily, meaningful rituals like family dinners.

And even though she does not live with her children, she is still able to provide for them. She offers unconditional love and support, helps financially and provides them with hope: the hope that they can overcome obstacles in their life and the hope that it will be over and they can be together again. And just as Keyvionne has Maya Angelou to help her as she works on herself, she and her children have Dr. Seuss to keep them connected and carry them through their current challenges.

Keyvionne’s Story— continued from pg 1

offering such a course, she immediately knew Forty Carrots was the place for her.

She enrolled in Parenting Basics, a series of classes that meets the requirements for parents involved in the judicial system. Her positive prior experiences with Forty Carrots gave her confidence in the agency’s ability to serve her again.

“I knew I would get what I needed and learn,” she said.

A lot has changed for Keyvionne since her experience at age 16. Now 20, Keyvionne feels more mature as a class participant. Not only is she older, she has survived significant trauma. And she has the clear goal of being reunited with her children.

From attending Parenting Basics, Keyvionne says she has learned things she could have done differently with her daughter and feels more capable of implementing them now. She relates better to class material now that she has an older child, more experience and an open mind. And she has found a network of support.

“Forty Carrots encourages me to keep my head up, and stay strong to become and stay the best mother I’m destined to be,” she said.

Keyvionne is committed to her children. Her smile widens and eyes sparkle as she talks about J’Miyah’s ability to speak her mind, despite the challenges that can sometimes bring, and Preston’s smile with dimples that “make you melt.” She hates to say goodbye to her children at the end of visitations and is looking forward to the day they can be together again. She is thankful that her mother not only continues to provide a support system for her, but also for her children.

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage need not be lived again. — Maya Angelou

Through her written works, Maya Angelou speaks to Keyvionne, offering encouragement, hope and inspiration. Keyvionne knows that life is on its way back up, and even though it means the

Our thanks to one and all who supported our Capital Campaign. Special recognition goes to our generous benefactors who contributed \$100,000 or more.

- Janet Kane Memorial Auction – \$250,000
- Gulf Coast Community Foundation – \$125,000
- Wall Street Live – \$105,000
- Publix Super Markets Charities – \$100,000



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many ways. I can’t imagine a more fitting way to celebrate the true spirit of Janet Kane than to do good with her good fortune,” Betsy Kane-Hartnett, executive director of Forty Carrots Family Center, said.

Betsy expressed gratitude to the women who helped her host the private auction: Kim Githler, Katherine Kane, Priscilla Kane Hellweg, Elita Krums-Kane, Margaret Wise, Deb Knowles,

Jennifer Saslaw, and Karin Gustafson, and to Jennifer Grondahl from Events by Maestro and to staff and volunteers from MoneyShow and Forty Carrots who worked behind the scenes.

Special thanks to former two-term Forty Carrots Board of Trustee member Taber Chadwick, whose unrelenting commitment and passion for Forty Carrots’ mission led the campaign for three years.

More than 500 women, 22 Solemen, 10 wine-makers and 6 retailers added up to 3 days of girlfriend fun for a great cause. Wine, Women & Shoes 2010 raised more than \$158,000 in October, topping the previous year’s event. Proceeds support parenting education programs in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, Center For Sight



Presented by Center For Sight

Presenting Sponsor, Center For Sight, for helping to make the event such a heel-clicking success. Cheers to our 2010 event Chairs Paula Heap and Roger Capote.

Be There. Be Fabulous – Nov. 4, 2011

Prepare to put on your party shoes for the return of Wine, Women & Shoes 2011. More information coming soon!

Welcome to Our World



A Free Class for Parents and Babies Birth to 6-Months Drop in; no registration necessary

Supportive, fun, informative classes with our parenting educators
Mondays 10:45-11:45 am • Forty Carrots Family Center, 1500 S. Tuttle Ave.
Information: fortycarrots.org or 365-7716

Support Forty Carrots 2011 Annual Fund

Forty Carrots serves a broad cross-section of the community, from teen parents and young homeless mothers to stay-at-home parents and young professionals. Here’s a sampling of ways you can “Fund a Family.”

- \$50 ... supports a week of parenting education for 120 families by filling the gas tank of our minivan as our educators travel and deliver services among eight local libraries and other venues serving at-risk families.
 - \$250 ... provides a class of families with newborns and infants with enough developmentally-appropriate toys and supplies to stimulate learning in a year’s worth of Forty Carrots play-based parenting education classes.
 - \$2,500 ... funds 24 at-risk parents’ attendance at “Parenting Basics,” a five-week series of critical parenting education for court-ordered families.
- Learn more by visiting fortycarrots.org or call 365-7716 to donate today!



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Forty Carrots Family Center

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