



## OUR "NON-EVENT FUNDRAISER"!

Black ties, tuxes and ball gowns and rubber chicken. Hotel ballrooms, endless auctions and long lines at the valet. Not at Street Poets, Inc.! This year, Street Poets has decided NOT to do a gala event and to use your resources where they are needed most - in our programs and services reaching youth in need. Despite the success of our gala event last year, we know that our donors and volunteers are inundated with requests for flashy parties and beautiful banquets and want to create an opportunity for you to help without the stress of clearing your calendar. Our programs and services cannot survive without your support. Programs that reach out to hundreds of teens who struggle to find their voice need your donations. Camp programs, services for teen mothers, and many more all require support to stay afloat. **A generous donor has allocated \$20,000 as a matching gift to launch our Fall, 2007 "Non Event Fundraiser."** These funds will match, dollar for dollar, the first \$20,000 that comes in towards our goal of \$100,000 by December, 2007. With your help, we can reach that goal and continue to provide the vital support and services that are our heart and soul. Thank you for all that you do to make our work happen.

## OUT OF THE 'HOOD INTO THE WOODS

Street Poets is pleased to announce that two outstanding alumni of our ongoing juvenile detention camp workshop at Camp Miller, David Sanchez and Jarmell Denmon, were recently accepted into Eagle Rock School, a unique experiential-learning-oriented boarding school funded by the Honda Corporation. Eagle Rock is situated among the Rocky Mountains in Estes Park, Colorado, a long way from the streets of South Central Los Angeles and Lancaster where David (15) and Jarmell (17) grew up. "Man, I didn't want to leave," Jarmell said of his weekend visit to the school, "I can't wait to get back there as a student." David and Jarmell's enrollment at Eagle Rock begins on September 23rd with three weeks of wilderness training culminating in 4-day solo hikes. While each of them will be receiving the equivalent of \$45,000 annual scholarships from Honda to attend, Street Poets will be acting as their sponsor, covering incidental costs and airfare to and from school over the next 2-3 years until they graduate. "I feel blessed to be able to start over in a place where I don't have to worry about getting jumped or shot," David explains. "If Street Poets hadn't helped make this happen, I'd still be stuck running around my neighborhood. I honestly don't think I'd have been able to survive, let alone graduate from high school."

### WHY NOW

I want to know  
How to flow  
Like a mountain stream of childhood dreams  
Running wild through aspen trees  
Belief in something bigger in the breeze  
That carries the leaves  
To a higher place beyond eye-sight  
Freedom is the destination on this flight  
Estimated time of arrival?  
When we transcend survival  
And begin living the truth  
Able to be whole once more  
Bonding the elements of life within  
Prosperous without slipping into sin  
We've been there before  
And refuse to return  
Burning a new path  
Through the forest of a mind  
Re-aligned with reason



Shown above, poet Jarmell Denmon.

(Co-written by Jarmell Denmon and his Street Poets mentor during a recent workshop writing exercise in which the paper is passed back and forth between two or more poets.)



*In August, Camp Miller workshop alum Mario Herrera (age 18) joined our male staff at the annual Mendocino Men's Retreat facilitated by the Mosaic Multicultural Foundation. "This has been the best week of my life," Mario (shown at left) shared with the diverse gathering of eighty participants (age 16 to 75) on our last night there. After the retreat, Mario returned to his group home in Long Beach where he continues to work toward building a positive future for himself beyond the streets that once threatened to claim his life.*



*We are proud to salute Mario as one of the emerging young leaders in our Street Poets community.*

One Street. One Heartbeat. One Love

**TO INSPIRE** at-risk youth in the juvenile detention facilities, schools and streets of Los Angeles to discover and develop their voices as writers, artists and human beings.

**TO EMPOWER** these young people to use the skills and increased self-awareness engendered through the arts to transcend self-destructive lifestyles.

**TO CREATE** a healing community that unites different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic segments of our city around the transformational power of the creative process.

## THE WISDOM OF WOUNDS

By Chris Henrikson, Founder/Co-Executive Director, Street Poets Inc.

One of the early questions we ask the boys in our juvenile detention camp poetry workshops is: "What are you running from?"

Their first responses generally range from a defensive "I don't run from anything" to "from the police," "from my enemies," "from hollow-point bullets" or "from my probation officer." Over time, our students learn to use poetry to answer from a deeper place in themselves: "from that crack pipe that keeps calling my name," "from my Mom's abusive boyfriend," "from my Auntie drinking herself to sleep every night," "from the ghost of my biological father who hung himself while doing life in prison," "from nightmares of being sexually abused by my uncle when I was a kid," or "from the memory of holding my little brother in my arms while he bleeds to death from gunshot wounds." With pencils poised, our students begin to approach the wounds from which they may have been fleeing - tapping them as sources of creative strength. Their pain, in effect, becomes the high-octane fuel that propels them beyond the prisons in which they have found themselves. Instead of projecting that pain out onto those around them, they learn to transform it into something beautiful, into words with the power to heal.

Our work as facilitators is to maintain a safe space within which these young poets can find and develop their authentic voices. Laughter and tears mix freely in our workshops, as our students play with language and learn to see themselves in each other. In twelve years of facilitating juvenile detention camp groups that included rival gang members of all races, we have never had an altercation of any kind. On the contrary, our poets develop deep compassion for their peers as they listen to and reflect on each other's work. To quote the late author and psychiatrist Scott Peck: "Community is the fruit born of shared brokenness." Within our workshops, this powerful statement has been proven true time and time again.

Ultimately, as our young poets mature and dive deeper into the creative process, they come to see their wounds as doorways through which they can choose to step in order to fully claim their gifts. It has been our great privilege to witness many of these bold initiatory steps over the past few years, and we are consistently humbled by their transformational impact on not just that individual, but our community-at-large. Especially at this time when our country is struggling to face its own wounds with dignity and grace, we believe the voices of these courageous young people are more essential to the well-being of our society than ever. This is the primary reason we've recently installed a recording studio in our office: to amplify the healing wisdom emerging from our culture's deepest wounds, from the hearts and minds of our most troubled youth.



### BOOK RELEASE PARTY

Last June Street Poets celebrated the release of Re:BIRTH, our new book of poetry and art generated from our workshop at La Vida North High School, a facility for pregnant girls and teen parents. Our class at La Vida has been a central part of our work since 2003, and we're grateful to our collaborators at Re:Active Magazine and the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department for helping us give voice to the program. The book launch was held at Equator Books in Venice and featured live poetry from workshop participants and veteran Street Poets. Guests included Victoria Chandler (pictured with son, above), who was a leader in the class and created the cover art.

### MOTHER'S FOOTPRINTS

I feel as if I'm walking  
In the footprints of my mother  
Living a lie  
A daydream of denial  
Growing up  
I couldn't see past  
The tip of my nose  
Couldn't watch my family  
Fall apart  
Once the final decree was made  
The family that I knew  
Was split in two  
And I took the identity  
Of a woman I no longer know  
People change  
Like the seasons of the year  
The sun shines happiness  
But around the corner  
A winter front lurks  
I want my family back  
My brothers and my sisters  
But most importantly  
I want to be myself  
And not the echo  
Of my mother's mistakes.

—Joslyn James, La Vida North Program.  
Poem excerpted from Re:Birth.



### How You CAN HELP

#### DONATE TIME

Volunteer for our 2007-08 event committee  
Lead a class or workshop  
Serve on a committee or Board

#### DONATE RESOURCES

Make a contribution of any amount (reply envelope provided)  
Donate or sponsor needed equipment for our in-office recording studio  
Donate invitation printing, newsletter printing, or other in-kind service

Call 323-737-8545 or email [chris@streetpoetsinc.com](mailto:chris@streetpoetsinc.com) to lend a hand.

THE WRITER DOES NOT LEARN TO WRITE SO THAT HE CAN "WRITE," BUT BECAUSE WITHOUT THE NECESSARY TOOLS, HE CANNOT DIG HIS WAY OUT OF PRISON.  
—ALLAN SWALLOW