

2007 WOMAN OF THE YEAR

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Professional Development for Child Care Providers</i>	2
<i>Working to Close the Gap: AB 172, Constructing Connections, Child Care Access Initiative</i>	2
<i>Solano County Among Nation's 100 Best</i>	3
<i>Blue Ribbon News and Calendar of Events</i>	3
<i>Continued Funding for Family Support Services</i>	3
<i>Council Members</i>	4
<i>Get Involved and Stay Informed</i>	4
<i>Volunteer Appreciation</i>	4

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KIM THOMAS HONORED BY 7TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



Kim Thomas, Executive Director of the Children's Network, on the floor of the California State Assembly with Assemblymember Noreen Evans (D-7th District) and Speaker Fabian Nunez (D-46th District)

California Assemblymember Noreen Evans selected Kim Thomas as the 2007 Woman of the Year for the 7th District. Kim received the honor at the State Capitol on March 5, 2007, as the Legislature recognized outstanding women from throughout the state during the 20th Annual Woman of the Year Ceremony.

In presenting the honor, Assemblymember Evans acknowledged Kim's dedicated and passionate work on children's issues in her district: in Solano County, where Kim has served as Director of the Children's Network for 12 years, and preceding that, in Napa County for seven years as Director of Community Resources for Children.

Kim was instrumental in the development of the nation's first child support law, which addressed the adequacy of child support awards, while working with then Assemblymember Art Agnos. She later worked as a committee consultant for the State Legislature on welfare reform issues. Evans 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."

Each year, every member of the State Senate and Assembly honor the accomplishments of a woman they represent in celebration of Women's History Month.

COMING SOON: NEW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR LICENSED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

For the past six years, Children's Network has administered the CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) Program, which has provided guidance and incentives for providers to continue their education and career development in the field of child care. Through the CARES Program, more than 800 child care providers have completed a minimum of three college units and/or 21 professional growth hours each year, which will allow them to obtain a higher level Child Development Permit and/or college degree. Training received by participants has enabled them to assess the quality of child care services they provide and to develop and implement plans for improvement. Since 2001, the retention rate for teachers continuing in the field of child care has improved by 70%, with a turn-over rate of only 7% in 2006.

Although the CARES Program will conclude this Fall, the Children's Network will continue to administer professional development activities for the child care workforce. On behalf of the Local Child Care Planning Council (CCPC) and through a grant from First 5 Solano

Children & Families Commission, the Solano County Professional Development Program will provide a variety of services designed to encourage retention of highly qualified child care providers, improving the quality of child care in Solano County. Providers will have access to: technical assistance and information on how to obtain a Child Development Permit and/or college degree; an expert pool of educators to provide local and onsite training to licensed family child care homes and centers; and an online database which will list current education opportunities in the community for child care professionals. Qualified providers may also apply for up to \$100 per semester unit upon completion of prescribed college courses.

The grant awarded by First 5 Solano 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. The program will begin July 1, 2007. If you would like more information, please contact Becky Billing at (707) 438-1709.

WORKING TO CLOSE THE GAP

AB 172 PRESCHOOL EXPANSION FUNDING APPROVED FOR VACAVILLE: In the Fall of 2006, we reported on the need for more child care and preschool programs in Solano County. We also reported information on funding opportunities available through the California Department of Education under Assembly Bill 172 to expand preschool and family literacy programs and provide child care wraparound services in areas of low performing schools. In Solano County, 20 elementary school's catchment areas were eligible. We are pleased to report here that Child Development Centers/Child Development Inc. successfully applied for funds to offer two new programs in the Vacaville Unified School District. The two sites, Markham and Fairmont Elementary Schools, are scheduled to open in September, 2007, and will provide up to 168 preschool slots for eligible children. Statewide, there were 193 applications submitted from 43 counties. The applications totaled \$79.8 million, exceeding the \$55 million legislative allocation by more than \$25 million. This response demonstrates the interest in and the need for increased state funding for preschool and child care programs.

FUNDING RENEWED FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT: Constructing Connections, a project of the CCPC administered by Children's Network, is having an impact in Solano by focusing on the need for child care centers in all areas of the county and by collaborating with local government officials and staff, real estate and economic development professionals, lenders, business leaders and others. With assistance from Constructing Connections, 170 new child care slots in five new facilities have been created since Nov. 2005; six new centers are in the development phase and in addition, staff facilitated the partnership with Vacaville Unified School District and Child Development Inc. to expand state-subsidized preschool under AB 172. Recently approved for renewed funding statewide by the First 5 California Children & Families Commission Affordable Buildings for Children's Development and thanks to matching funds by First 5 Solano and contributions from the Department of Education, Children's Network and Solano Family & Children's Services, the project is fully funded for the next three years. The program reflects Solano County's interest in its children and families.

NEW CHILD CARE ACCESS INITIATIVE: The Children's Network, with the CCPC, was recently awarded \$25,000 per year for three years (2008-2011) by 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. The CCPC and other stakeholders will develop and implement strategies to increase 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.

Solano County: An America's Promise Community

Solano County has been included once again among the Nation's "100 Best Communities for Youth!" 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." In congratulating county partners on this distinction, Kim Thomas said, "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."



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS— BLUE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

The Child Abuse Prevention Council, Board of Supervisors and many other partners recognized April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Informational materials were distributed and events were held throughout the county to bring awareness to child abuse and neglect prevention. Blue ribbons, as the symbolic memorial to children who have suffered abuse or neglect, were displayed and worn by participants in every city. More than 4,000 children each year in Solano County are reported to Child Protective Services as being abused or neglected. These children face many challenges. Young people who have experienced abuse are at greater risk of growing up to be 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 family and communities. To help ensure the safety and well-being of our children, our communities must also be committed to supporting and strengthening families.



Funding Continued for IFSI — Integrated Family Support Initiative

Children's Network was recently awarded a grant by First 5 Solano for continued coordination of IFSI, a collaborative of agencies providing a constellation of Family Support Home Visiting Services to all families with children ages 0-5 countywide. The goal of the initiative is to ensure that families have access to support and community services, that all parents support their children's development, guide and nurture their children and are involved in their community's recreation and information infrastructure, resulting ultimately in improved outcomes for all children and families in Solano. Established in 2001, IFSI served 5286 unduplicated families with 11,631 children (7012 children ages 0-5) in its first six years and was recognized for its success by the National Association of Counties with a "Counties Care for Kids" award in June, 2006.

Children's Network provides staff and

technical support for the project partners, which include *the Family Resource Centers* in each city, *Youth & Family Services, CA Hispanic Commission, Children's Nurturing Project, Interfaith Council of Solano* and *Solano Health & Social Services*.

The grant also includes partial funding for continued coordination of the *Solano Parenting Partnership*, a countywide parent education resources collaborative that created and maintains the Parenting Information and Referral System, a database linking families to parenting classes, support groups and resources. *Solano Parenting Partnership* offers facilitator trainings for evidenced-based, best-practices parenting programs, produces and distributes a monthly list of parenting classes and encourages involvement by parents in the lives of their children. The Parenting Information and Referral database is online at www.childnet.org/parenting.

Upcoming Events

VITA Appreciation Reception

June 14 - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
County Government Center
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

General Meetings:

Solano Children's Alliance

June 6 - 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
July 4 - Meeting Cancelled
August 1 - 2:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Joseph Nelson Center
611 Village Drive, Suisun City

Family Resource Center Network

June 4 - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
July 2 - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
August 6 - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Children's Network
2320 Courage Drive, Suite 107
Fairfield

Child Abuse Prevention Council

June 18 - 11:30 to 1:00 p.m.
July 16, - 11:30 to 1:00 p.m.
County Government Center
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

Child Care Planning Council

June 25 - 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Children's Network
2320 Courage Drive, Suite 107
Fairfield

Integrated Family Support Initiative Collaborative

June 11 - 9:00 to 11:00 p.m.
County Government Center
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

Parenting Partnership

August 23 - 10:00 a.m. to noon
SFCS, 420F Executive Ct. No.
Fairfield

Constructing Connections

July 26 - 11:00 to 1:00 p.m.
SFCS, 420F Executive Ct. No.
Fairfield

Children's Network

A united voice for the children of Solano County

2320 Courage Drive
Suite 107
Fairfield, CA 94533

Tel: 707-421-7229
Fax: 707-421-6495

Kim Thomas
Executive Director

Thank You, Volunteers!

Response to this year's call for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program was very positive.

In Jan. and Feb., many volunteers from throughout Solano received free Tax Assistor Training, became certified and provided Free Community Tax Service at locations in Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Suisun and Rio Vista.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program helped many Solano families receive a return on state and federal income tax withholdings; allowing them to Earn It! Keep It! Save It!

A Volunteer Appreciation Reception will be held June 14 at 1:00 p.m. in Fairfield. Announcement will be made on the total funds returned to Solano as a result of this valuable program. For details, call Rhonda Smith, 421-7229.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Kathy Lago
Eloisa Mercado
Valerie Powell
Karen Sanchez

GET INVOLVED! **JOIN THE** **SOLANO CHILD CARE** **PLANNING COUNCIL**

The Child Care Planning Council works to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care countywide and to keep the community informed about child care needs. Council members, appointed by the Board of Supervisors and County Superintendent of Schools, include parents, child care providers, public agency and community representatives. Meetings are held monthly, typically in Fairfield. For application and information, call Kimberley Johnson, Child Care Program Director, at 707.421.7229.

PLEASE SUBSCRIBE: Beginning June, 2007, meeting notices and other informational updates will be available via email. If you wish to remain informed on local issues concerning children and families, we invite you to subscribe to one or all our email distribution lists. To do this, please visit the following link: <http://www.ChildNet.Org/ListServe>. Just enter your name and email to receive monthly notices from our secure and restricted list serve. Your address will be used only for this purpose, and you may unsubscribe at any time. If you do not have internet access or wish to remain on our postal mailing list, please call the Children's Network at 707.421.7229 to subscribe.