

Word on the STREET

VOL. 3, No. 1

NEWS FROM STREETSIDE STORIES

SPRING 2003



Everett student Ripa Saha ponders her story's setting.

State Budget Cuts Challenge the Storytelling Exchange

How will Streetside Stories weather upwards of \$25,000 in budget cuts and still bring the Storytelling Exchange to hundreds of sixth-graders this year?

That's the question that's keeping Streetside's board and staff awake at night. In the past, schools could pay less than one-third of the cost of our popular Storytelling Exchange, which will serve 800 sixth graders this year. Now, state budget cuts mean that some schools can't pay at all.

Since our first San Francisco workshop over ten years ago, the Storytelling Exchange has brought literacy to life, building academic skills for thousands of public school

students. Now, mid-year state budget cuts estimated at five billion dollars will drastically reduce funding for programs like the Exchange. The cuts will slash budgets for enrichment programs and downsize teaching faculty. Already, schools are scrambling just to buy paper and pencils.

With fewer quality programs, larger classes, and less

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Everett students Diego Sagatume, Anthony Salas and Michael Fitzpatrick generate story ideas.

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Photos of students by Bill McLeod.

Literacy Comes Alive at Streetside After School

At the end of their school day, twelve students' noisy bustling, swinging backpacks and constant chattering settles into excited energy as they begin a session of Streetside After School. The group quietly devours an article about racial profiling that facilitator Mei-ying Ho hands out, then segues into an excited discussion. Soon, Mei-ying calls for silence again, and each student bends over a free-write, a free-form essay.

As students share their writing, nods and murmurs testify to common experiences. Students describe interactions with the INS, police or security guards that reflect the reality of racial profiling for students and their families.

Streetside After School, Streetside's newest program, brings writing, reading and communication skills into the real world in two of San Francisco's lowest-performing middle schools. Seventy percent of students at James Denman and 67% at Luther Burbank score in the bottom half on standardized literacy tests.

As part of an exciting collaboration with Urban Services YMCA,

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Facilitator Anna Maria Luera and students Laura Mangandid and Terrance Williams bring a story to life with theater improvisation.

streetside STORIES

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Word on the Street is a publication of Streetside Stories, a nonprofit arts education organization that uses storytelling, creative writing and theatrical improvisation to help youth develop their reading, writing, and oral communication skills.

Streetside Stories uses storytelling to build community and inspire students to write, read and tell their own stories.

Established in 1992, Streetside Stories brings literacy arts education to San Francisco youth in public middle schools and the community, through in-school workshops, after school programs for struggling students, and literacy arts training for educators. Streetside engages students through storytelling and theater to make reading and writing come alive.

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Anna Maria Luera
Workshop Facilitator
Mei-ying Pu'ali Ho
Workshop Facilitator
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adult attention, students will suffer—especially students at the under-performing schools that Streetside serves. State support targeting under-performing schools is already disappearing, while schools are punished for failing to reach standards that are beyond their grasp.

This year, Streetside will do everything we can to make sure that students get the high quality, challenging educational experiences they deserve. But we need your help to make it happen.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Support Streetside as a donor! Use the enclosed envelope or donate through our website, www.streetside.org.
- Take action. Let the decision-makers know that school cuts hurt students!

Visit www.colemanadvocates.org, the Coleman Advocates website, for updates on the budget crisis, contact information for state and local representatives, and news on youth and community involvement.

Visit www.assembly.ca.gov to contact your state senators and assembly members, and ask them to restore funding for public education.

Streetside Volunteers: Making a Difference!

Since the school year began, over 60 community volunteers have spent more than 500 hours supporting students in the classroom and after school, editing student stories, and making over 800 student journals. Also, volunteers and their friends and families gave 15% of donations to Streetside's Fall Appeal.

Each month one or two volunteers have stood out for their extraordinary service. Our "Volunteers of the Month" for the Fall 2002-03 school semester are:

Emma Cott

A recent graduate from Oberlin College who works as an after school program instructor in Alameda, Emma worked the most hours in the classroom in September.

Adrienne Koteen

Adrienne is also a recent graduate from Oberlin College (and Emma's roommate). Not only did Adrienne come in every day of the 8-day workshop at Everett in October, she jumped in and subbed for Streetside facilitator, Mei-ying Ho when Mei-ying's car was broken into the first morning of the workshop at Francisco Middle School.

Raegan Yoneda

During November, her first month of volunteering, Raegan worked in Francisco Middle School, Claire Lilienthal Middle School, attended our editing orientation and helped assemble our annual appeal.



Abby Rosenheck

Throughout the fall Abby was our grant writing intern. She did such a great job we hired her to be our part-time development associate. Abby began volunteering with Streetside in the classroom two years ago, when she saved the day by translating every day for Streetside's facilitators in a class of Spanish-speaking newcomer students.

George and Jane Collier

Former Stanford professors George and Jane Collier have worked in the classroom, after school and as editors for over a year. Like Abby, they were invaluable translators in a newcomer class of only Spanish-speaking students last year.

For more information about volunteering contact Program Director, Britt Aageson, by e-mail at britt@streetside.org, or call (415) 864-5221.



Adrienne Koteen assembles a student journal.

FRIENDS

of Streetside Stories

State budget cuts mean even less support for youth programs. That's why the support of our wonderful donors means so much! Many thanks to all who make our work possible.

\$10,000 +

Goldman Fund
Kimball Foundation
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Holiday Fundraising Success!

The 2002 fundraising appeal generated more support than ever before, thanks to the many Streetside volunteers, staff and board members who took an active role.

This year, 89 individuals donated generously in response to our annual mail appeal, compared to last year's 42 donors. Donors gave a grand total of \$6,271, a major jump from \$3,200 last year. Major donors also supported us with \$4,500, boosting our total from \$3,500 last year.

Members of our Board of Directors pushed our efforts forward by bringing in 39% of all gifts through their contacts. Advisory Board members and volunteers also contributed and encouraged their contacts' support, comprising 20% and 15% of all gifts respectively, while staff and their contacts gave 16% of contributions.

Overall, this year's fundraising campaign raised \$11,897 in gifts that directly benefit Streetside's programs. Thank you!



Advisory Board member Mike Smerklo and Board members Peter Vestal and Charles Alexander celebrate the successes of Streetside Stories in 2002 at the annual staff and board dinner.

GET INVOLVED!

There are many different ways to contribute to Streetside Stories. If you or someone you know is interested, contact Britt at britt@streetside.org or (415) 864-5221, or visit our website at www.streetside.org.

WORK IN THE CLASSROOM! Streetside classroom volunteers act as storytellers and mentors, primarily helping students one-on-one with their writing. They also lead discussion groups and participate in improvisation and theater activities with the students.

HELP OUT AFTER SCHOOL! Volunteers at Streetside After School also assist the facilitators and work with students writing poetry and autobiographical stories.

MAKE A DONATION! Donate or help with fundraising. Please feel free to pass on information about upcoming grants, or organizations that may give in-kind donations.

Streetside Stories' TALE Tools for Arts and Literacy Education

Ever wished Streetside could come to *your* classroom? Now *you* can make it happen with our teacher training program, TALE.

Streetside trains educators, teachers-in-training, and other youth-service professionals in the use of our innovative and engaging techniques! Learn to lead story swaps, theater games, and use other literacy arts tools. Help your students to tell their own stories, build literacy and get engaged in learning.

Call Linda Johnson at (415) 864-5221 for details.

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Streetside After School is bringing life-changing literacy arts education to 60 middle school students this year. In a high-energy after-school setting, Streetside offers students themes relevant to their own lives and gives them a way to express themselves through poetry, prose and performance. Supportive adults and peers help them to improve critical thinking and academic skills and get ready for success in high school.

Streetside's two classroom facilitators, Anna Maria Luera and Mei-ying Pu'ali Ho each work with an after-school group of 15 students, meeting twice a week for eight weeks. Workshop sessions emphasize the creative literacy arts through daily reading and writing. Theater games build trust among the group and students develop the confidence to perform in front of a group of peers.

Social justice education is crucial to the program's success in grabbing students' interest and securing their dedication to literacy. Readings about issues like racial profiling and civil rights leaders like Cesar Chavez motivate students to put words to their own struggles. When Anna's class read poetry by Assata Shakur, Nikki Giovanni and Langston Hughes students were inspired to write their own powerful poems (see p. 5).

An environment of group safety and support creates a unique space for students to voice their opinions and take risks in group discussions. When Mei-ying's group read an excerpt from Antwone Fisher's *Finding Fish*, she was impressed at how students "could talk openly about taboo subjects, like homelessness and the welfare system, that might be uncomfortable to talk about in other places." In Anna's class, limited English speakers find the rare comfort to practice literacy in a new language: "At first some kids made fun of them, and then the group began to understand how they felt and to establish group support."

As Streetside After School begins its second cycle of workshops the new groups dive enthusiastically into literacy arts. Here, critical discussions and personal experience meld and are reflected in pieces created and performed by student artists.

The Story Swap

At the beginning of each Streetside workshop, facilitators tell an autobiographical story around the year's theme (this year's is "Choices") and then ask students whether they have had a similar experience that they would like to share. This is called the Story Swap. This page is dedicated to this idea, and to sharing student and community stories.

My World

By Ana Centeno
Streetside After School participant,
James Denman Middle school

In my world
everybody would be happy.
In my world
everybody would have
everything they wanted.
In my world
you could dress
However you wanted, anywhere.

In my world my family would have
their own Nicaragua.
In my world
there would be no such thing as BAD!
In my world
Everybody would communicate
through music.
In my world
there would be all kinds of food.

In my world everybody is invited.
In my world everybody
Would have a car.
In my world everybody has the
Right to an Education.
There would be no such thing
as sickness.
That would be my world!

When My Life Changed

By Rouelito Rimando
Storytelling Exchange participant,
Everett Middle School

My life changed when I decided
to go visit my dad in Los Angeles
with my brother when I was six years
old.

This was the first time I had
seen my father since he left us in the
Philippines. My dad had left us when
my brother and I were two and three
years old. He left my mom, my
brother and me by jumping out of a
tour boat in the Philippines to come
to the United States to get a job. While
he was in L.A. he married another
woman.

Because of an operation in the hos-
pital, I was sick before my dad left us.
He didn't give us the money for the medi-
cine I needed. I felt sad because he didn't
give my mom the money. I thought I was
going to die.

I went to L.A. with my brother and
my auntie because my dad wanted us to
visit him. My brother has black hair and
is taller than me. His voice is low. He is
taller than me and has size nine shoes.
My brother's favorite thing is going to



Everett student Semrotha San fleshes out his story.

Toys 'R' Us to buy lots of things with his
allowance. On our trip he was wearing
a white t-shirt, black pants and black
shoes that my uncle bought for him in
Niketown.

I was with my dad and my brother
in L.A. It was clean. I didn't see any trash
on the sidewalk. It was hot outside, and
I saw some cars passing by my dad's
apartment. My dad took us to the car
wash. Afterwards, when we passed an
elementary school, I saw a basketball net
that was torn apart.

Then we went back to my dad's
apartment. It was a big apartment, and
it had a swimming pool.

My dad asked me, "Is the water
warm?"

"Yes," I replied, "It's great. Put on
your bathing suit."

"OK!" he said.

I stayed in L.A. for just two weeks,
and then it was over. I was happy to go
back to San Francisco.

I Believe

By Aron Fischer
Streetside After School participant,
Luther Burbank Middle School

I believe in freedom.
I believe in individuality.
I believe in moonlight, shining brightly,
despite the surrounding darkness.
I believe in prevailing life.
I believe in the sunshine.
I see the blood of a thousand rebels
spilled across sights of grandeur.
I have seen the love of revolutionaries
battle the hate and darkness.
I have seen the pain of all fighters and
survivors.
I have seen the surrounding darkness
over our corrupt government.
I have seen the future that is destined to
doom.
But I've also seen the people fighting the
future I've seen.
Fighting Fate and Destiny

I wish peace could run free like an African,
I wish greed was drained from the soul
like the blood from a large cut,
I wish love flowed into everyone like
the Mississippi River,
I wish racism fled out of our lands never
to return,
I wish our streets and skies were as
clean and clear as the Great Lakes,
I wish equality cleansed every nook and
cranny on the earth,
I wish hate was demolished like a car
under a monster truck
This is the World I Wish Was



Anna flexes her improv muscles with Everett students Laura Mangandid and Terrance Williams.

Streetside Stories uses storytelling to build community and inspire students to write, read and tell their own stories.

READERS' CORNER

What books are we reading at Streetside Stories?



Caucasia
by Danzy Senna

It was easy for me to relate to the bi-racial perspective of this book, a young woman's journey to reconnect with herself, her sister and her culture.

—Mei-ying Ho, *Workshop Facilitator*



The Pact
by Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins,
and Rameck Hun

Three black males raised in the inner city of Newark seek to become doctors. They all come from single parent homes and deal with all sorts of adversity in order to fulfill their dream. They manage to stick together and become doctors (one dentist, and two physicians). It's an incredible story of what three people can do to help support each other's dreams.

—Charles J. Alexander, *Board Member*

Pride and Prejudice
by Jane Austen



I first read this book when I was in high school (for fun, not for a class), and I re-read it couple of years ago. It explores women's identity and individuality in the face of social pressures to conform to expected roles. It's the kind of romance—intellectually challenging, full of integrity, caring and, ultimately, passionate—that so many smart women dream of experiencing.

—Wako Takayama, *Advisory Board Member*

Samaritan
by Richard Price



A criminal investigation parallels a jaded television writer's return to his old, depressed neighborhood where he volunteers to teach creative writing at the local high school. The book is both a suspenseful mystery and an exploration of the narcissism of 'giving back,' a journey into the Heart of Darkness of Dempsey, New Jersey.

—Jonathan Knapp, *Volunteer*