March 12, 2007
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.

Subscribe  Past Issues  Forward

IN THIS ISSUE

Moms' "Top 5" List
Home Visitors' Tools
Adoptive Parents
Compassionate Touch
Ezequiel De La Torre Profile
Healthy Kids Brochure

CALENDAR

March 21, 8-11 a.m.: Quality of Life in Los Angeles/ 2007 State of the County Report at the Westin Bonaventure, 404 S. Figueroa Street, L A 90071. To register, please visit www.unitedwayla.org or for more information call (213) 630-2301.

March 30-April 1, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.: Seven Dimensions of Emotion, Third FPR-UCLA Interdisciplinary Conference at UCLA on integration of biological, clinical and cultural perspectives on fear, disgust, love, grief, anger, empathy, and hope. Register at www.thefpr.org/conference2007/.

March 30, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: Foundations of Infant Feeding: Application to Breastfeeding Practice, Exploring the Suck/Swallow/Breathe Triad presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles, Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, 12401 Washington Blvd., Whittier. Call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

TELEMUNDO SERIES

Five "Must-Haves" for New Mothers Include Baby Sling & Breast Pump

What are the top five products that can ease stresses and strains for new mothers? This Wednesday, First 5 LA and Telemundo Los Angeles will show viewers some new babygear that experts consider “must-haves” in the nursery.

Part of a weekly TV news series on pregnancy and infancy, this "Primeros Pasos" episode will air at 6 p.m. on KVEA-Channel 52.

"Nursing and caring for a newborn can be challenging for any new mother," said Corky Harvey, a registered nurse and certified lactation consultant who is co-owner of The Pump Station, a baby education center and retail store with two locations in Hollywood and Santa Monica.

"There are a few products that can make those early months much smoother-increasing the bonding between mother and baby," she said.

Among the "top 5" products recommended by experts are an electric breast pump for times when mother can't nurse the baby, a "miracle" blanket that comforts infants, a baby pouch sling, a cuddly stuffed animal that emits white noise, and soft bottom cloths.

To find out how these items can make any mom's life easier and any baby happier, check out the broadcast, or visit www.pumpstation.com.

Home Visitation Professionals Learn Self-Care & Share Strategies

Experts say home visitation professionals who work daily with families to prevent child abuse and neglect have highly stressful jobs. That's why a recent First 5 LA-sponsored symposium, "Tools for Your Toolbox," introduced relaxation and self-care techniques to representatives of 20 grantee agencies.
March 30, 8:30 a.m.-noon: Developmental Milestones: Axis V as a Treatment Roadmap - Training at the California Endowment; on social/emotional milestones from birth to 3. $25 registration and $15 continuing education fee. Visit www.uscucedd.org or call (213) 383-5992.

March 30-April 1, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.: Certified Infant Massage Instructor Training at The Heart Touch Project, 3400 Airport Ave. #42, Santa Monica 90405. Registration is $650. Contact Jennifer at (310) 391-2558 x5 or jennifer@hearttouch.org.

March 31, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.: Tools for the Journey: Teaching Reading to Children with Down Syndrome at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 N. Oakland Ave., Pasadena 91182. Registration before March 15 is $100 single and $150 per couple. Visit www.toolsforthejourney.homestead.com

April 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: South Los Angeles Children's Health Fair, organized by Immunize LA Kids, the South LA Health Projects WIC Nutrition Program, and Los Angeles City Councilmember Jan Perry at the Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, 4269 S. Figueroa St., LA 90037. Call Irene Health at (323) 757-7244.

April 14 & 15, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: Peaceful Touch®, a Healthy Touch Curriculum for Children: Two-Day Workshop for teachers, health professionals, and parents at The Heart Touch Project, 3400 Airport Ave. #42, Santa Monica 90405. Registration is $200. Call (310) 391-2558 or visit www.peacefultouch.net.

May 19, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.: 4th Annual Community Resource Fair, at Rowen Avenue Elementary School 600 S. Rowen Ave., Los Angeles 90023. Call Mari Flores (323) 261-7191.

According to Carolyn Braddock, a former social worker and trauma specialist who now teaches tai ji and qi-gong workshops internationally, the ancient Chinese arts represent a body-centered approach to facilitate personal growth, body relaxation, increased circulation, and release of joint and muscle stress.

"You have one of the hardest jobs in the world," Braddock told the home visitation professionals. "But if you do it in a way where you are centered and balanced, then you can better help your clients diffuse family tensions."

Other seminar workshops focused on family strengthening and child protective factors, skilled dialogue (engaged participation with families), child mental health, substance abuse, self-defense/safety, and domestic violence.

"The event is an opportunity for home visitors to hear about and exchange strategies that can help make their work more useful and gratifying," said Karen Blakeney, a First 5 LA program officer who organized the program.

The symposium, the first of its kind, was part of First 5 LA's Partnership for Families initiative, a groundbreaking child maltreatment prevention effort designed to create a network of partnerships between new and existing service agencies.

For information about the initiative, visit www.first5la.org.

Adoptive Parents Spend More Time and Money on Their Kids, Study Says

Adoptive parents invest more time and money in their children than biological parents, according to a study published in a recent issue of the American Sociological Review.

The study examined data from 13,000 households with first-graders in the family. It found that couples who adopt spend more money on their children, and invest more time in family activities such as reading, eating, and talking together.

According to the study, adoptive parents also tend to be older and wealthier than biological parents. In the United States, two to four percent of households include adopted children, and researchers expect this number to grow.

"Adoptive parents face a culture where, to many other people, adoption is not real parenthood," said Brian Powell, one of the study's authors and an Indiana University sociologist. "They recognize the barriers they face, and it sets the stage for them to be better parents."

Researchers said their findings call into question the longstanding argument that children are best off with their biological parents. Such arguments were included in state Supreme Court rulings last year in New York and Washington that upheld laws against same-sex marriage.
EVIE'S DESK
First 5 LA Seeks Help to Raise Awareness of Insurance Plan

At First 5 LA, we believe strongly in the power of collaboration. That's why we're asking our grantees and partners to participate in a renewed parent outreach program to raise awareness of First 5 LA's Healthy Kids insurance plan. Available to LA County families with children 5 years of age and younger with household incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level, the insurance program costs from $0-$12 a month.

Upon request, First 5 LA will send any grantee or partner a supply of our new bilingual (Spanish and English) Healthy Kids brochures for display and distribution to parents. The brochures will also be distributed county-wide by First 5 LA at health fairs, community events, and conferences.

To date, more than 8,000 youngsters 5 years and younger have been enrolled in Healthy Kids, which covers children who are not otherwise eligible for state-sponsored insurance, such as Healthy Families and Medi-Cal.

Outreach efforts are now focusing on the estimated 6,000 more children 0-5 who qualify for Healthy Kids but remain uninsured. By law, First 5 LA funds may only be used for services to prenatal through 5 year-olds.

Although private funders, under the umbrella of The Children's Health Initiative of Greater Los Angeles, have managed to garner donations to expand coverage to an additional 36,000 children ages 6-18, enrollment for this older age group is currently capped, due to inadequate funding.

First 5 LA wants to express our gratitude to the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and our many community and business partners who have worked with us to broaden health coverage to more children in LA County.

Together, we can do even better—we can reach even more families with young children who still haven't heard about this free and low-cost coverage, available regardless of the family's immigration status.

To request brochures, please contact Ruben Vidalés at rvidales@first5la.org.

The study was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, funded in part by the National Science Foundation and the American Educational Research Association.

To learn more, click here.

GRANTEE PROFILE
Compassionate Touch Can Help Children Increase Concentration & Learning

When young children have problems paying attention in class, or yell, kick, and bite when they are upset, talking or reasoning with them doesn't always work.

But sometimes, a soothing touch can do the trick, says Tina Allen, director of the children's program at The Heart Touch Project, a First 5 LA grantee.

The Santa Monica-based organization will begin next month to offer classes to teachers and parents on using nurturing touch to help preschool and school-age children increase concentration and reduce anxiety and aggression.

"By using games, exercises, and storytelling that incorporate healthy touch, we can teach children how to soothe each other and themselves," said Allen.

For example, one game involves children using their fingers to write math problems on each other's backs. If the child whose back is turned gives the correct answer, he receives a short shoulder massage from his/her partner.

"Oxytocin (a natural chemical, involved in social recognition and bonding) is released in the body whenever a person receives nurturing touch," said Allen.

The Peaceful Touch® method was created, more than 300,000 children practice the techniques regularly. Allen said the workshop is the first of its kind in the area.

For information about the workshop April 14 and 15 in Santa Monica, visit www.hearttouch.org.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Ezequiel De La Torre Helps Ensure Kids are School-Ready

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

Ezequiel De La Torre is coordinator of the Cudahy Ready for School program, a First 5 LA-funded school readiness program, which fosters the cognitive, social, and emotional development of its students.

He began his teaching career at Union Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles and later, while at Breed Street Elementary, he started the Family Writing Project, which gives families the opportunity to share their personal stories through poetry and prose.
He also helped create a kindergarten summer transition program for incoming kindergarten students without preschool experience.

De La Torre earned his BA in international marketing from Cal Poly Pomona and his MA in educational administration from Cal State LA.

**Which book has most influenced your life?**
*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire.

**What makes you happy?**
A quiet Sunday morning with my wife and daughter.

**What makes you angry?**
Exploitation of any kind.

**Which historical figure do you most admire?**
Benito Juarez, who personified "the struggle."

**What is the greatest challenge faced by children and families in LA County?**
Overcoming economic and social disparities.

**Which living person do you most admire?**
My mother, who has always been my inspiration.

**Who was your favorite teacher?**
My fourth grade teacher, Ms. Pritchard, who "lit the spark."

**What is your motto?**
"Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace." --Benito Juarez