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Witness to a Dream: The Foshay Learning Center

Helen Carillo, a 7th grader at Foshay Learning Center, met Tom Sturges at a Christmas mentoring event in 1997. Mr. Sturges, an executive vice president at the Universal Music Publishing Group, not only spoke to Helen's class, but he also made an impromptu assignment for the class to write a song about what they thought makes a difference in the world.

From that moment, the Foshay Learning Center Choir began to take shape. Inspired by the students' energy, Mr. Sturges continued to meet with the students periodically and introduced them to the world of the music business. He partnered with long-time Foshay music teacher Vince Womack and eventually helped the new student choir write and record an entire CD of original songs. By 2003, when the last of the original choir members graduated, they had performed for a long list of luminaries, including Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Secretary of State Colin Powell. Most of the original choir members would say that Mr. Sturges' commitment and continued presence in their lives played a significant part in their success (92% of them have graduated from college).

Now *Witness to a Dream*, a documentary film about the original choir's successes and challenges, has begun making the rounds at local film festivals and recently gained acceptance to the International Bahamas Film Festival. The film's real prize, however, lies in its effect on current students at Foshay. Assistant Principal Regina Boutte says that current students get excited seeing kids from their school make it through challenges and graduate from high school, then college. "We have formed the *Witness to a Dream* Foundation to continue the work," says Ms. Boutte, who is also the documentary's co-executive producer. "We want to talk to adults and tell them that they can get involved. They can bring exactly who they are, whether auto mechanic or nurse or movie star, and make a big difference in our kids' lives." The film's producers hope to have other showings in the area soon, possibly in November. Screening details will be at www.witness-to-a-dream.org.



The Foshay Choir performing under the direction of their mentor, Tom Sturges.

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