Two Outcomes for Newborn Babies--One Tragic and the Other Happy

In a span of three days last week, two newborn babies were found--one deceased and abandoned near railroad tracks in Alhambra--the other, healthy and safely surrendered at a Long Beach hospital.

“These incidents illustrate the stark contrast of two possible outcomes for unwanted pregnancies,” said Evelyn V. Martinez, executive director of First 5 LA. "We want to take this opportunity to remind the public that there are safe, confidential alternatives to abandonment of unwanted babies."

Martinez emphasized that there is a toll-free hotline to find the nearest surrender site: (877) BABY-SAFE or (877) 222-9723.

California's Safely Surrendered Baby (SSB) Law allows a parent or anyone authorized by a parent to confidentially surrender an infant, within three days of birth, to any hospital or fire station. The law guarantees anonymity and freedom from prosecution in these instances if there are no signs of abuse or neglect.

Since Jan. 1 of this year, four infants have been surrendered in LA County and two have been found abandoned and deceased. Since the SSB Law took effect in 2001, 40 newborns have been surrendered safely in LA County.

First 5 LA led a county-wide task force in a $500,000 public information campaign in Spanish and English on SSB. For information, visit www.babysafela.org.

Healthy Kids Insurance Brings New Peace of Mind to Families With Children

When André was a baby in New Jersey, an emergency trip to the doctor's office resulted in costly bills for his unemployed single mother.

But last year, after the family moved to LA County, outreach workers at Asian Pacific Health Care Ventures, Inc. (APHCV) enrolled André in First 5 LA's Healthy Kids insurance, which provides free or low-cost health and dental care to children 5 years old and under who do not qualify for Healthy Families or Medi-Cal.
April 1, noon-4 p.m.: 6th Annual Raising Readers--A Literacy Festival at Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica 90405. For information, call (310) 452-3325 x237 or visit www.connectionsforchildren.org.

April 6, 10 a.m.-noon: Building our Leadership Skills Using the Hospital Breastfeeding Rates to Promote Model Policies, 2930 W. Imperial Hwy., 4th floor, Inglewood 90303. For information, call Karen Peters at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

April 7, 8 a.m.-noon: Early Identification of Autism in Infants/Toddlers and Intervention Approaches workshop at the Cambrian School District, 4115 Jackson Dr., San Jose 95124. Registration fees are $50 for IDA members and $70 for non-IDA members. To register by March 31, visit www.idaofcal.org.

April 10, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: Risks of Not Breastfeeding: Diabetes, Obesity and More--A Day with Marsha Walker, presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. For information, call Karen Peters at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

April 12 & 26, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.: Gentle Transitions: Support, Establish and Protect Both Early Mother-Infant Attachment and Breastfeeding in the Hospital Setting, presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at Harbor UCLA Medical Center, 1000 W. Carson St., Torrance 90502. For information, call Karen Peters at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

April 19, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: Task Force Seminar: Applying New Evidence-Based Research to Lactation Care: From the Breast to the Baby or the Pump--A Day with Peter Hartman presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at Housssels Forum, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, 2801 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach 90806. For information, call Karen Peters at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

April 25, 9 a.m.-noon: Awakening the Advocate Within: Influencing Public Policy and Legislation, 2930 W. Imperial Hwy., 4th floor, Inglewood 90303. For information, call Karen Peters at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

April 30, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: El Dia de Los Niños (Children’s Day) at the East Los Angeles College, 1301 Avenida Cesar E. Chavez, Monterey Park 91754. For information, call Ancelma Sanchez at (323) 981-0028.

"The day after André’s fourth birthday, he started vomiting repeatedly," said his mother, Mia Cendana, an immigrant from the Philippines. "Since it was a Sunday, I rushed him over to St. Vincent's emergency room, where they spent four hours doing all kinds of tests on him."

"I was relieved to learn that all he had was a viral infection and also relieved that Healthy Kids insurance took care of the entire emergency room bill," she added.

First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids insurance helps ensure that André receives regular checkups and care while Mia helps him prepare for school by taking classes in parenting skills, early literacy, nutrition, and first aid/CPR at APHCV.

APHCV is a nonprofit, community-based organization that serves underprivileged immigrant families in LA County. The agency provides preventive health and related social services in Bengali, Cantonese, English, Hindi, Indonesian, Khmer, Mandarin, Japanese, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

First 5 LA has committed $100 million over five years to fund Healthy Kids for young children from households that earn up to 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines ($58,056 for a family of four). For information about APHCV, call (323) 644-3880 or visit www.aphcv.org. For information about Healthy Kids, call 1-888-FIRST5LA or visit www.first5la.org.

GRANTEE PROFILE
San Pedro’s Harbor Interfaith Services Helps Survivors of Domestic Violence

Elizabeth Romero, a 28-year-old Latina with college aspirations, appears to be a young woman full of hope and potential. It's hard to imagine that just seven years ago, she was so desperate to escape domestic abuse that she and her five children became homeless.

The Romeros found help at Harbor Interfaith Services in San Pedro, a First 5 LA grantee. Through the Children and Families First program, families like the Romeros find shelter, child care, and job placement and counseling services.

Today, the Romeros have their own apartment. The children attend school while their mom works full-time as an administrative manager at a pharmacy, where she has been employed for six years.

"When I was 15, I was having babies and didn't know what I wanted," said Romero. "Now I know that I want to be an accountant." Romero is about to take an important step toward that goal, when, later this month at Harbor College, she starts courses toward a high school equivalency certificate.

For information about Harbor Interfaith Service's programs, call Tahia Hayslet at (310) 831-0603 or visit www.harborinterfaith.org.
EVIE'S DESK

Women's History Month Calls on Us to Remember Contributions

This month, Americans celebrate Women's History Month, first designated by Congress in 1987 to recognize the many ways in which women's achievements have helped shape our communities.

This year's national theme, Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams, honors the spirit of possibility and hope set in motion by generations of women in their creation of communities and their encouragement of dreams.

I want to take this opportunity to offer a tribute, on behalf of First 5 LA, to all the women of LA County who have, through adversity and often against impossible odds, managed to make a real difference not only for themselves and their children and families, but for all of us.

We salute all women--both ordinary and extraordinary--who have toiled to put food on the table for their families, who have fought for the rights of the underprivileged, who have born and raised a future generation of leaders, and who continue every day to make a difference as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and individuals in their own right.

You have built our communities and inspired and nurtured our dreams. Thank you.

For information about The National Women's History Project, visit www.nwhp.org.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

CHAMPION PROFILE

Shannon Whaley Performs Research and Evaluation for Family Programs

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

Shannon Whaley is a child-development specialist with the PHFE-WIC Program, a nutrition program for low-income families with young children in LA County. She serves as the program evaluator at five PHFE-WIC centers that offer Little By Little, a First 5 LA-funded early-intervention program to increase school readiness.

In addition, she helped design the First 5 LA/WIC Data Research Partnership, which provides information about the needs of more than half a million LA County low-income families with young children served by WIC.

Whaley holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from UCLA.

What book has influenced your life the most? Crossing to Safety, by Wallace Stegner.

What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child in your life? There is nothing better than greeting my son, Jay, in the early morning and sitting down together to read a favorite book over a big cup of milk.

What is your idea of a perfect world? Where the equal worth of every child is understood and embraced.

Which living person do you most admire? My friend, Rosemary, the principal of a small elementary school in rural Kenya, who magically creates opportunities for children facing unbelievable odds, including loss of parents through AIDS.

Who was your favorite teacher? My 11th grade creative writing teacher, Mr. Shoenberger, who taught me to write everything down.

What is your motto? "If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."