

FOCUS ON CHILDREN

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COMMUNITY LEADERS GATHER IN SUPPORT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Solano and Contra Costa Child Advocates Engage with Experts at 2008 Children Summit

On January 29, 2008 nearly 150 local business leaders, elected officials, academics, child advocates, joined together for a half-day summit focused on the importance of a child's first years. Held at the Pleasant Hill Community Center, "Children Summit 2008" showcased recent research on children's brain development, the benefits of investing in early childhood programs, and the local and statewide policies needed to help young child develop into productive members of society. The Summit will include a panel of world-renowned experts focusing on four core subjects: the science of early childhood development, early learning, health and mental health, and income and family support:

- Keynote Speaker—Dr. David Kirp: Professor of Public Policy at UC Berkley and author of "The Sandbox Investment: The preschool Movement" and "Kids-First Politics"
- Dr. Ross Thompson: Professor of Psychology, UC Davis

- Dr. Neal Halfon: Director of the Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities and Professor of Pediatrics, Health Studies and Life Sciences, UCLA
- Jean Ross: Executive Director, California Budget Project

In order to maximize the availability of the conference proceedings, the Children's network is hosting a website with conference materials and related resources. Please go to: KIDSFIRSTINVESTMENT.ORG to access further information.

The Summit was coordinated by representatives from over a dozen local organizations including the Children's Network and First 5 Solano and modeled after the National Children's Summit, which took place in Washington D.C. last May and was cosponsored by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Congressman George Miller.

Forward Together: A Budget for All Californians

We believe California's budget should invest in California's future:

- We believe in a California that provides high-quality public services for all Californians, protects consumers, the environment, and our quality of life, builds the infrastructure we need to prosper, educates our children and that fosters opportunity, economic growth and strong and vibrant communities.

- We believe that a responsible California budget would keep its commitment to meet the basic needs of our children, our seniors, our families and our future. We believe there are budget needs of our children, our seniors, our families and our future. We believe there are budget choices beyond budget cuts.

Upcoming Events:

FORWARD TOGETHER: A BUDGET FOR ALL CALIFORNIA—CONTINUED

- We believe in a balanced budget that invests in the future, rather than one that mortgages our future with one-time “fixes” that fail to address California’s structural problems.

We support a balanced solution to the budget crisis:

- We oppose arbitrary policies, such as across-the-board reductions, that ignore critical priorities.
- We support a balanced solution to the budget crisis, rather than a budget that seeks to solve the problem only through cuts and borrowing.
- We support raising revenues needed to prevent cuts, including closing tax loopholes, eliminating the tax cuts of the last decade and updating our tax system to reflect our changing economy.

____ Our organization signs on to the above statement.

ORGANIZATION: _____

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please return to: Budget Allies, c/o Kisha Jackson, California Association of Food Banks, kasha@cafoodbanks.org or Fax-back at 510-272-9171

Currently over 65 organizations have joined the Children’s Network in signing on to this positing, including:

A BUDGET FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

Organization

Alameda County Community Food Bank
American Federation of State County Employees
Asian Law Alliance
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN)
C.U.R.A., Inc.
CA WICC Association
California Alliance for Retired Americans
California Association of Food Banks
California Association of Nonprofits
California Child Care Coordinators Association
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network
California Church Impact
California Federation of Teachers (CFT)
California Food Policy Advocates
California Health Advocates
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network CPEHN
California Partnership
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
California Public Interest Research Group
California School Nurses Organization
CALPIRG
Child Care Law Center
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund California
Children's Network
CHIRLA
Community Child Care Coordinating Council - 4 C's
Congress of California Seniors
Department on the Status of Women
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation
Food Bank for Monterey County
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food Bank of San Luis Obispo
Friends Committee on Legislation
Harbor UCLA Medical Center Department of Pediatrics
Health Access California
Hunger Action LA
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
JERICHO
League of Women Voters of California
Libreria Del Pueblo, Inc.
LIFETIME
Loaves and Fishes
Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness
Lutheran Office of Public Policy
MAZON
Native American Health center - WIC
Older Woman's League
On the Capital Doorstep
Parent Voices
Parent Voices Southern Alameda County Chapter
Protection & Advocacy, Inc.
Redwood Empire Food Bank
San Diego Hunger Coalition
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz & San Benito
Service Employees International Union
Services, Immigrant Right & Education Network
St. Anthony Foundation
St. Mary's Center
Western Center on Law and Poverty

CHILDREN'S NETWORK AWARDED MENTAL HEALTH GRANT

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www.childnet.org

The Children's Network has been awarded a grant from the California Family Resource Association (CFRA) and The California Endowment under their Mental Health Capacity Building for Family Resource Centers and Family Strengthening Organizations Initiative. Four agencies in California were chosen to participate. The Children's Network application includes members of the Solano FRC Network in Rio Vista, Dixon, and Vacaville, as well as the Children's Nurturing Project. CFRA will provide training and technical assistance to the Network and participating agencies to increase community based mental health prevention, intervention and treatment services.

Solano County Residents Encouraged to Take Advantage of Free Tax Assistance and Receive Federal Tax Credits

The Children's Network of Solano County, United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA) and the Internal Revenue Service are pleased to announce the 2008 Solano County kick off of Earn It! Keep It! Save It!, which provides free tax preparation to and help claiming the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to low-income families.

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NEWSLETTER

Mary LeCompte, Editor

The official Solano County kick-off consisted of a "Super Saturday" on January 26, 2008, at the Fairfield-Civic Center Library. This event featured a Financial Fair open to all residents, and provided free tax preparation for Solano County residents who earned less than \$42,000 in 2007.

Eligible residents who cannot attend "Super Saturday" can still receive free tax help through April 15 at 15 sites throughout Solano County (see list below). Call 1-800-358-8832 or visit www.EarnItKeepItSaveIt.org to locate a site.

"Unfortunately, thousands of low-income taxpayers in Solano County are paying to have their taxes prepared, when they can receive free, expert assistance from Earn It! Keep It! Save It!," said Carole Watson, chief community investment officer for UWBA, which leads the Earn It! Keep It! Save It! coalition. "We're urging these families to hold onto the money that they have worked so hard to earn by having their taxes done for free at our sites, where they can also connect with dozens of asset-building resources."

The EITC is a federal tax benefit designed to help low-income workers increase their financial stability. It has several important purposes: to reduce payroll taxes for these workers, to supplement wages, and to make work more attractive than welfare. It is the nation's largest anti-poverty program, and it helps working families maintain their financial independence from receiving public assistance.

Unfortunately, many eligible families do not receive the credit because they don't know they are eligible, haven't heard about it or don't know how to apply. It is estimated that between 20% and 25% of EITC eligible tax filers are not receiving this credit. These substantial tax credits can be the first step in helping families meet their every day needs, as well as save toward assets such as higher education, a first home or a new business.

During last year's Earn It! Keep It! Save It! campaign in Solano County, 43 volunteers helped 736 low-income families file their taxes, which resulted in a total of \$890,420 in refunds to low-income taxpayers in Solano County. Of that total, \$270,757 were EITC.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION COUNCIL

“100 years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the type of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drive, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Child abuse and neglect is a serious issue in Solano County. Every day, throughout our nation, thousands of children are mistreated by their parents, guardians, relatives, or caregivers. On average, three children a day die as a result of abuse and neglect, and countless others remain silent, their pain unnoticed and unreported. In Solano County each year over 4,000 children are reported to Child Protective Services as being abused and/or neglected. These children face challenges that no child deserves, and young people who have experienced abuse may grow into adults who are self-destructive and damaging to our communities. To help all children become healthy and happy adults, parents and caregivers must provide them with love, security, emotional support, and a strong connection to their extended families and communities. To help ensure the safety and well being of our children, our communities must also be committed to supporting and strengthening families.

Working with families before inappropriate parenting practices begin is essential. Studies show that nationwide, 80 percent of all severe abuse incidents occur among children under age five, and most child deaths from abuse or neglect occur at an average age of 2.6 years. The first few years of life are a critical developmental period and abuse or neglect during this time severely impacts normal development.

Poverty is the most frequently and persistently noted risk factor for child abuse and neglect.

Dramatic changes have occurred in the structure and patterns of family life in the United States over the past twenty years. For example, families have become increasingly mobile, and parents often function without help from extended family. Family support services have emerged in response to these changes. The settings in which family support services operate vary widely, as do the services and resources they offer to families. *However, all family support services are geared toward a common goal: increasing the ability of families to successfully nurture their children.*

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- Seem to be having economic, housing or personal problems
- Are isolated from their family or community
- Have difficulty controlling anger or stress
- Are dealing with physical or mental health issues
- Abuse alcohol or drugs
- Appear uninterested in the care, nourishment or safety of their children
-

By helping parents who might be struggling with any of these challenges, you reduce the likelihood that their children will be abused or neglected. Reach out to the children, too, and show them that you care.

Families with children need support services, which improve the well being of families, enhance family functioning, and foster a sense of self reliance. The goal of family support is to help parents to create safe, stable and nurturing home environments that promote the safety of all family members and healthy child development. Providing family support services to families and preventing problems before they become crises is the most effective and economical way to help troubled families.

A family support approach is based on the following precepts:

- Families have primary responsibility for their children's development and well being; they need resources and supports that will enable them to fulfill that responsibility effectively.
- Healthy families are the foundation of a healthy society. Families which are unable to promote their children's development ultimately place the entire society at risk.
- Families operate as part of a total system. Children cannot be viewed as separate from their families, nor can families be viewed separately from their communities, their cultural heritage, or the society at large. Decisions made on behalf of children must take into account the ways in which these various systems are interconnected.

The systems and institutions upon which families rely for support must assist families' efforts to effectively raise their children. They must adjust and coordinate their services so that they do not hinder families' abilities to maintain positive environments for their children.

Family support programs operate successfully in diverse communities and settings. Some are separate, freestanding nonprofit agencies; others are part of a larger organization and are sponsored by churches, hospitals, schools, day-care centers, state agencies, or colleges and universities. In Solano County the Family Resource Center Network offers access to family support services in each city. (<http://www.childnet.org/ourprograms/frcs/index.htm>) Specific program content and structure are determined by the needs of the families being served, and are designed to complement already existing community services and resources. Most family support programs include the following:

- Life skills training. This may include family literacy, education, employment and vocational training, or personal development skills such as problem solving, stress reduction, and communication.
- Parent information classes and support groups. These provide instruction in child development and opportunities for parents to share their experiences and concerns with peers.
- Parent-child groups and family activities, which provide occasions for parents to spend more time with their children.
- Child care for parents who are participating in a particular class or activity.
- Newsletters and other communication tools providing information on programs, activities, and available resources for families.
- Information and referral services.
- Crisis intervention/family counseling to respond to parents' special concerns about their children or specific family issues.
- Auxiliary support services such as clothing exchanges, emergency food, transportation.

Advocacy for individual families and for all families within the community.



APRIL IS CHILD

ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



We must protect our most precious gift of all...our children. **Together - We can help prevent child abuse!**

We use this reminder to renew our commitment to protecting our most vulnerable citizens from harm not only in April, but also throughout the year.

Visit the Children's Network website www.childnet.org in March and April to find a Blue Ribbon event in the month of April in your local community.

Solano CARES Initiative

The Solano CARES Initiative continues to have a significant impact on child care and early education in Solano County. To date, 1810 stipends totaling over \$2,518,009 have been issued to 783 providers. These stipends have provided an incentive for members of the workforce to increase their educational levels and remain in the field thus improving the quality of child care and development services throughout the county.

The turnover rates of providers participating in CARES have consistently stayed well below the rates of the pre-CARES total workforce turnover rates for Teacher Assistants and Teachers. The turnover rates of teachers have declined significantly over the past few years, from 25% in 2001 to 4% this year (2007). For the second consecutive year, center-based programs completing the workforce survey reported that there was no turnover for Site Supervisors/ Teachers Directors or Directors.

To find out if you are eligible to receive funding, visit www.childnet.org or call 707-421-7229.

CEL

The Solano County Centralized Eligibility List (SCEL) is designed to assist low income families with child care costs. The Local Child Care Planning Council of Children's Network in collaboration with Solano Family & Children's Services makes it easier for families to apply for subsidized child care. The SCEL allows a family to sign up for all child care subsidy programs at one time and in one place. By completing one application, a family can gain easy access to multiple subsidized child care programs improving the opportunity to find free or low-cost child care to eligible Solano County families. For further information, please contact Solano Family & Children's Services at (707) 864-4640.

Hello

Jacqueline Jackson is the Child Care Programs Director at Children's Network of Solano County, a nonprofit organization located in Fairfield, California. The Children's Network of Solano County is a nonprofit organization committed to improving the lives of children in Solano County through education, advocacy, coordination of community services and community-based collaboratives.

Before joining Children's Network, Ms. Jackson worked for the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco as Program Director of the Child Care Program. She was also the Wraparound Director for Stark County Family Council in Canton, Ohio, a non-profit organization that specialized in services for Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Children. Ms. Jackson has worked in several capacities in the child care field for more than 25 years.

Prior to coming to California, Ms. Jackson worked as an Assistant Professor in the Education Department of Niagara University. She has served on several boards, volunteers as a reading tutor for children of all ages, and has acted as chair for various community organizations.

Jacqueline Jackson is a passionate advocate for equality for all, but more importantly issues surrounding the health and safety of children.

My name is Laurie Andres and I took the position of Parenting Partnership Coordinator in December 2007. I've been working with children and families in Solano County for the past 7 years; first in Vacaville with the Welcome Baby Program and most recently with the Children's Nurturing Project where I still work part-time. I teach parenting classes in Solano County and am also a parent of three, so I understand the struggles families face in meeting the challenges of parenting. Solano is rich with resources for families and children and I am happy to be a part of the Children's Network in providing access to these resources.