

FOCUS ON CHILDREN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>2008 Children's Summit</i>	1
<i>Tax Assistance & EITC</i>	2
<i>A Budget for All Californians</i>	3
<i>CAPC Program</i>	4-5
<i>Children's Network Awarded Mental Health Grant</i>	6
<i>CARES Initiative</i>	6
<i>Transitions</i>	7

CHILDREN'S NETWORK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Dickey, Board President
North Bay Medical Center

Liz Gibboney, Board VP
Partnership Health Plan of California

Barrett Adams, Treasurer
Prudential Real Estate

Carmen Mason-Browne, Member
Imani Fellowship church

Sal Alcalá, Member
Solano Community College

Tony Intintoli, Member
Former Mayor, City of Vallejo

Gail Jack, Member
Solano County Health & Social Services

Rozzana Verda-Aliga, Member
Solano County Health & Social Services

Dale Welsh, Member
Former Superintendent of Schools - Vallejo

COMMUNITY LEADERS GATHER IN SUPPORT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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



On January 29, 2008 nearly 150 local business leaders, elected officials, academics, and 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 children develop into productive members of society. The Summit included 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 Berkeley 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. It was sponsored by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Congressman George Miller.

Upcoming Events

Child Abuse Prevention Council
Solano County Government Center
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

April 21, 10:30 to 1:30 p.m.
May 19, 10:30 to 1:30 p.m.
June 16, 10:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Integrated Family Support Initiative
Solano County Government Center
675 Texas Street, Fairfield

May 12, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.
August 11, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Solano Children's Alliance
Joe Nelson Community Center
611 Village Drive, Suisun City

May 7, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
June 4, 12:00 to 4:30 p.m. @ 675 Texas Street

Family Resource Center Network
Children's Network
2320 Courage Dr. Ste 107, Fairfield

May 5, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
June 2, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Child Care Planning Council
Children's Network
2320 Courage Dr. Ste 107, Fairfield

April 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
May 26, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
June 23, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Constructing Connections
Solano Children and Family Services
420 F Executive Ct. North, Fairfield

April 25, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Parenting Partnership
Solano Children & Family Services
420 F Executive Ct. North, Fairfield

April 23, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

CARES Professional Development Training

April 25—Empress Theater, Vallejo
May 10—Migrant Center, Dixon
May 17—Solano County Off. of Ed., Fairfield
June 21—Solano County Off. of Ed., Fairfield

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

On January 26, The Children's Network of Solano County, United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA) and the Internal Revenue Service held the 2008 Solano County kick off of Earn It! Keep It! Save It!, which provides free tax preparation and help claiming the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to low-income families.

The kick-off consisted of a "Super Saturday" on January 26, 2008, at the Fairfield-Civic Center Library. The 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 did not attend "Super Saturday" can still receive free tax help through April 15 at 15 sites throughout Solano County. 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 percent of EITC eligible tax filers do not receive 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 low-income families file their taxes. This resulted in a total of \$890,420 in refunds to low-income taxpayers in Solano County, of which \$270,757 were EITC.

Forward Together: A Budget for All Californians

In December, 2008, the Board of Directors of the Children's Network elected to sign on to the following letter which expresses our priorities for state level budget negotiations.

As was underscored at the recent Children Summit described on page one, it is essential that fundamental investments in the safety and well being of all of our children not be eroded as a result of current budgetary imbalances.

We believe there are viable budget balancing choices beyond budget cuts, and invite you to encourage your elected representatives to shield children and families, and the programs which support them, from further budget cutbacks.

The letter:

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 we should address the budget needs of our children, our seniors, our families and our future. We believe there are budget choices beyond budget cuts.
- 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.

The Children's Network was joined in signing this letter by over 50 groups including:

California WICC Association

California Association of Nonprofits

California Health Advocates

California School Nurses Organization

Children's Advocacy Institute

Children's Defense Fund

Childcare Law Center

League of Women Voters of California

Western Center on Law and Poverty

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 drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.” Forest Witcraft

PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES PREVENTS CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

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.

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
- are abusing 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. They 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 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 (<http://www.childnet.org/ourprograms/frcs/index.htm>) offers access to family support services in each city. 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
These 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 at www.childnet.org to find a Blue Ribbon event in the month of April in your local community.

STAFF

- Kim Thomas
Executive Director
- Laurie Andres
Solano Parenting Coordinator
- Darren DeRose
Information Technology Administrator
- Jacqueline Jackson, Ph.D.
Child Care Programs Director
- Rosemary Kennedy
Council Coordinator
- Ronda Kogler
Fiscal Director
- YunAe Mello
Accounting Specialist
- Minerva Nunez
CARES Outreach Specialist
- Gerry Raycraft
Child Care Facilities Coordinator
- Ronda Ribeiro
Office Assistant
- Rhonda Smith
Community Programs Manager
- Tamsen Stevenson, Ph.D.
Family Support Programs Director
- Jackie Witherspoon
Office Assistant

COUNCIL OFFICERS

- CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION COUNCIL
Debbi Davis, Chair
Pat Nicodemus, Vice Chair
Susan Dolan, Secretary
- CHILD CARE PLANNING COUNCIL
Gail Jack, Chair
Leatrice Knox, Vice Chair
- CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE
Debbi Davis, President
Kay Bostick, Vice President



SOLANO CARES INITIATIVE SUPPORTS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Solano CARES Compensation and Retention Encourages Stability 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. 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 those of the pre-CARES total workforce turnover for Teacher Assistants and Teachers. The turnover rates of teachers have declined significantly over the past few years, from 25 percent in 2001 to four percent in 2007. For the second consecutive year, center-based programs completing the workforce survey reported no turnover for Site Supervisors/Teachers or Directors. For eligibility funding information, visit www.childnet.org or call (707)421-7229.



.....

The Solano County Centralized Eligibility List (SCEL) is designed to assist low income families with childcare 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. 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.

CHILDREN'S NETWORK AWARDED MENTAL HEALTH GRANT

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.

TRANSITIONS

It seems the only certainty in life is change itself. We'd like to take this opportunity to say good-bye to former staff members who have departed in recent months, and welcome aboard those who have joined us to keep the all important work of caring for families and children moving ahead. Truthfully, thank you are in order not only to departing staff for their years of service and the new staff who have so quickly picked up the ball, but to every staff member who has managed the transitions with such skill and generosity.

We welcome Laurie Andres, who has seamlessly stepped into Nicole Bandy's shoes as Parenting Partnership Coordinator. Come and see the new parenting library she has already created when you have a moment! "I teach parenting classes in Solano County and am also a parent of three," says Laurie, "so I understand the struggles families face in meeting the challenges of parenting. I am happy to be a part of the Children's Network in providing access to (Solano's) resources."

We welcome Dr. Jacqueline Jackson who has taken on the enormous task of coordinating all of the Network's Child Care Programs as the Child Care Programs Director. As many of you know, Kim Johnson left for a promotional opportunity in Marin County. Kim, we are grateful to you for promoting the growth and development of the Child Care field, and Dr. J, you have convinced us already that Ohio's loss is our gain! Jacqueline Jackson is a passionate advocate for equality for all, but more importantly issues surrounding the health and safety of children.

We welcome Minerva Nuñez, as CARES Program Outreach Specialist, who single handedly carries on the work previously handled by Paola LaTorre-Rey and Amy Powell in our redesigned CARES program. Paola and Amy, thank you for all you did, and good luck to you as you follow you hearts to other locations on the globe.

Welcome Jackie Witherspoon who is very capably providing administrative support to our program staff in partnership with Ronda Ribeiro. Kathy Salling has moved on to other opportunities, but left our office in very well organized shape!

We also want to welcome Julie Karpenko, our MSW intern from Cal. Julie, you are amazing! The research and analysis you have already accomplished for both the legislative and child care access initiatives is first rate.

DONATE TO CHILDREN'S NETWORK

Please accept my tax deductible contribution in the amount of \$_____ to support the Children's Network's mission of improving the lives of children in Solano County.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Card#: _____ Exp: _____

Make checks payable to the Children's Network or make contributions by Visa or MasterCard:

A united voice **Children's
Network**
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

SAVE THE DATE!

June 2, 2008
12:00pm to 4:30pm
Government Center
675 Texas Street, Room 1600
Fairfield, CA

Join us for an informational session with Dr. Ira Chasnoff, President and Medical Director of The Children's research Triangle, as he discusses an integrated system of care for young children at risk for mental health and/or developmental difficulties.

For more information, please contact Anel Muterspaugh at 707-784-8397, or awmuterspaugh@solanocounty.com

Meeting notices and other informational updates are available via email. If you wish to be informed on local issues concerning children and families, we invite you to subscribe to one of our email distribution lists. To do this, please visit <http://www.childnet.org/listserve>. 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 would like to be added to our postal mailing list instead, please call the Children's Network at 707-421-7229 to subscribe.