LA Best Babies Network to Launch Pilot Project to Improve Birth Outcomes

The LA Best Babies Network, a First 5 LA strategic partner, next week will launch its Healthy Births Care Quality Collaboratives, a pilot project to reduce the number of preterm and low-birthweight babies in Los Angeles County.

The 15-month pilot project will bring together more than 50 physicians, nurses, administrators, and office staff from 11 health clinics and private medical offices around LA County. Working with a team of national perinatal quality-care experts, they will learn how to apply best practices in perinatal care, including new clinical guidelines, quality-improvement techniques, and data tracking and monitoring systems.

"The goal of this project is to improve birth outcomes by changing the way health care practitioners deliver care to pregnant women, new mothers, and babies," said Carolina Reyes, the network's executive director. "We're creating a quality framework for screening, treatment, and preventive practices, linking community resources and addressing health, behavioral and social risk factors that affect both the mother and baby."

Created and funded through the $15 million First 5 LA Healthy Births initiative, the network connects leadership, builds collaborations, shares information, plans collaboratively, and provides technical assistance to local partner agencies and community organizations to improve the health and well-being of mothers and babies.

The pilot sites are AltaMed Medical Group, Arroyo Vista Family Health Center, Bell Gardens Family Medical Center, California Hospital Women's Health Center, California Obstetrics and Gynecologic Services Medical Group, Maternal-Fetal Medicine Associates, Northeast Valley Healthy Corporation-Pacoima Health Center, South Central Family Health Center, T.H.E. Clinic, Watts Healthcare Corp., and St. John's Well Child program.

For information, visit www.labestbabies.org or call the network at (213) 250-7273.
**First 5 LA Grantees and Partners Join McArthur Park Cinco de Mayo Health Fair**

Representatives from First 5 LA and seven grantees joined thousands of Angelenos at the recent Cinco de Mayo Health Fair at McArthur Park in the city's urban core. Organized by Federaciones Mexicanas, a California network of Mexican hometown clubs, the event coincided with Big Sunday, a day of community service that attracted 25,000 volunteers of all ages to activities across LA County.

Providing information on programs serving families with young children were Para los Ninos’ Terry Payne and Estella Brown; California Hospital’s Salvador Reyes, Mayda Echeverria, Maria Ramirez, and Gabriela Velasco; Asian Pacific Health Care Venture’s Rosario Hernandez; Los Angeles Universal Preschool's Elsa Leal and Johanna Sanchez-Aranda; LA County 211’s Miguel Serrano; Child Development Media’s Blanca Alarcon; Children’s Institute’s Sylvia Herrera; and First 5 LA’s Victor Abalos, Ruben Vidales, Katie Kurutz, Latasha Ball, and Robert Ennis.

**GRANTEE PROFILE**

**Gay & Lesbian Center Provides Social and Educational Support to Families**

To see 2-year-old David now, you would never know that the happy, active toddler had a tough start in life.

As a baby, he was abandoned on the street by his birth father, a long-time drug addict. At 9 months, he had already been in three foster homes when he arrived in the loving arms of Larry and Tom.

The couple had been attending foster parenting classes for several months before a social worker broke the news of David’s arrival. Larry says he remembers that the baby was initially withdrawn and unresponsive.

Larry and Tom turned to the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's Family Services Program, funded by First 5 LA, to help them connect with other lesbian-, gay-, bisexual-, and transgender- (LGBT) parented families.

They joined the Baby Bonanza play group, where they met other same-sex parents, and David interacted with children with similar experiences.

"The play group has given me a sense of peace, knowing that the gay and lesbian community is readily available to help us become a family," said Larry. "Foster parenting was the best decision for us. And now that we’ve adopted David, he’ll always be part of our family."
EVIE’S DESK
Acknowledging the Real Heroes in Reproductive Rights Case
More than 30 years ago, a group of young Latinas decided that they would not stand by while their sisters and mothers were being sterilized involuntarily (to avoid misreading, or should we not. They spoke out against the practice at legislative hearings and joined in a class-action lawsuit, Madrigal v. Quilligan.

Although the case was dismissed by a judge who called it "essentially the result of a breakdown in communication between the patients and the doctors," the advocacy efforts of these women led to sweeping changes in national and state regulations to safeguard reproductive rights of Latinas and all American women.

You might say, they lost the battle but won the war. I am proud to say that I was one of the foot soldiers on that battlefield in 1975. All of us--including Antonia Hernandez, Gloria Molina, Olivia Rodriguez, and other members of the Chicana feminist group Comision Feminil de Los Angeles--felt we were simply doing what we believed to be the right thing.

But the heroes are not those of us who were honored last week by the LA Center for Law and Justice. The real heroes were the 11 women who, after being victimized by the hospital system that was supposed to help them, dared to share their tragic experiences publicly, so that no other women would be sterilized involuntarily.

I want to say thank you to Dolores Madrigal, Maria Hurtado, Jovita Rivera, Maria Figueroa, Helena Orozco, Guadalupe Acosta, Georgina Hernandez, Consuelo Hermosillo, Estella Benavides, Rebecca Figueroa, and Laura Dominguez.

You showed us what courage looks like. You showed us how to stand up for ourselves and our sisters. You showed us what it means to "speak truth to power." And we will never forget.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

Annually, the program provides social and educational opportunities to 300 children aged 0-5. In addition, it offers diversity training to help caregivers, school and preschool staffs, and other service providers better meet the needs of LGBT-parented families.

For information, call Arielle Rosen at (323) 860-7397 or visit www.LAGayCenter.org.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Dorothy Fleisher of Keck Foundation Promotes Excellence in Early Education

Dorothy Fleisher is director for the W.M. Keck Foundation’s Southern California Program, where she oversees grant-making in the areas of arts; cultural, civic, and community services; health care; and precollegiate education. She is also responsible for the new W.M. Keck Foundation Early Learning Program, established to promote excellence in the field of early childhood education.

Fleisher previously worked for United Way for 14 years, where she oversaw allocations to a network of organizations and launched several major initiatives. She is a member of the LA County Children’s Planning Council and a past member of First 5 LA Universal Pre-K Master Plan Advisory Committee.

She has been honored by the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers as Social Worker of the Year and has received YWCA of Greater Los Angeles' Incredible Woman Making History Award.

Fleisher earned her PhD in social work from USC.

Which book has most influenced your life?
The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century, by Thomas L. Friedman.

What makes you happy? Angry?
Daily small acts of kindness make me happy. Violence - perpetuated individually and collectively - makes me angry.

Which historical figure do you admire most?
Alexander Hamilton, who was a messenger from the future who helped shape our federal system of government.

What is your idea of a perfect world?
A place where people and institutions learn from mistakes and strive for continuous improvement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Which living person do you most admire?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My colleague, Barbara Kaplan, who went back to earn her PhD at the age of 57 after founding the Freda Mohr Center, one of the first asset-based social service delivery models for older people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What is your motto?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Seize the day.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>