

# FOCUS ON FAMILIES

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## CELEBRATING OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET

*Solano Parenting Partnership hosts  
Honoring People Raising Children Week: February 21 - 28, 2005*

When was the last time you heard of a legislator, police officer or business person walking up to a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle raising a child and saying, "Thank you for making my job easier. Thank you for saving taxpayers money."

We don't often think of parenting as having a fiscal effect on our communities. And yet, research shows that children with involved, supportive parents are less likely to use or abuse alcohol and other drugs, are less likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system, and are less likely to engage in early sexual experimentation. Children whose parents are positively involved in their lives are also better prepared for school and earn higher grades, have better relationships with peers, and are more likely to talk with their parents about difficult issues. Positive parenting

accrues both social and fiscal benefits for our entire community!

The Solano Parenting Partnership, in collaboration with its many community partners, recognizes and honors the contribution parents make to the lives of their children – and to the life of our community. From February 21-28, the Parenting Partnership will host a week Honoring People Raising Children, to celebrate the many Solano County residents engaged in the difficult and wonderful work of raising children.

Please join us in celebrating families throughout Solano County February 21-28! Visit Solano County's parenting web site for a schedule of events: [www.childnet.org/parenting](http://www.childnet.org/parenting).

*For additional information, contact Nicole Bandy, 421-7229 x108.*

## BETTER FUTURE FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES

The Children's Network has hired Steve Dodini as Coordinator for the new Constructing Connections Program. The program's main purpose is to create a streamlined process for child care facilities financing and development that increases children and families' access to quality child care.

In accordance with the program's goals, Steve will be working to strengthen partnerships between the child care community and businesses

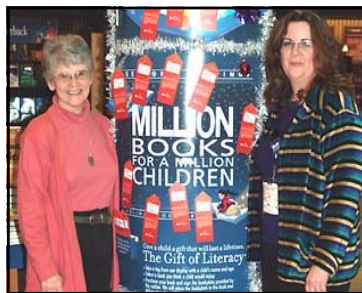
or agencies to ensure more efficient and cost effective development of quality child care spaces. The program will also integrate child care facilities development into cities and county land use planning, community development programs, zoning and permit processes, and transportation plans.

Overall, the program will ensure a strong local economy in the future and produce an overall higher quality of life for families in our community.

**Upcoming Events:****February 12***CARES Forum*  
CA Maritime Academy  
Vallejo, CA**March 3***CAEYC Annual  
Conference*  
Sacramento, CA**April 20***CAEYC Public Policy  
Symposium*  
Sacramento, CAAmeriCorps Training:**February 23***Conflict Resolution at  
Fighting Back  
Partnership***February 24***Cultural Diversity at  
Fighting Back  
Partnership***March 16***Team Building at  
Children's Network*CAPC Events:**January 31***Substance and Child Abuse  
Training at Solano  
County Office of  
Education*FRC Events:**January 22, 29 and  
February 5***Tax Law Training for  
Volunteers at the  
Fairfield Adult School***FRC Network Meetings:***January 24 1-3pm at  
Fairfield FRC**February 28 1-3pm at  
Benicia City Hall**March 28 1-3pm at  
Children's Network*

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS PROGRAM

The Children of Incarcerated Parents Sub-committee has been hard at work responding to recent interest in new program-related activities and projects.



Cindy Joseph, Community Relations Manager for Barnes & Noble of Fairfield (pictured here with Pat Nicodemus, Youth and Family Services Jail Outreach Program Coordinator), selected Children of Incarcerated Parents as recipients of their "Gift of Literacy" book gift giving tree in November and December. Over 2000 books have been donated to Solano County children who have one or both parents who are incarcerated. Local schools, social services agencies and community-based organizations have been involved in the identification of children to receive the books.

In November, the Community College Chancellors' Office announced that the Solano County Community College Early Childhood Education Program was awarded a \$5000 grant to implement a "Reading Connection" project designed to address the impact on children of separation due to incarceration. This project, which will be coordinated through The Children of Incarcerated Parents Sub-Committee, is a collaboration of the Solano County Sheriff's Office, Solano Community College, Child Welfare Services and the Youth and Family Services jail-based outreach programs.

Last summer, The Children's Network submitted a proposal to San Francisco State's Digital Video Intensive Multimedia Studies Program suggesting that one of their students create a promotional video and/or PSA for the Children's Network. In November, Craig Abaya, head of the DVI Program, selected as a video subject The Reading Connections Project instituted by the Children of Incarcerated Parents program and chose Allison Kristal, DVI student to work on the video project. Allison met with members of the Children of Incarcerated Parents on December 8<sup>th</sup> to begin the initial filming at the Solano County Jail. Allison will be working with the Children of Incarcerated Parents Committee until the completion of the grant project in April.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, members of the Children's Network and Youth & Family Services attended an inspiring book reading and discussion at Barnes & Noble featuring Joe Loya, a Bay Area essayist and playwright. His memoir, entitled *The Man Who Outgrew His Prison Cell*, was published in September 2004 by HarperCollins. Mr. Loya has spoken to inmates at the Solano County Jail at the request of the Jail Based Outreach Program in the past.



*Joe Loya*

## FRCs: HELPING FAMILIES BOOST INCOME

Over the last couple of years, an increasing number of low-income families have been requesting assistance with basic needs at Solano's Family Resource Centers (FRCs). During 2003-2004, 71% of families served at the FRCs were low-income. Parent input regarding FRC services has also demonstrated a need to help families increase their household income. Of 806 pre-evaluation surveys collected by FRCs last year, the top four most pressing needs listed by families were shelter, food, utilities and employment.

Two recently released studies demonstrate the difficult environment working families face while raising children in Solano County and the Bay Area, and lend credence to the trend that Solano's FRC Network has experienced first-hand:

- The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that a person living in Solano County must make at least \$19.35 per hour to rent a two-bedroom home. According to that study, there is no place in California that a person earning minimum wage can afford the fair market rate for a one-bedroom unit.
- A study by the United Way of the Bay Area, *The Bottom Line*, cites Solano County as the Bay Area county with the largest share of its population (30%) that cannot afford the basics of housing, food, health and child care.

Given the high cost of living - coupled with budget shortfalls and cutbacks in services - Solano's FRC Network is proactively helping low-income families to

raise their income so they can meet basic needs and support their children more effectively. One major strategy is to help families become aware of and access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit. Many families are unaware such credits even exist. The Internal Revenue Service estimated that in the 2002 tax year at least 6,000 eligible families in Solano County did not apply for EITC, resulting in a loss of an estimated \$8.9 million for those families. The FRC Network is working to reverse that trend, providing information and resources to families and recruiting volunteers to serve the many families in need.

In 2005, the Fairfield and Vallejo Family Resource Centers will run a pilot project to provide free tax return preparation service, assistance with filing tax credit claims, and asset building information to eligible Solano County families through a campaign called *Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Solano*. This effort is in partnership with the United Way of the Bay Area, the Internal Revenue Service, the Children's Network and many dedicated volunteers. It is our hope that the pilot will expand to other family resource centers in the following year.

If you are interested in volunteering this tax season, please contact Ronessa Cooper at the Children's Network. Volunteers who assist with tax returns must be certified through an IRS-sponsored training. If you would like more information about free tax assistance, contact the Fairfield FRC at 707-421-3224 or the Vallejo FRC at 707-642-6999.

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# Children's Network

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Leatrice Knox, First VP  
Sal Alcala, Second VP

### Child Abuse Prevention Council

Debbi Davis, Chair  
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Susan Dolan, Secretary

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Kim Thomas, Executive Director

### NEWSLETTER

Mary LeCompte, Editor

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(formerly known as The Children's Network Council)

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Dennis Covell	Michael Jereb	Gayla Reiter
Debbi Davis	Jeffrey Knight	Bruce Sanders
Ana Dineen	Leatrice Knox	Pelton Stewart

### Solano County Child Abuse Prevention Council

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Dorothy Bryant Steel	Rev. Willie Graham	JoAnn Parker
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Mary Dickey	Louise Harris	Chuck Ramey
Kathy Dineen	Gene Horst	Stacy Souza
Susan Dolan	Bridget Kennedy	Capt. Guy Venuti
Jennifer Doran	Denise McBride-Delgado	
Dottie Fair		

### Solano County Child Care Planning Council

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