

SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Partnership is a lovely sounding word. We are stronger, together, so everyone must want to partner. It should be easy... almost a no-brainer, right?

In principle, perhaps, but in practice, true partnership, whether a marriage, a community-based collaborative, or a treaty among great nations, is not always so easy.

The human ability to work together to accomplish mutual goals requires clear communication and mutual respect. Successful collaboration is based on trust, and that trust is based on a complex web of elements including consistency over time, dependability and honesty; factors which allow the partners to see each other as trustworthy.

We are all confronting difficult times, times which strain our collaboratives. Funding cutbacks are taking their toll on the capacity of members to participate and share resources. People are understandably afraid of what the next round of cutbacks will mean. Increasing organizational pressures have resulted in leadership changes in many partner organizations, and new leaders, however much they are personally committed to a philosophy of collaboration, have simply not been here long enough to experience that dependability over time, which is such a key component of trust.

And yet, our children need us to keep trying. Like the children's story of "Stone Soup," it is only by pooling our resources and pulling together that we get through difficult times with everyone adequately fed.

From its inception, the Children's Network has been a vehicle for enabling and sustaining child-centered partnerships in our community. Our vision, for over 20 years, has been to improve the lives of children by increasing the effectiveness of children's services through better service integration and accountability – a vision which can only be accomplished in true partnership with others.

So, the staff and Board of the Network make this pledge to our many partners, and to the children and families of our beautiful county: We will continue to show up even when it's hard; to tell the truth to the extent we can discern it; to remind everyone what our children need and deserve from us; and to answer the call to be your trustworthy partner.

We are stronger, together.




PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: IFSI

The Integrated Family Support Initiative (IFSI) is a countywide, public-private partnership that provides in-home family support and child development services to overburdened families with children ages 0-5. Funded by the First 5 Solano Children & Families Commission, IFSI is generating positive outcomes for isolated families. Now wrapping up its third year and planning its fourth, IFSI partners have learned many lessons in how to craft prevention-oriented solutions for families who are managing

multiple demands on their lives. IFSI partners include the Children's Network, Child Haven, Solano's eight Family Resource Centers, the Department of Health and Social Services and many others. A major success of this partnership has been enabling the professional disciplines that touch a family's life to gather at one table – to ensure that children's developmental needs are met – through support for parents or caregivers who may be struggling with inadequate income, poor health, substance abuse or other challenges.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE CHILDREN'S NETWORK'S PARTNERSHIPS

There are many kinds of partnerships the Children's Network engages in: providing staff and technical support for the family resource centers in our county, convening the Children's Alliance, Child Care Planning Council and the Child Abuse Prevention Council, and staffing and encouraging the work of those councils – which has resulted in the Blue Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness about child abuse, participation in the Children's Memorial Flag Day in Vallejo, and more.

In February, the Child Abuse Prevention Council's Children of Incarcerated Parents sub-committee, in conjunction with the Solano County Sheriff's Office, hosted a visit with Dr. Stephanie Covington. The visit was made possible by a grant from First 5 Solano. Dr. Covington is a nationally recognized speaker on the topics of women in the criminal justice system. She spent the day in Solano County working with incarcerated women, consulting with the Solano County Sheriff's administrators and correctional staff, and speaking to a well-attended lunch gathering on local services for children of incarcerated parents.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Sid Gardner

The sixth annual Children's Network Conference was held May 7-8 at the California Maritime Academy in Vallejo. The conference boasted three plenary speakers, and a number of workshops designed to highlight successful partnerships in Solano County.

Children's Network Board President Mary Dickey opened the conference by introducing Sid Gardner, president of Children & Family Futures in Irvine. Sid talked about the life cycles of collaborations, and the challenges facing them, particularly in challenging budgetary times. Sid's message encouraged participants to look closely at what works and what doesn't in collaborations and seek to discover ways in which the status quo, if it isn't working, can

be challenged to grow. Mayor Tony Intintoli welcomed conference attendees to Vallejo, and conveyed warm wishes from Congressman George Miller.

Supervisor Barbara Kondylis introduced the afternoon plenary speaker, Riane Eisler, who spoke about the historical context of dominator and partnership models. Morning and afternoon workshops focused on Solano County collaborations.

Saturday morning's CARES Forum presented Dr. Kerby Alvy, director of the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring. Dr. Alvy discussed ways in which childcare providers could encourage effective parenting techniques, with a particular emphasis on how providers can be helpful to families who have children with special developmental and behavioral needs.

The Children's Network would like to thank Mary LeCompte for her outstanding organizational skills and terrific sense of humor; and Personal Touch by Design for their wonderful catering.

The conference was made possible through the generous contributions from our sponsors: First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission, Solano Community College's Foster & Kinship Care, Kaiser Permanente, Solano Partnership Against Violence, First 5 California, the California Department of Justice/Office of the Attorney General, Yin McDonald's, the California Department of Education, and the Solano County Child Abuse Prevention Council.

NEW LOOK FOR OUR WEBSITE

The Children's Network is delighted to unveil our revamped web site. Inspired by Fern Tiger Associates' new graphic look for the agency, computer specialist Darren DeRose (with help from CN staff) redesigned the old site to be more user friendly, more appealing, and more reflective of the Network's mission.

Next time you're surfing the web, check out www.childnet.org and let us know what you think.



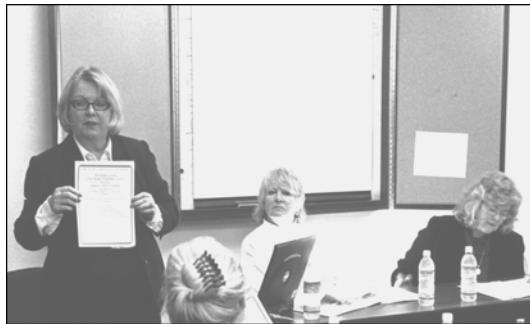
SOLANO COUNTY BUDGET & REPORT CARD

At a time of economic insecurity, when local families face increasing concerns about job security and providing for their children, the good news is that Solano County has maintained its commitment to children's services. The challenge, however, is that federal and state funds for these services are dropping. Improvements in the rates of infant mortality, teen pregnancy and health care coverage give reason for hope. At the same time, concerns rise sharply when race and ethnicity are factored in.

These findings and many more can be found in *The Solano County Children's Budget 2003* and *The Solano County Children's Report Card 2003*, two comprehensive reports that track local spending on programs that benefit children and families, and the success of those programs. The reports are funded by The California Endowment.

The Budget, produced by the Children's Network and researched and written by Dr. Tamsen Stevenson, found that spending for services to prevent child abuse, child poverty, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime remains among the smallest county expenditures. This year's Report Card found that significantly more prenatal care for Solano women in early pregnancy is needed; that despite recent efforts there is still only one shelter bed for every 17 homeless persons in the county; and that childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions. Key findings include:

- Less than 75% of pregnant women in Solano County receive first trimester prenatal care. The national objective is 90%.



Dr. Tam Stevenson, Supervisor Barbara Kondylis, and Director Kim Thomas at the Budget press conference.

- In spite of significant improvement in the overall infant mortality rate, there are great disparities by race and ethnicity that need to be addressed. The same improvement and disparity exists when looking at low birth weight rates and teen birth rates.
- Less than 5% of children in Solano County are without health insurance, one of the lowest rates in the state. While a tremendous success, the rate at which Solano County is growing means that these efforts will need to be sustained.
- There is a childcare crisis in Solano County, in availability and in funding. There are more than 51,000 children who need childcare, and fewer than 12,000 licensed daycare slots available.

Download complete copies of the 2003 Solano County Children's Report Card and Budget at www.childnet.org. Click on "Our Research."

"Alone we might survive. Together we can thrive."

SOLANO CARES APPLICATIONS

If you work with children in Solano County, you may be eligible to receive funding ranging from \$150—\$4,450 as a reward for taking child development training and staying in the field. To find out if you are eligible, visit www.childnet.org or call 707.421.7229.

Solano CARES Year 4 Program Applications:

Round 1: Open to providers working in licensed family child care homes in Vallejo, Fairfield and Travis. Applications will be sent August 1, 2004.

Round 2: Open to providers working in licensed family child care homes in Benicia, Dixon, Rio Vista, Suisun and Vacaville. Applications will be sent September 1, 2004.

CARES is made possible by grants from First 5 Solano Children & Families Commission, First 5 California, and the California Department of Education.

CN PRESENTATION AT CHICAGO CONFERENCE

On May 14, 2004, Children's Network staff presented at two workshops held at the *Family Support America Biennial Conference* in Chicago. Jenny Ocón and Darren DeRose led a presentation on "How Outcomes Tools and Innovations in Technology Can Support Your Program." Their presentation featured the design of a comprehensive, integrated database, the *ChildNet Results Manager*, developed for and used by Solano's eight Family Resource Centers. Kim Thomas co-

presented with the Foundation Consortium on "Building a State Association to Advance the Family Support Movement in California." For further information about the ChildNet Results Manager, contact Chris Erbe at 421-7229 ext. 115 or chris@childnet.org. For further information about the newly forming statewide family support association contact Kim Thomas at 421-7229 ext. 112 or advokat@childnet.org.

Children's Network

A united voice for the children of Solano County

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Jennifer Kaiser, Editor
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If you are interested in making a donation to the Children's Network, please visit us at www.childnet.org or contact Jayleen Richards at 707-421-7229 or Jrichards@childnet.org.