

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2011



Every Mother Matters

Mother's Day is just around the corner (May 8th), and our *Every Mother Matters* fundraising campaign is on a roll! We would like to thank everyone who has already donated to the campaign. If you haven't yet donated, please consider donating to our family strengthening programs, so that local mothers can better nurture and provide for their young families. Tell us the name of the an important woman in your life whom you would like to honor, and we'll send them a Mother's Day card letting them know of your dedicated donation. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Partnership with Help-A-Mother-Out

Help-A-Mother-Out is an outstanding Brighter Beginnings partner organization that provides diapers to mothers in need. Their mission is basic, to-the-point, and very effective: diapers are often the number-one need for children in low-income families, and they aren't covered by other programs such as food stamps. HAMO regularly gives diapers to Brighter Beginnings clients, but recently their diaper bank has run low, so we're reaching out to spread the word! Please visit <http://www.helpamotherout.org/> for more information.

AAF Wrap-up

Our 15th annual Adopt-A-Family season was a hit this year! 250 families, and nearly 1,000 family members had their wish lists fulfilled this year by our generous network of donors. We served a full 10% more families this year than we did in 2009. Donors contributed time and funds gathering holiday gifts, while others came to our two volunteer wrapping events to add sparkle and holiday magic to the gift bundles before our staff delivered them to vulnerable East Bay families.



Our offices filled with tricycles, learning games, kitchen supplies, blankets, books, clothing, and grocery gift cards while we arranged for delivery. We had a number of special stories, with one donor providing an entire household of new furniture to a pregnant mom who had been sleeping on her floor, and another child getting her first bed. We would especially like thank the Brighter Beginnings volunteer groups at Chevron, Clorox, and Kaiser, who provide immeasurable support every year.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Though tax season doesn't often bring waves of excitement, this year we were overjoyed to participate in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistant program (VITA) for a second year as part of our Family Financial Health initiative. VITA is a great United Way program that puts money back into the pockets of residents and the local economy. Through the work of staff and volunteers, we provided free tax preparation services to those who most need it - households making less than \$49K per year. We were able to save lower income families the costs of a paid tax service, as well as screen them for a variety of tax credits.

We had three VITA sites at Brighter Beginnings centers in Oakland, Richmond, and Antioch. Last year we served 183 clients and processed \$225,000 in refunds. This year we served 336 families, processed \$512,000 in refunds, and helped local residents access \$206,000 in earned income tax credits. If you are interested in volunteering with VITA next year, please email us at volunteers@brighter-beginnings.org. Many thanks to our 22 amazing VITA volunteers this year!



Preserving Early Head Start

This year, Early Head Start was facing potentially drastic budget cuts with legislators proposing cuts that would have affected an astounding 218,000 students, 55,000 jobs, and 15,000 classrooms. EHS programs are a crucial investment in the early education, health and well-being of at-risk children and families. Through a determined organizing effort, the EHS community spoke out and told Congress to preserve Early Head Start and allow all children enrolled to stay in the program for the fiscal year. Our success shows that making calls to your senators, writing letters to papers, and using social media to get the word out is effective! Thank you for your efforts. If you would like to learn more, or start the ball rolling for maintaining Early Head Start programs in the 2012 fiscal year, please visit http://www.nhsa.org/news_and_advocacy.

Recognizing the Year's Donors

We would like to take a moment to recognize the many donors who have generously expressed their support of the Brighter Beginnings mission this year. In this tough economic climate we have managed to keep our doors open and our vital programs running through your donations! You have our deepest thanks from all 51 staff and 2,300 clients at Brighter Beginnings

[THE YEAR'S DONORS LIST](#)

Recognizing the Year's Volunteers

Brighter Beginnings' many volunteers have spent the year stuffing envelopes, wrapping presents, making food baskets, setting up events, and preparing taxes for under-resourced families in our community. What a busy year! We thank you for your heartwarming involvement in all of our programs.

[THE YEAR'S VOLUNTEERS LIST](#)

One Client's Inspiring Story

With all of the clients who come through our doors hoping for better opportunities, Brighter Beginnings has a seemingly endless number of resourceful, determined clients who are working to better their families' lives. Here, one of them shares her story.

"When I was a pregnant teen, scared and shunned by everyone, I met a woman named Danna Marks [a BB Richmond Family Advocate]. I always tell everyone that Danna was my angel, because she came to my school, and



told me exactly what I needed to know: The world was not over, and neither was my life, it was simply about to take responsibility for another life. I participated in all types of infant care and parenting classes, learned so much about my baby, and even got hands-on experience giving infant massages. There were times when I couldn't buy necessities, such as diapers, and Brighter Beginnings came through to help me. Brighter Beginnings even made sure my children received gifts during the holiday season when I could not afford to buy them anything.

The service I received from Danna Marks and Brighter Beginnings has been truly wonderful and has made an imprint on my life I will never forget. I learned to be a better parent and even more, a better person. I know I always have a home at Brighter Beginnings, and I visit as often as I can. I even met with some of the older girls and we started our own support group, so we can always have someone to talk to. I am studying for my degree in Human Services, so that I too may give back to those in need, just like Brighter Beginnings gave to me."

Christian Holmes

Facebook

Brighter Beginnings is now on Facebook. Like us to hear the latest news, get updates on our programs, and learn about upcoming events!



In-Kind Donations

Donors have been busy flooding our centers with in-kind donations recently, and we're amazed by their hard work and thoughtfulness! We would especially like to thank Pharmaca in Oakland for donating thousands of dollars of pharmacy products and Help a Mother Out for their diaper donations. If you are interested in donating, we are currently in need of the following items: car seats (infant and toddler), strollers, and diapers. *We especially need diapers right now*, as our supply has completely run out. You can contact us for donations at our centers in Antioch (925) 303-4340, Oakland (510) 903-7516, and Richmond (510) 779-3199.