To submit comments or items (3 weeks in advance) for this e-newsletter, please contact Vivien Hao, public affairs officer, First 5 LA at vhao@first5la.org or (213) 482-7563.

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CALENDAR

December 13, 6:30-7:30 p.m.: Art Exhibition by the children of Norwalk-LA Mirada School Readiness Program at Washington Mutual Bank 11618 Rosecrans Ave., Norwalk 90650. Call Carolina Tercero (562) 868-3796.


TELEMUNDO PREVIEW

4-Dimension Ultrasound Helps Detect Birth Defects and Genetic Syndromes

For pregnant women over 35 and others at high risk for birth defects or disorders such as Down Syndrome, a genetic ultrasound using the latest 4-D sonogram technology can provide valuable information about the health of the unborn baby.

This week, First 5 LA and Telemundo Los Angeles will explore this important medical tool, which creates a detailed image of the fetus about halfway through the 40-week pregnancy. KVEA-Channel 52 anchorwoman Lucia Navarro’s own examination by Dr. Gregory DeVore, a Pasadena fetal ultrasound specialist, will shed light on how high-resolution ultrasound scans can provide critical information about the fetus, including pictures of organs, face, and bone structure.

The segment, part of Telemundo’s weekly “Primeros Pasos” series on pregnancy and infant development, is scheduled to air this Wednesday, between 6 and 6:30 p.m.

“Typical indications for this type of ultrasound include a family history of a genetic disorder, a previous abnormal child, advanced maternal age, maternal illness, maternal medication or chemical exposure, and abnormal clinical or laboratory findings during the course of the pregnancy,” said Dr. DeVore, who heads the Fetal Diagnostic Center.

“Using high-frequency sound, we can build an image of the fetus, and detect chromosomal and structural abnormalities without using an invasive procedure,” he added. “This can help put the parents’ minds at ease or provide indications for further tests.”

Dr. Devore cautions against “recreational ultrasounds,” which are provided in storefronts without the oversight of a medical doctor. He noted that non-medical use of ultrasound equipment is illegal and is opposed by the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine.

For information about genetic ultrasounds and other pregnancy-related tests, visit www.fetal.com or www.aium.org.
Women & Children Make up 40 Percent of Los Angeles County’s Homeless

More than 40 percent of Los Angeles County’s homeless population are women and children, a situation expected to worsen in the years ahead unless immediate action is taken, according to a United Way survey released recently at the Women Leaders Summit in Los Angeles.

On any given night, 21,000 women and 15,000 children are estimated to be homeless in the county, with nearly 90 percent unable to find a homeless shelter-instead, sleeping in everything from cars to abandoned buildings, the survey noted.

The problem is worst in the San Gabriel Valley, where there are just 214 beds for 10,500 homeless people—or only one shelter bed for every 48 homeless, according to the survey.

The LA County Board of Supervisors this year allocated $100 million to increase homeless shelters and services, but officials say the problem is escalating quickly.

“One of the big changes is that women have become more independent and on their own,” said Marge Nichols, who authored the report. “And they are also on their own when they run into really big trouble. They may not have the family supports that were available in earlier times.”

Although women have made progress in obtaining jobs and college degrees and in opening more small businesses, the report found that the percentage of single mothers with children living in poverty increased from 37 percent in 1990 to 40 percent currently. Among married couples with children, 11 percent live in poverty.

For information on the report, click here.

First 5 LA’s Universal Preschool Evaluation Showcased at National Conference

First 5 LA’s emerging evaluation approach for its $600 million universal preschool initiative was showcased recently at the American Evaluation Association’s annual conference, where 2,000 evaluation practitioners, academics, and students gathered in Portland, Oregon.

The panel discussion on evaluation models for universal preschool was chaired by First 5 LA consultant and director of the National Center for Latino Child and Family Research, Michael López. Also featured were First 5 LA’s Katie Fallin, Los Angeles Universal Preschool’s Kimberly Hall, and First 5 LA/LAUP Research Advisory Committee member, Gary Henry, a University of North Carolina researcher who headed the evaluation of Georgia’s universal preschool program.
"Unlike Georgia's established universal preschool program, First 5 LA and LAUP's approach to make preschool available to every 4-year-old in the county is still being fully developed," said Fallin. "We have many unique evaluation challenges, such as the sheer number of 4-year-olds-150,000. The diversity of our target population is unlike any other universal preschool program in the country," she added.

According to Fallin, First 5 LA has taken the unprecedented step of developing a Preschool Research Advisory Committee, comprised of 20 of the nation's top experts on early childhood development and education research and evaluation.

This group, which meets twice a year, will help ensure that the First 5 LA/LAUP research and evaluation approach incorporates the best practices and latest design innovations gleaned from other efforts.

In addition, First 5 LA is launching a Child Outcome Pilot Study next month that will show how children in LAUP-funded programs are progressing. This study is expected to help identify the most appropriate measures and methodologies for assessing children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

For information, contact Fallin at kfallin@first5la.org or (213) 482-9489.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Trish Ploehn Leads LA County Dept. of Children and Family Services

Champion Profile features individuals who exemplify First 5 LA’s tagline, "Champions for Our Children."

Trish Ploehn is the newly-appointed director of LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). She heads a $1.5 billion organization with 7,000 employees, charged with administering protective services, foster care, and adoption of children in accordance with government requirements.

Beginning her DCFS career in 1979, she is the first director to be selected from within the department. Ploehn formerly served as a treatment counselor, social worker, assistant regional administrator, and deputy director.

She earned a BA in sociology from Cal State LA and a master's in social work from Cal State Long Beach.

Which book has most influenced your life?
The Bible.

What makes you happy?
Having time to think, plan complete tasks, and enjoy family and friends.

Which historical figure do you most admire?
Caleb from the Bible (for whom my son is named), for his truthfulness and faithfulness.
**What is your idea of a perfect world?**
Where work and play are balanced with a tolerance of differences and an appreciation of each person's uniqueness.

**What is the greatest challenge faced by children and families in LA County?**
The ability to develop, value, and maintain a strong family foundation despite conflicting priorities of the outside world.

**Which living person do you most admire?**
David Sanders, the previous DCFS director, a brilliant man who always made leadership look easy and people feel important.

**What is your motto?**
“Believe in the goodness of people; they will generally live up to your expectations.”