



WHAT'S INSIDE:



Developmental Playgroups



A Message from Pete Caldwell



New Perinatal Mental Health Program

we care news

Summer 2024

Growing Together with We Care's Developmental Playgroups

For years, We Care's Developmental Playgroups have been transforming lives by fostering meaningful connections between parents and children. These playgroups, held at First 5 Centers and led by Early Childhood Specialist Lupe Henriquez and Playgroup Teacher Associate Monica Granados, provide a special environment where children and parents learn and grow together through play.

Offered weekly for eight weeks, each 1.5-hour session includes interactive activities that enhance language, social skills, problem-solving, and motor coordination. Beyond these developmental benefits, the playgroups are a space where caregivers can bond with their children and learn how to support their progress.

We are exceptionally proud of these playgroups, as they fill a void in the community by offering support and guidance for caregivers of children with developmental delays who have not received the diagnosis needed to qualify for typical resources and services. This support is evident during the sessions where parents are not simply observers but active participants. As one parent shared, "The services gave Tommy and me one-on-one time, and provided tools to use at home to help improve his overall growth."

Children's progress through the playgroups speaks volumes about their effectiveness. Jessica's mom noted, "The playgroups have given Jessica more confidence. Following directions has improved and it has enhanced her hand-eye coordination."

Another parent's experience highlights the practical skills children gain. "My child is now better at following directions and has learned good table manners. He can put on his shoes, zip up his jacket, and even use a spray bottle. I have a better understanding of how to support his growth at home."



Continues on page 3



board of directors

Simi Gupta
Chair

Marc Greenberg
Vice Chair

Bob Sachs
Secretary

Iona Da Costa Pereira
Treasurer

Jeff Butler

Linsey Dicks

Mike D'Orazi

Dirk Fitzgerald

Glenn Garabedian

Kazuo "K" Gray

A message from:

Pete Caldwell, Executive Director



Dear We Care Family,

I hope this message finds you well and enjoying the last weeks of summer.

Each season at We Care has its appeal, but I'm a particular fan of this time of year. August often feels like a new start at We Care – a time to reflect on the past year, and set our sights on new challenges and opportunities. We see the kids excited to be back in the classrooms, folks feeling refreshed from summer, the start of the new fiscal year, and much to look forward to this fall.

We ended 2023/2024 healthy, secure, and even better able to meet the needs of the children we serve. Thanks to the extraordinary support of our individual, foundation-based, and corporate sponsors, as well as the hard work and remarkable talent of the staff who work with our community's most at-need children, We Care continues stronger than ever.

Fall also brings our most important event of the year: our Gala. Each year we gather with a wonderful group of supporters to celebrate all that We Care is and does. This is our most important fundraiser of the year, and the support we receive on this night is what enables us to further our reach to deliver critical developmental and mental health services for at-risk children and families.

It's also an incredible party! Please come to Blackhawk on October 19 and join us for great food, music, dancing, auctions, and entertainment – and know you're making a difference in the lives of the children who most need the help we provide.

As always, I hope you enjoy our newsletter – we think you'll find a lot of inspiring information in it. Please pass it on to anyone you know who shares your interest in the ways we're working to improve the lives of children with special needs in our community.

And thank you again for all YOU do to partner with us in this work!

Sincerely,

Pete



join

the We Care Community:

Email: ewilliamson@wecarechildren.org
to be added to our email or mailing lists

[wecare.services.for.children](https://www.facebook.com/wecare.services.for.children)

[@wecare_servicesforchildren](https://www.instagram.com/wecare_servicesforchildren)

[wecare-services-for-children](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wecare-services-for-children)

YouTube Search
We Care Services for Children

These reflections demonstrate how our playgroups help build a child's independence. Lupe and Monica's "we're all in this together" approach during the sessions is also critical in helping families learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. Children leave the playgroups with self-confidence and skills, while parents gain valuable insights and practical strategies for fostering continued growth. The positive impact extends beyond the sessions, strengthening family bonds and creating a foundation for ongoing development.

We share these stories to illustrate how our Developmental Playgroups foster stronger family relationships, and build a community where every child can reach their full potential, regardless of their abilities or circumstances.



Leading with Heart: Meet We Care's Dedicated Board Members

We want to take a moment to highlight the remarkable individuals who volunteer their time and expertise to shape, champion, and further our mission. Their guidance, support, and influence are invaluable to us, and we are deeply grateful for their commitment.

Simi Gupta - Board Chair

Simi, Director of Engineering at Procore Technologies and We Care's former board secretary, now serves as our board chair. Her passion for helping children, inspired by her father's pediatric camps, drives her dedication to raising awareness and engaging support for our agency.

Marc Greenberg - Board Vice-Chair

Marc, Chief Financial Officer at Altruist, has a long-standing connection to We Care through his wife's work as an occupational therapist and their son, a We Care graduate. Previously our board treasurer, Marc brings professional expertise and commitment to his new role, and enhances our community ties.

Bob Sachs - Board Secretary

Bob, a retired Kaiser Permanente executive with a background in counseling psychology and business, has been a dedicated board member for years. We are incredibly grateful for Bob's leadership as former board chair. He now holds the position of board secretary, continuing his deep commitment to We Care's success.

Iona Da Costa Pereira - Board Treasurer

Iona, Senior Director of Accounting & Finance at Firstup and a licensed CPA, joins us as a first-time officer in her role as board treasurer. Her extensive finance experience and passion for early childhood intervention make her a valuable asset to our mission.

Jeff Butler - Board Member

Jeff, a partner at Dentons US LLP, believes in providing every advantage to children who need us to help them reach their full potential. His legal expertise and commitment to our mission make him an invaluable board member.

Linsey Dicks - Board Member

Linsey, Medical Group Administrator at Kaiser Permanente, brings important healthcare management experience to our board. His past service as board vice-chair has been crucial in guiding our mission to helping at-risk children.



Continued from page 3

Mike D'Orazi - Board Member

Mike, a retired fire chief, has been dedicated to volunteering and supporting youth for decades, and We Care is excited to have him as our newest board member.

Dirk Fitzgerald - Board Member

Dirk, a retired insurance agency principal, has supported We Care for over two decades. His expertise in employee benefits and long-standing involvement with the Walnut Creek Kiwanis Club make him an essential part of our team.

Glenn Garabedian - Board Member

Glenn, a retired health physicist from the University of California, has a history with We Care dating back to 1969 when he first served on our board. As a parent of a We Care graduate, Glenn's dedication to our mission is profound and enduring.

Kazuo "K" Gray - Board Member

K, Branch Manager at Mechanics Bank, is one of our newest board members. He combines his financial expertise and commitment to community service to significantly increase local support for our work.

Thank you to all our board members for your unwavering support. Your vital contributions make a significant difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. We look forward to the continued growth and success of We Care under your guidance.

Introducing We Care's New Perinatal Mental Health Program

We Care is thrilled to introduce our Perinatal Mental Health Program, a pilot initiative designed to support expectant mothers facing mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, and trauma. This early intervention program profoundly helps both mother and baby by addressing mental health issues that can affect fetal development and the mother's ability to bond with her baby.

Our program focuses on managing postpartum recovery, enhancing mother-baby bonding, and supporting emotional responses to ensure a nurturing environment. Under the direction of Amanda Medrano, our Clinical Program Manager, We Care's dedicated team is committed to setting a solid foundation for a healthy future for both mother and child.



Inspired by successful programs at institutions like San Francisco General Hospital and UCSF, our initiative fills a crucial gap in Contra Costa County by providing these essential services to expectant mothers. We offer comprehensive mental health assessments, therapeutic interventions, psychoeducation, and resource referrals tailored to each mother's specific needs. Post-birth, our services transition seamlessly to address the mental health needs of both the child and the mother if required.

We Care's Perinatal Mental Health Pilot Program represents a monumental step in expanding our efforts to reach many of the most vulnerable members of our community. By addressing issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma early, we help establish a solid foundation for a healthy and happy future for both mother and baby, regardless of the challenges they face.

We look forward to sharing more about the powerful impact of this program as it continues to grow and evolve.