



## Parent Education

# South Bay Adult School STORIES

### Generations of Parenting

Parents in Stella Varey's South Bay Adult School Parent Education class at North School in Hermosa Beach offer variations on the theme: "Everything I Know, I Learned in Stella's Class." Carly Brandt is one of her biggest supporters. "She genuinely cares about all of us. She is the kindest woman. I've never heard her raise her voice." Carly should know. She was four years old when her mother, Sandy Brandt enrolled in Stella's class twenty-two years ago. This year, Carly is a parent in the same class with her own four-year-old daughter, Amalie. It's not unusual for Stella to work with children of former students. After all, she's been teaching in the popular SBAS program for more than 30 years. What is unusual is Carly's story.

Carly was a South Korean orphan who, although she'd been adopted by Sandy and her husband, almost didn't make it to America. After the adoption papers had been filed and the visa approved, Korean officials discovered that Carly had a small scar on her arm. They thought that the American couple would reject a "defective" child, so they halted the adoption process. Sandy, who had been an adoption advocate for years, worked through the bureaucracy for four months before being able to claim her daughter. Meanwhile, she'd enrolled in Stella's parenting class, a course that relies on parent/child participation--without a child. When Carly finally arrived, she was adopted by the entire class. Stella remembers vividly that the other children reached out to the non-English speaking four-year-old, holding her hand, showing her the pre-school ropes and explaining all things American from the unique perspective of preschoolers.

Now Carly is in Stella's "Parenting The Pre-Schooler" class. Amalie is participating in the pre-school Olympics, just as Carly did twenty-two years ago. Carly has learned, as all of Stella's parents have always learned, that there are only two rules in the class: Be Kind and Be Safe. She has a new appreciation for her own mom who learned the value of classroom participation from Stella and was "involved in everything" from kindergarten through high school.

*South Bay Adult School Parent Education has offered parent/child participation classes since 1952. The program currently serves 1600 families in the South Bay.*