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ISSUE 2

SPRING 2001

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**Check Us Out**  
 We've changed our cyber address to [www.riseschool.org](http://www.riseschool.org). Check out updated photos, personnel changes, and the latest addition of our online newsletter "Rise and Shine". The address was changed to reflect our non-profit status. Thanks to Portaris, Inc. (formally The Internet Design Firm) who continues to make our online presence shine.

**DIRECTOR'S CORNER** by Jan Stailey

# Slowly Sculpting Our Future

**We had a great fall semester at Rise, full of celebrations and exciting events.**

We dressed up for Halloween, participated in our fall Gala, "Gifts from the Heart", celebrated Thanksgiving with music, and heralded the holiday season with a visit from Santa and a party provided by our friends at Enron. All the while, our staff continued to do the daily work that makes a difference in our children's lives, although sometimes we are so close to our work we don't always see the results.

I am reminded of the story of the stonecutter who each day picks up his tools and carries them to the quarry. He sets his chisel to the stone and hammers away. He swings - clink. He swings again - clink. Maybe a hundred times the hammer hits the chisel and the chisel hits the rock, with no apparent result. Not so much as a crack is showing. Then on the one-hundred-and-first blow the rock splits in two and we realize it was not the final blow that split the rock, but the combination of all that had gone before.



Here at Rise, with patience and persistence, we can sculpt the future for our students. We see our kids begin to navigate their world, making new discoveries. Little by little, each at their own rate and in their own time, we get to hear our kids put their observations into language and describe their world to us.

Our gift this past holiday season and into the new year is the opportunity to work with the children of The Rise School. Each small step, each small word, gives our work meaning. We are off to a great beginning in 2001 as we continue to discover what we can create together with our children. ☀

## Overwhelming Support for First Fundraiser

*The old proverb notes that it takes a village to raise a child. One of our biggest Rise boosters, Enron Corporation, was busy throughout the Fall helping us prepare for our first fund raising event "Gifts from the Heart."*

Gift giving was certainly the theme of this year's first annual Rise School fundraiser held at FAO Schwarz. Gifts from the Heart, chaired by Brenda Duncan and Linda Lay, gave our grown-up supporters an opportunity to shop, play, and raise funds during a fun and festive evening. The success of the event was overwhelming as our generous supporters raised over \$325,000 to help us continue the work of The Rise School of Houston.

## The Rise School of Houston Staff

Jan Stailey  
*Director*

Jennifer Dennis  
*Assistant Director*

Nan Robinson  
*Educational Coordinator/Teacher*

Melissa Bransfield  
*Teacher*

Bethany Burge  
*Teacher*

Christy Lewis  
*Teacher*

Christene Schwarzbach  
*Physical Therapist*

Dr. Doreen González  
*Speech-Language Pathologist*

Karen Fisher  
*Occupational Therapist*

Veronica Butler  
*Music Therapist*

Vanessa Chan  
*Speech-Language Therapy Assistant*

Donna Cox  
*Teacher Assistant*

Patricia Harris  
*Teacher Assistant*

Lois McDonald  
*Teacher Assistant*

Rachell MacLeod  
*Teacher Assistant*

Peggy Nevedomsky  
*Teacher Assistant*

Carmen Piza  
*Teacher Assistant*

Meredith Hanrahan  
*Teacher Assistant/Supported Employment Program*

Melvin St. Julian  
*Teacher Assistant/Supported Employment Program*

Christopher Scott  
*Teacher Assistant/Supported Employment Program*



Gifts from the Heart drew more than 500 people to the FAO Schwarz Galleria area location. Led by manager Terry Trocki, the FAO Schwarz staff served as personal shoppers and helped guests with their holiday shopping lists. The store also donated 10% of the evening's sales to The Rise School of Houston.

Thanks to the assistance of Stanford Alexander and Margaret Garrett at Weingarten Realty Management Company, a large party tent was set up in the parking lot outside the front door of the store. As guests mingled and nibbled inside the tent, they enjoyed the music of Jerry Atwood and Sharon Montgomery.

Decorated in a "Babes in Toyland" theme, the tent served as the site of seventeen family-focused silent auction items. The auction, which included two Aspen ski vacations (at the homes of Linda and Ken Lay and Brenda and John Duncan), a trip for four to New York City and a custom artist-drawn mural, raised more than \$20,000. Molly James and Ron Chespak, the author and illustrator of *The Whimsical Verse of Olly-O* were also on hand to sign copies of their award-winning book.

The success of Gifts from the Heart was the result of many generous groups and individuals, including Enron, who helped underwrite the event. Heart-felt thanks are extended to everyone who donated time and services to help the dream of the first annual Rise School fund raiser come to life. Our in-kind donors included: Innovision Communications, Jackson Hicks, Jeff Skilling, Mark Brown, and Moore Document Solutions. Thanks also to FAO Schwarz neighbors, Arcodoro Ristorante Italiano, BB1 Classic, Caruggi's, Chocolate Designs, Iloff Jewelers, J. Tiras Handbags-Jewelry, Lerant, Nature's Way Day Spa and Salon, Sport Clips, United Airlines, Vision Corner Post Oak and

Westbank Anglers for supporting Rise by donating 10% of their sales on Saturday, November 18. ☀



**Save the Date: Mark your calendars now for Gifts from the Heart 2001 to be held Tuesday, November 13 at FAO Schwarz.**

## Rising to the Challenge

We are continually trying to expand our "village" and have done so with the help of a variety of people and organizations.

- Our parents continue to give hours of volunteer time. Parents participated in our "Gifts from the Heart" fundraising efforts by transporting students to our picture shoots, stuffing and addressing envelopes, and helping the evening of the event. Twenty parents participated in a pot luck dinner at Rise on Saturday, October 21. Parents also attended a workshop which Rise provided on communication strategies to use with your child. Twice a month, we are now featuring Parent Volunteer Day at Rise. There are helpful parents aplenty on the first Friday and third Monday of each month.
- The River Performing and Visual Arts Center is a non-profit, year-round barrier-free extracurricular arts enrichment program for children ages 2-19 involving those with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and their siblings. The group provides monthly interaction with the arts for our students. The programs include music, storytelling and dance. Our children always look forward to our visits from the River.
- Pediatric Associates, our upstairs neighbors, have also become a part of our village. Volunteers from upstairs spend time with our students on a weekly basis helping out during their lunch hour. They also hosted our first Halloween parade providing both applause and treats for our little goblins.



- The newly formed Young Friends of Rise organization become an official supporter of Rise in the fall. The group's mission is to raise awareness and to raise money for The Rise School of Houston. Young Friends of Rise already has an impressive membership of over 200 people between the ages for 22-39, and has named 17 board members. Membership dues are \$25 for individuals/\$40 for couples. Membership includes the opportunity to participate in at least two social events each year, along with numerous volunteer events at the school. The Young Friends of Rise board met in January to develop bylaws and set goals for activities in the 2001 calendar year. They have agreed to host our "Gifts from the Heart" event in November of 2001. If you or anyone you know is interested in joining, please contact Missy Stevens at [missy.stevens@enron.com](mailto:missy.stevens@enron.com).
- Texas Children's Hospital has graciously donated an additional 3,000 sq. ft. so Rise may expand. By August we will have 2 additional classrooms and bathrooms, a larger "Sunshine Room" and additional laundry and storage areas.



The staff at The Rise School plays an important role in the success of our program and our children, however we know that our success is only a part of what makes Rise special. We thank all those members of our Rise "village" who help us in a myriad of ways. ☀

## "Gifts from the heart included kind words from parents"

*In preparation for our first "Gifts from the Heart" fundraiser we asked our families to tell us how they feel about their experience at Rise. The mother of Sara and Dakoda (our very first Rise graduate) Hamilton, shared with us what it has been like for her family to become part of the Rise Family.*

### OUR RISE JOURNEY

Our journey to the Rise School began in our search for a preschool for Dakoda, our typical 5-year old son. I visited a local school near my home. I was so excited to see the programs that awaited him and yet in the midst of my joy, I also feared that Sara, our 2-year old daughter with Down syndrome, would not have the same opportunity to participate in such a preschool. I decided to seek comfort at a Down Syndrome Association of Houston meeting. Dr. Cook was the guest speaker. Her words inspired and encouraged me. Needless to say, I signed the kids up for Rise and our journey began.

Dakoda, who has always been home with a caregiver, was very shy and withdrawn. Because he was not used to a schedule, he had a hard time the first week of Rise. When at home, he chose when he wanted to color and when he wanted to read. I knew that in Kindergarten he would have to follow the rules and schedule of the classroom. The Rise School prepared him for Kindergarten in an environment that was encouraging and loving. With the help of Bethany, his Rise School teacher, and her tremendous love and assurance, he was able to adjust. Well, he did more than adjust, he excelled. In fact, one day we told him he couldn't attend school because he was sick and he was so upset. He did not want to miss school. I never knew a child who would cry because he wasn't allowed to go to school. Dakoda is now in a classroom of 21 students. Though his teacher tells me that he is well adjusted and an excellent student, I doubt that would be without Rise. In a classroom of 21 students, Dakoda would not have received the attention he received at Rise.

Sara, who you would not believe if you didn't know her then, was also very withdrawn. She was quiet and kept to herself. She only identified with certain people. Because she was also at home with a caregiver, she was sheltered to only that caregiver and mommy and daddy. When she first attended Rise, she wanted to be cradled by Nan, her toddler teacher. I still remember sitting behind the glass at the Feigen Center, watching circle time while Sara, being held by Nan, did not even want to look at what was going on. She often fell asleep in her arms. I remember being asked several times if Sara had enough sleep the night before. Those who know her now would have never guessed her to be that way. She is now the little entertainer who "charms everyone who walks in the door." She participates in circle and encourages other children to participate as well. Aside from the fact that she likes to taste everything, including blue



## Rise School of Houston 2001

### JANUARY

Monday, January 8  
Teacher In-service  
No Classes

### FEBRUARY

Monday, February 19  
Teacher In-service  
No Classes

### MARCH

Monday, March 12 -  
Friday, March 16  
Spring Break  
Rise Closed

Monday, March 19  
Children Return

### APRIL

Friday, April 13  
Easter Holiday  
Rise Closed

### MAY/JUNE

Monday, May 28 -  
Friday, June 8  
Summer Break  
Rise Closed

Monday, June 11  
Teacher In-service  
No Classes

Tuesday, June 12  
Children Return

### JULY

Tuesday, July 3 -  
Wednesday, July 4  
Independence Day Holiday  
Rise Closed

### AUGUST

Monday, August 6 -  
Friday, August 24  
Summer Break  
Rise Closed

**Volunteer Spotlight:**

This quarter's volunteer spotlight shines on Gloria Borreca, our regular Friday morning volunteer in the Red room (Pre-K). Ms. Bethany notes that she can always count on Ms. Borreca to brighten up the room with her smile. As a retired special education teacher Ms. Borreca brings an experienced touch that provides a great service to the children and the staff at Rise. The Borreca family has been working with special needs children and adults in the Houston community for many years and we are grateful that Gloria Borreca finds time each week to share her skills and her love with our children. ☀

**T-Shirts Light Up the Day**

John Ramsey, Executive Director of the Greater Houston Community Foundation stepped forward to provide The Rise School students, staff, and board with a t-shirt and polo shirt design which will proudly proclaim our commitment to Rise. Designed by Hazeltine Advertising & Design, our brightly shining sun lights up a new day of services for special children in the greater Houston area. Many thanks to the Greater Houston Community Foundation for their generous gift that will allow us to wear our pride in the Rise program. ☀

Every contribution makes a difference. The Rise School of Houston counts on generous friends for assistance. Thank you again for helping reduce the challenges of disabilities for our young children while maximizing their abilities. Thank you for caring.

The Brenda and John Duncan  
Rise School of Houston  
8080 North Stadium Drive  
Houston Texas 77054

tel: 713.532.RISE (7473)  
fax: 713.383.7007  
www.riseschool.org

We would like to thank our friends at Azurix and Enron for the design and printing of this newsletter.

paint, she has learned so much at the Rise School. Rise has been much more than a preschool program. It has taught, encouraged, loved and lightened the paths of my children immeasurably. In fact, the Rise journey will lighten the paths for all these little ones. ☀

**Special Days Are Exciting Times for Children**

The children at Rise have much to be thankful for: An expression of our thanks took place on November 21, as the students entertained family and friends with a Thanksgiving Concert. Produced and directed by our very own Veronica Butler, the students, playing the roles of the original Thanksgiving feast attendees, sang songs, performed skits and shared thanks with parents, siblings and friends.



Richard Causey's team at Enron arrived at Rise with a sleigh full of goodies (gifts, food and festive activities) on December 15. Thanks to Richard and the good folks at Enron for making our first Christmas at Rise such a treat for our kids.

We kicked off the New Year with a concert by Jim Newton and Paul Hill from Celebration Shop in Dallas. Celebration Shop artists are specialists when working with special kids. Our kids clapped and sang along during this New Year's concert on January 9. Every child went home with a tape of Jim's songs.

Despite the balmy weather, a blizzard arrived at Rise just in time for our January 31 "Snow Day" celebration. Bundled in stocking caps, mittens, and mufflers our students, parents, and staff members frolicked through the four inches of snow provided by Ice Express. The playground became a winter wonderland, as snowmen were built, sleds went whizzing, and snowballs went sailing through the air. ☀



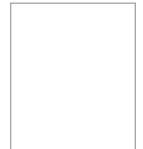
The Brenda and John H. Duncan

**Rise School**

OF HOUSTON

*"Where Special Kids Shine"*

8080 North Stadium Drive  
Houston Texas 77054



*Forwarding and address correction requested*