

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES REPORT – April, 2007

Children's Network

Solano County Recognized Again By America's Promise. Congratulations to the Board of Supervisors on the occasion of Solano County being once again included among the Nation's "100 Best Communities for Youth!" As you know, America's Promise selected Solano County for recognition "based on [the County's] commitment to engage partners and individuals from all community sectors in raising awareness of young people's needs and taking action on behalf of children and youth." This community has been very fortunate to have had elected leadership that has consistently supported the hard work of genuine partnership and collaboration long before it was fashionable. The Board of Supervisors' steadfast commitment has assured the community voice for children would be heard and heeded, and their vision is now being recognized nationwide.

2007 Woman of the Year for the 7th District of California: Kim Thomas, Executive Director of the Children's Network of Solano County, was selected by Assemblymember Noreen Evans as the 2007 Woman of the Year for the 7th District of California. Kim received the honor at the State Capitol on Monday, March 5, as the Legislature recognized outstanding women during the 20th Annual Woman of the Year ceremony.

In presenting the honor to Kim, Assemblymember Evans acknowledged her dedicated and passionate work on children's issues locally in Solano County, 12 years as the director of the Children's Network following seven years in Napa County with Community Resources for Children. In a press release, the Assemblywoman stated that "Kim has been a tireless advocate for children," adding that "without all her hard work and commitment, Solano County wouldn't be such a great place for kids to grow up."

Child Abuse Prevention Council

Child Abuse Prevention Council: More than 250 recently attended a forum on March 27, 2007, in Vallejo entitled *All Alone in the World: Children of Incarcerated Parents*, which was co-sponsored by Solano County CAPC, the Greater Bay Area Child Abuse Prevention Council Coalition and First 5 Solano. Nell Bernstein, journalist and author of *All Alone in the World—Children of the Incarcerated*, and Denise Johnson, M.D., Director of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents, both presented at this forum. The Solano Child Abuse Prevention Council—Children of Incarcerated Parents Subcommittee secured these two noted speakers. Ms. Bernstein provided an intimate look at the parents and children torn apart by the American penal system. Dr. Johnson presented findings to recent empirical and service-related research on parental incarceration as well as studies on enhancing parent-child attachment in families of incarcerated parents. Other presenters included a youth panel from Berkeley-based Community Works Project W.H.A.T. (We're Here and Talking) and Francine Lucas-Sinclair, the adult daughter of two incarcerated parents. Attending also were representatives from Friends Outside, and other Bay Area agencies serving this population, who spoke about resources available.

Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness—Blue Ribbon Campaign Events: Together with the Board of Supervisors and many other partners, the Solano County Child Abuse Prevention Council recognizes April 2007 as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Each year in Solano County, more than 4,000 children are reported to Child Protective Services as being abused and/or neglected. These children face many challenges, 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, 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

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supporting and strengthening families. Following is a list of events held throughout the county to bring awareness to child abuse and neglect prevention:

- April 2 —Blue Ribbon Tree Ceremony, Vacaville City Hall
- April 3 —Resolution issued by the Solano County Board of Supervisors
- April 6 —Ten Reasons Not to Hit Children fliers distributed at elementary and preschools, Vacaville Unified School District
- April 9-13 — Materials distributed at Child Start/Head Start sites
- April 14 — Fighting Back Against Child Abuse , JFK Library, Vallejo
- April 16-29 — Display and materials distributed at North Bay Medical Center sites
- April 21 — Children Day of Hope Event at Joseph Nelson Community Center, Suisun
- April 23, 24, 25 — Cherish the Child Event, Benicia Library
- April 26 — Walk for Safety/Blue Ribbon Event, Rio Vista
- April 26 — "Day of the Child" at Markham Elementary School, Vacaville
- April 27 — Children's Memorial Day, Flying of the Flags
- April 28 — Block Party at the Women's Improvement Park, Dixon
- April 30 — Spank Out Day, Vacaville

Child Care Planning Council

New Professional Development Program for Child Care Providers: As a result of a successful competitive proposal process, the Children's Network was recently awarded \$129,000 per year for three years, 2008-2011, by the First 5 Solano Children & Families Commission. This award will allow the Children's Network to continue to administer professional development activities for the child care workforce, on behalf of the Local Child Care Planning Council, with the goal of retaining highly qualified providers in the child care field in order to provide quality care to the children of Solano County. These funds will complement additional funds received by the Children's Network from the California Department of Education under AB 212 to provide retention activities to child care providers working in state subsidized child care programs.

For the past six years, Children's Network staff has administered the Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards (CARES) Program, which has improved turn-over rates for teachers by 70 percent, from 25 percent in 2001 to 7 percent in 2006. More than 800 child care providers have obtained a minimum of three college units and/or 21 professional growth hours each year, which will lead them to a higher level Child Development Permit and/or college degree. Participants have received training allowing them to assess the quality of child care services they provide and develop and implement plans for improvement.

Constructing Connections: The First 5 California Children & Families Commission recently approved renewed funding of the statewide Affordable Buildings for Children's Development (ABCD) Constructing Connections project for three years with an allocation of over \$3 million. Solano County is one of ten sites in the State participating in Constructing Connections, which is administered by the Children's Network. With the funding from First 5 California, Constructing Connections now is fully funded for the next three years thanks to a match of funds from First 5 Solano and contributions from the California Department of Education, Children's Network and Solano Family & Children's Services.

Constructing Connections is having an impact in Solano County by focusing on the need for child care facilities in all parts of the County and by collaborating with local government officials and staff, real estate and economic development professionals, lenders, business leaders and others. One hundred seventy new child care slots in five new facilities have been created with assistance from Constructing Connections between November, 2005 and June, 2006, and more than six new

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centers are in the pipeline. In addition, staff helped facilitate a partnership with Vacaville Unified School District and Child Development Inc. that resulted in more than one hundred sixty five new state-subsidized preschool spaces set to open this year. The program reflects Solano's interest in its children and families, consistent with Solano being one of America's 100 Best Communities for Youth.

New Child Care Access Initiative: The Children's Network was recently awarded \$25,000 per year for three years, 2008-2011, by the First 5 Solano Children & Families Commission to implement a new Child Care Access Initiative. This funding was allocated to address Solano County's need for additional subsidized child care and development funding. Between fiscal years 1998-1999 and 2005-2006, the California Department of Education earmarked \$2,810,974 for state subsidized child care program services in Solano County. Solano County only received \$1,301,663 of these funds, leaving \$1,509,311 and a continuing unmet need. For Solano County families, the total funds lost over the last eight years is \$9,803,603.

The Child Care Planning Councils and other stakeholders will develop and implement strategies to increase the amount of subsidized child care funding received in Solano County so that children and families have improved access to quality subsidized child care and development services resulting in a greater chance of family economic success and children's school success.

Integrated Family
Support Services

Integrated Family Support Services Initiative (IFSI): The Children's Network was recently awarded the joint-agency grant proposal for \$911,000 annually for three years (2007-2010) by the First 5 Solano Children & Families Commission for continued coordination of IFSI, a collaborative of thirteen agencies providing a constellation of Family Support Home Visiting services to all families with children age 0 to 5 throughout Solano County to ensure that they have access to support systems and community services, that all parents support their children's development, guide and nurture their children and are involved in their communities' recreation and information infrastructure, resulting ultimately in improved outcomes for all children and families in Solano. The Children's Network will provide staff coordination and technical support for the project partners, maintain the database for the Family Resource Centers (FRCs) in the school readiness catchment areas, and modify it as appropriate for reporting purposes. The IFSI collaborative partners include Benicia FRC, Dixon FRC, Fairfield/Suisun FRC, Rio Vista CARE, Vacaville FRC, Fighting Back Partnership, California Hispanic Commission, Youth & Family Services, Children's Nurturing Project, Interfaith Council of Solano County, and the Solano County Department of Health & Social Services.

The award also includes partial funding for continued coordination of the *Solano Parenting Partnership*, the county-wide parent education resources collaborative that created and maintains the Parenting Information and Referral System, a database linking families to parenting classes, support groups and other parenting resources. The Solano Parenting Partnership collaborates to increase local capacity by offering facilitator training for evidence-based and best-practices parenting programs; identifies and addresses gaps in parent education services; produces and distributes a monthly list of available parenting education and support groups; and encourages involvement by parents in the lives of their children. The Parenting Information and Referral database, accessible at www.childnet.org/parenting, receives more than 90,000 on line hits per year.