

## **BIOGRAPHY OF MARGARET BRODKIN**

Margaret Brodtkin is a graduate of Oberlin College, where she received her B.A., and Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve), where she received a master's degree in social administration (MSW equivalent). She has been a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in California for three decades.

Margaret began her career in human services during college, working summers in settlement houses in New York City. After graduation, she was a social worker and program administrator at a variety of human service agencies in the fields of mental health, child welfare and after-school. This included running the children's program at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center and running the community mental health program in Sierra County, California.

### **LEADERSHIP AT COLEMAN ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH – 1978 - 2004**

Margaret was the Executive Director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth from 1978 to 2004. Under her leadership, Coleman became one of San Francisco's most respected and influential organizations, making children and youth one of the city's highest public policy priorities. For 26 years, Coleman and Margaret were pioneers in developing the theory and practice of local child advocacy. The work of Margaret and Coleman is now known nationally, and is being replicated in communities throughout the country.

Margaret personally authored many of Coleman's publications, including four "children's budgets" for the city of San Francisco, five profiles of San Francisco's children, a series of four reports on youth development titled "Making Children a Priority of Our Local Communities," report cards on elected officials, dozens of briefing papers on children's policy, three reports on the impact of budget cuts on community-based services, three guidebooks on civic engagement, and *From Sandboxes to Ballot Boxes: San Francisco's Landmark Campaign to fund Children's Services*. The latter has been described by colleagues as one of the best case studies in the country on successful child advocacy.

Under Margaret's leadership, Coleman successfully fought for reforms in San Francisco's juvenile justice, child welfare, health, recreation, youth development and childcare systems; expansion of community-based services; improved planning and accountability in the service delivery system; greater voice for youth; increased funding for children's services; and the creation of a city department (now the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families) devoted solely to children and youth issues.

In 1991, Margaret was the moving force behind The Children's Amendment, the first local children's budget initiative in the nation. Coleman authored and sponsored this voter's initiative, which brought together a diverse new coalition for children in San Francisco. This city charter amendment, passed by voters, protects current levels of

funding and created a new Children's Fund from a tax set-aside, which brought in close to half a billion dollars in increased allocations in the first 20 years. *The New York Times* commented, "Bypassing lawmakers and making a case directly to voters may be the wave of the future for the emerging children's movement..." The *San Jose Mercury News* saw this landmark initiative as an "unprecedented crusade for children, one that has unnerved local politicians and signaled a tough new approach by traditionally meek social service groups." Coleman, with its small full-time staff, captured national attention for what *The Washington Post* characterized as a "daring assault on the political establishment."

In 1993, HarperCollins published *Every Kid Counts: 31 Ways to Save Our Children*, by Margaret and Coleman Advocates. The book has been praised by many, including Jonathan Kozol and Marian Wright Edelman, and received extensive newspaper coverage.

During her last decade at Coleman, much of Margaret's work focused on increasing civic engagement in public policymaking for children and youth. Under Margaret's leadership, Coleman pioneered innovative strategies to strengthen the voices of parents and youth. These included a vocal, forceful youth advocacy organization called Youth Making a Change; a youth commission in San Francisco with the mandate to review all youth-related legislation; YouthVote, in which 4,000 young people voted on city priorities; and a parent empowerment group called Parent Advocates for Youth, whose work on parent-driven report cards on San Francisco's parks won national attention. Coleman became a hub of youth-led organizing and campaigns for California, and fostered the development of many new youth-driven organizations and projects.

From 1998 to 2002 Margaret led a successful multimillion-dollar capital campaign to create an advocacy center in the neighborhood in San Francisco with the highest population of children. The center continues to be a model for integrating neighborhood services and community organizing with broader child advocacy strategies and issues.

In 2000 Coleman and Margaret led the campaign to reauthorize the city's landmark Children's Amendment. Margaret organized the coalition to rewrite the amendment and was the chief strategist of the campaign, which received 74% of the vote. The new Children's Amendment gives San Francisco the most comprehensive planning process for children in the nation, and includes an innovative 3% set-aside for youth-initiated projects.

#### HEADING THE SF DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES – 2004 – 2009

In 2004, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom appointed Margaret Director of the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF), where she was able to continue her innovative work on behalf of San Francisco's young people from inside government. During her four-and-a-half-year tenure at DCYF, the department's budget and grants nearly doubled, and the initiatives created and overseen by the department more than tripled – all with the same number of staff. She considers her signature

accomplishments to be turning DCYF into a community-oriented department that models how government and community can collaborate to develop program and policy; instituting partnerships among city departments to improve inter-departmental collaboration; and forging a system of services in areas that were previously characterized by fragmentation. During Margaret's tenure, DCYF established joint programming with 13 city departments.

By the end of 2008, under Margaret's leadership, DCYF had reached all-time high benchmarks:

- Served more children than ever before in its history – 44,000 in 2008
- More young people were trained and employed than ever before in the city's history – over 4,000 youth were placed in jobs
- For the first time, all DCYF-funded programs complied with program standards that had been vetted by experts in the community and in the field
- Twelve city departments were collaborating with DCYF
- More families were able to connect to resources through DCYF – including 40,000 who attended Family Appreciation Day, and 9,000 a month who used SFKids.org

New and expanded initiatives created under Margaret's leadership at DCYF included:

- Afterschool for All – This inter-departmental initiative resulted in thousands of new afterschool program slots and reached almost 80% of need
- Rec-Connect – served over 5,000 youth annually at six sites throughout the city
- Community Response Network – provided violence intervention services in four of the city's highest-risk communities
- Service Learning Initiative – focused on five high schools, bridging community work and course work on environmental issues
- New Directions Employment Program – provided specialized jobs and support for youth on probation
- Anchor Initiative – DCYF experimented with new ways to fund community-based organizations that play a central role in key communities throughout the city
- Early Literacy – reached all pre-schoolers in two high need city neighborhoods
- Wellness Centers – expanded to serve every high school in San Francisco
- Truancy – a new CARE center in Bayview for youth who had dropped out of school that provided a transition from the streets to a successful reentry into school
- Shape Up – DCYF was a major partner in the city's efforts to improve the nutrition and physical fitness of children
- Beacons – Beacon Centers in eight neighborhoods became broader platforms for a wide variety of community and family needs

Margaret placed particular emphasis on developing partnerships with the San Francisco Unified School District. She has created the Committee for CBO, City and SFUSD Partnerships – which developed joint goals, worked on joint use of space and created protocols to facilitate joint work, which significantly changed the relationship between community groups and the school district.

Margaret led DCYF through efforts to improve the quality of services provided by community organizations. She involved 100 organizations in the development and implementation of a set of standards that had to be complied with in order to get funding. She also instituted the innovative Roots Fellowship to provide intensive training and coaching to 15 nonprofit leaders who never had the opportunity for formal training.

Under Margaret's leadership, DCYF became a policy leader in the city. She created the Policy Council on Children, Youth and Families, composed of civic and governmental leaders. The council brought the issue of family flight to the fore – leading to changes in the city's family housing policies, as well as more family-friendly strategies to address cost of living, transportation, early childhood development and public schools. DCYF involved thousands of San Franciscans in creating needs assessments to guide the city's work. DCYF became a national leader in policy and program planning for children, youth and families.

Margaret guided DCYF in developing more outreach to families and communities, including family events (such as Family Appreciation Day, which was attended by more than 40,000 people) and the city's first parent-run website providing up-to-date and comprehensive information on resources and events. The Convener project placed a community organizer in 20 neighborhoods to coordinate services and bring information to the neighborhood level. The Conveners provided an important link between community and government.

Under Margaret's leadership, DCYF integrated youth voices into the running of a city department, with its Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board and its partnership with the Youth Commission in continuing and strengthening an annual youth vote process. For the first time ever, city government funded youth organizing and youth empowerment work in neighborhoods throughout the city.

#### LEADING NEW DAY FOR LEARNING: A COMMUNITY SCHOOL INTERMEDIARY – 2009 - 2012

In February 2009, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom appointed Margaret to lead the city's New Day for Learning Initiative. San Francisco was one of two cities selected by the C.S. Mott Foundation to implement its findings on education reform. The New Day for Learning Initiative in San Francisco was positioned as the intermediary between city government, the school district and community partners to promote a 21st century vision for learning that would be adopted citywide. Five of the city's most challenged schools were selected as "early adopters" to provide the initial framework for program and policy innovations. After a successful first year, the community school approach was determined to be the most effective strategy through which to foster reform. As a result of federal funding for persistently low-performing schools, seven schools were added to the New Day cohort.

As the Director of New Day for Learning, Margaret's work included leading the community school technical assistance work for the San Francisco Unified School

District (SFUSD), promoting the community school approach citywide, building partnerships across all sectors to participate in community school work, and developing an evaluation and sustainability plan for community schools in San Francisco. Margaret convened a citywide Community School Council and a 60-member Summer Learning Network, as well as a CBO-SFUSD Advisory Committee and numerous working groups to address the goals of the Initiative. Goals included improving the coordination of services and programs at the school-site level, developing a whole-school approach to behavioral health, building a seamless day and year in which school and after-school are linked, and focusing the work of numerous school partners on a shared learning agenda.

After three years, the community school approach was integrated into the city's school reform strategy, and an implementation infrastructure was developed at 12 schools. When the three-year New Day for Learning Initiative ended, Margaret was widely recognized for her contribution to San Francisco's education reform efforts.

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In 2011, Margaret was asked to write, and has completed, a chapter on her work at Coleman Advocates, DCYF and New Day for Learning for a major social work text, *Handbook of Community Practice*. The book will be published in 2012 by SAGE Publications and used in social work schools throughout the country.

Margaret has received numerous awards for her work on behalf of children, youth and their families, including over 30 proclamations and certificates of honor from San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, California Legislature, San Francisco's Mayor's Office, the Board of Education, and the U.S. House of Representatives. She has been honored by over 20 local organizations, including San Francisco Organizing Project, YMCA of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, and the San Francisco Children's Council

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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