

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES REPORT – June, 2006

Children's Network

Recognizing the Impact of Parental Substance Abuse on Infants, Children, Families and Communities Training: On Wednesday May 17, 2006, the Children's Network, Child Abuse Prevention Council and the Solano Children's Alliance, along with the Children's Nurturing Project, First Five funded Solano Prenatal Initiative (BabyFirst) and the Vacaville Police Department, co-sponsored a training entitled *Recognizing the Impact of Parental Substance Abuse on Infants, Children, Families and Communities* at the Joseph Nelson Community Center in Suisun. One hundred seventy-five participants from a broad range of disciplines, including CPS, Probation, Public Health Nursing, law enforcement, foster family agencies, schools, child care, family resource centers, substance abuse counselors and homeless shelters, attended this day long training with very positive feedback.

The following topics were included by local presenters:

- **Street Drugs and Paraphernalia**, presented by Detective Ian Schmutzler of the Vacaville Police Narcotic Enforcement Team;
- **Solano County Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Protocol Overview**, presented by Detective Patrick Cowan, Vacaville Police Department, FIRST Team;
- **Latest Research on the effects of prenatal methamphetamine exposure on the health and development of infants and children**, presented by Debbi Davis, RN, Children's Nurturing Project;
- **Update on local efforts to implement coordination of services for pregnant substance using women and substance exposed newborns**, presented by Jayleen Richards, BabyFirst Solano; and
- **Resources available for Substance Abusing Parents in Solano County**, presented by Sandy McQuillan, Solano County Substance Abuse Services

Child Care Planning Council

Proposition 82 (Preschool for All) Defeated: Prop. 82 lost statewide, 39 percent (yes) to 61 percent (no). The proposition would have provided voluntary preschool opportunities for the state's four-year olds. Reflecting the statewide vote, 41 percent of Solano County voters supported the initiative, while 59 percent voted no.

The Solano County Child Care Planning Council will continue to work with First 5 Solano, the County Office of Education and other community stakeholders to create more quality, affordable child care and development (including preschool) options for families in Solano County.

Quality preschool opportunities in Solano County, as elsewhere in California, are in short supply. Federal and state preschool programs for low-income children have long waiting lists. Middle-class parents who do not qualify for public preschool programs also cannot afford enrollment in private preschools, which can cost the parent as much as college tuition at a public university.

The Council's completion of the 2006 Child Care Needs Assessment, and improved data

that will be obtained from the County's Centralized Eligibility List, will provide policymakers with additional detail on how well we are meeting the child care and development needs of our families.

After-School Program Expansion

After-School Programs (excerpted from Bay Area Partnership summary): In 2002, California voters passed Proposition 49, which was sponsored by now-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to increase the state's investment in after school programming. Prop. 49 will more than quadruple funding for after school programs through the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program, from its current \$121 million to \$550 million. The original intent of the legislation was to allow *every* public elementary and middle school in California access to state funds for after school programs.

Senate Bill 638, authored by Bay Area Senator Tom Torlakson of Contra Costa County and co-sponsored by the Bay Area Partnership and Children Now, proposes a number of very positive improvements to the ASES and 21st Century Community Learning Center programs. Proposed changes to the ASES program include an increase in the daily student rate, raised grant caps, and direct grants rather than reimbursement for services. The bill passed unanimously through the Assembly Education Committee on May 10, 2006, and is waiting to be assigned a hearing date in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The Council has voted in support of this bill.

The application for Proposition 49 is expected this summer.

Child Care Provider Appreciation Day: Child Care Provider Appreciation Day was celebrated nationwide on May 12, 2006. Locally, the Board of Supervisors presented a proclamation to Child Care Planning Council members Alan Tornay with Travis Air Force Base and Gail Jack with Solano County Health and Social Services, along with Solano County Family Child Care Association President, Sharon Coleman.

Additionally, the Solano County Child Care Planning Council, the Solano Napa Association for the Education of Young Children, the Solano County Family Child Care Association, Children's Network, and Solano Family & Children's Services co-sponsored a Provider Appreciation Day celebration on May 13, 2006, at the Joseph Nelson Community Center. The 137 individuals who have participated in the Solano CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) program *continuously* over the last four program years were honored. These are individuals who have all increased their educational levels (some earning degrees) and have truly demonstrated their commitment to improving the quality of child care and development services in Solano County.

Constructing Connections—Financial Summit: Constructing Connections hosted a Financial Summit on Thursday, March 30, 2006, to engage banks and lending institutions in a dialogue about child care as a viable lending opportunity. A total of 18 companies were invited and ten participated in the 2-hour meeting held in the Suisun City Council Chambers. Supervisor Duane Kromm provided welcoming comments, noting that child care is a significant need in Solano County and allows parents to find and keep jobs and to contribute to the local economy as well as their own self-sufficiency.

The program featured presentations by Constructing Connections staff on the history of the program, the need for a balance of child care options, and the economic contribution of the child care industry. With this background, presentations were made by a financial expert from the Low Income Investment Fund and by the manager of the Solano Small Business Development Center on the opportunities for lending for child care. An open discussion followed with all of the banking representatives actively participating. At the Financial Summit, five lending institutions indicated a willingness to explore the potential to create loan products for child care and two representatives indicated a willingness to participate personally in the Constructing Connections Collaborative.

April 2006 Public Awareness Events: In keeping with the spirit of community collaboration that helped Solano County to be selected as one of the “100 Best Communities for Youth” by America’s Promise, and recognizing that the health and well-being of young children in Solano County are critical components of the Solano County Board of Supervisors strategic plan, a large collaborative of public and private agencies joined together under the unified theme of “*Solano County, A Community United for Building Better Futures*” to promote awareness of children’s issues during the month of April. The agencies involved included the Children’s Network, Child Care Planning Council, Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC), AmeriCorps, eight Family Resource Centers, Solano Family and Children’s Services, First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission, Solano Office of Family Violence Prevention, Court Appointed Special Advocates(CASA), and Travis Air Force Base, among others.

In 2005, 4,126 children in Solano County were reported abused or neglected to Child Protective Services. Solano County recognized these children with the Blue Ribbon Campaign in April by holding blue ribbon tying events, presenting Board of Supervisors and city proclamations and sponsoring a kid’s art activity on “what keeps me safe and healthy”. In Solano County, the Blue Ribbon Campaign has been conducted by the CAPC and AmeriCorps since 2001.

Blue Ribbon Campaign events organized by the CAPC, AmeriCorps members, and FRC staff, included information for the community on child abuse prevention and other resources that would benefit their need for services.

Fighting Back Partnership and AmeriCorps members from Vallejo, sponsored a community event in front of the library on Saturday, April 8, 2006, that included entertainment, speakers from various programs in the community, resource booths, raffle prizes for families and activities for children.

Vacaville had their Blue Ribbon tying event in front of City Hall on April 11th and the City of Vacaville declared April 30th as “Spank Out Day!”

In Fairfield, on April 13th the CASA Program, CAPC, and AmeriCorps Members co-sponsored a Blue Ribbon and The Light of Hope event at the County Administration Center, tying blue ribbons at the county tree and lighting candles to spell the word HOPE, for the children of Solano County. Speakers included Supervisor Barbara Kondylis, Judge

Gary Ichikawa, Stephan Betz from First 5 Solano, Debbi Davis and Rosemary Kennedy from the CAPC, and Aaron Crutison from Child Welfare Services.

Rio Vista had their 2nd Annual "Save a Child" Walkathon on April 20th. The walkathon started at D.H. White Elementary and ended at City Hall where participants tied Blue Ribbons that represented the cases of child abuse reported in Rio Vista.

Dixon had their 11th Annual Block Party on April 22nd where they honored the children who are victims of abuse and neglect, and also had concession proceeds benefit the Dixon Youth Organizations.

Benicia had their "Cherish the Child," event on April 23rd providing the community with information, resources and activities for children.

In addition, members of AmeriCorps and the Child Abuse Prevention Council participated in the statewide 2006 "Kids' Day at the Capitol" Event in Sacramento on April 7th and the Greater Bay Area Regional Child Abuse Prevention Campaign whose theme this year was "Child Abuse is Everyone's Business." Child Abuse Prevention materials were also provided to Head Start and North Bay Medical Center to distribute to families during the month.

Welcome to the Network's New Coordinator: The Children's Network recently welcomed Rhonda Smith to the position of Community Programs Manager. She will oversee and manage the countywide, community-based family support initiatives serving families and children through the Family Resource Center Network. Although Rhonda recently returned to Northern California, she is well acquainted with Solano County through her work as Program Director of Youth Strategies for Fighting Back Partnership in Vallejo from 1997 to 2000. Rhonda also served as the Deputy Director of the First 5 Commission in San Francisco.

Safe from the Start Training: The Solano Parenting Partnership and the Office of Family Violence Prevention completed their second Safe from the Start training for parenting education providers on May 2, 2006. The training equips parenting providers with current information about normal brain development and the impact of violence on the developing brain, so that this information can be shared with parents.

Thanks from the Family Resource Center Network: All of the Family Resource Centers countywide, and the Children's Network wish to say a very special thank you to all of the members of the Board of Supervisors. The additional \$167,000 you provided for the core prevention services of the FRC Network during your budget hearings June 26, is greatly needed and deeply appreciated by us all.