

# Inspiration



## What the ROCK Family Means to Me

Curt Yagi, Executive Director

Because I often refer to the "ROCK Family" to loosely describe the entire community of individuals who are involved with ROCK, whether as participants, families, volunteers or supporters, I decided to look up the word family. Among the many definitions that I found, perhaps the most relevant one is as follows: "Two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place." While it is safe to conclude that we all don't reside in the same place, I strongly feel that everyone involved with ROCK shares similar goals and values and are committed to and believe in the organization.

I clearly remember my first involvement with ROCK back in 1998. The night before attending Saturday morning "Skill Drills", I was nervous and excited and wondered if the kids would accept me. After all, I had never in my life worked with children and had limited knowledge of what ROCK was all about. On Saturday morning, as I entered the gymnasium at Visitacion Valley Middle School, I saw many smiling faces (both on children and adults) and felt the immediate sense of community and acceptance. I immediately knew this was not only the ideal place for children to develop, but for me to grow as an individual. This was my first sense of what the "ROCK Family" was all about.

In recent weeks, Lindsay, a ROCK Board Fellow from Stanford's Graduate School of Business, began a project to determine the effectiveness of ROCK in the Visitacion Valley community.

Her first task was to gather parents and care-givers and interview them about what ROCK has meant to them and their children. Lindsay began by pulling aside parents and care-givers during programs and initiating open ended discussions about the organization. I was overtaken with emotion as I learned about the excitement and passion that all of these adults felt toward ROCK. Statements such as, "I don't know where I or the kids would be without ROCK" and, "ROCK is a big part of my life, it is in my heart" have reinforced my belief about the impact of ROCK and the meaning of the "ROCK Family".

Each day I experience the ROCK family roots planting themselves deeper into the lives of the community and am proud to be part of such a caring group of individuals. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for being a part of the "ROCK Family".

**ROCK's Mission and Programs** Real Options for City Kids (ROCK) was founded in 1994 in response to the needs within San Francisco's low-income neighborhoods for enhanced public education and positive after-school activities. ROCK's mission is to nurture the healthy development of children by listening attentively to their needs and by providing opportunities to those who might not otherwise have access. ROCK aims to promote the positive development and long-term success of the youth that it serves through a combination of in-school and after school learning enrichment, sports and fitness, leadership training, outdoor adventure and summer camp opportunities. ROCK's programs are designed to serve girls and boys, ages 6-14, who live in or attend school in San Francisco's Visitacion Valley.



ROCK's Proud Middle School Martial Art Students

## What ROCK Means to Me – A Parent Perspective

Yvonne Casperson / Parent

My name is Yvonne Casperson and I have been involved with ROCK for 6 years. My children, who are all current participants, are Mariah (14), Melina (13), Marissa (11), Adrianna (8) and Jovani (7) Garcia. The program was first introduced to us when Mariah and Melina were attending El Dorado Elementary School. With nothing to do on Saturdays, Mariah, being the aggressive girl she is, kept asking, "Mommy can you please take us to Saturday Skill Drills with the ROCK program?" After much hesitation, I finally broke down and told her yes, but that we would leave if I wasn't comfortable with the program. Saturday morning arrived and we went.

To my surprise, there were staff members and volunteers at the door greeting myself and my girls as we arrived. Still being skeptical, I remained there for the day, observing everyone. I continued to take the kids on Saturdays and stayed to watch. At the end of the six week session, another surprise came up...the "Awards Ceremony" and pizza celebration. I thought to myself, "hmmm...this is very interesting"; and the next thing I knew, trophies were brought out. I was shocked and amazed as each trophy had their name on them. As a mother, you are pleased with your children no matter what they do, but this time they were proud of themselves as they had accomplished something on their own. As they stood tall with their trophies, I cried.

I continued to take the kids and learned more and more about ROCK and all of its programs it had to offer. I became more and more involved with my children's activities and as they grew so did ROCK. As the girls entered Middle School, ROCK opened their doors for after school tutoring, karate and other activities that kept my children engaged and provided them with emotional support, guidance, determination and a sense of belonging. They love their adventures, camping trips, scavenger hunts, rock climbing and pretty much anything involving ROCK's programs. The program has taught them to become leaders, develop positive relationship with their peers and adults and trust one another.

I always thought a program like this would be "too good to be true!" Well, trust me, it is that good. ROCK has become our safe haven and without it, I don't know where I would be. The organization has changed my destiny and perhaps even the direction in my life. Through its staff members, I have learned patience, gained listening skills and have a better direction in life. If ROCK can help me help my children become self-sufficient, hard working adults when they grow up, then I am all for it and would gladly give my all to the program. There are many things I hold dear to my heart and ROCK is one of them.



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2006 ROCK Soccer Skill Drills

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