July 2, 2007
To submit comments or items (3 weeks in advance) for this e-newsletter, please contact Katie Kurutz, public affairs officer, First 5 LA at kkurutz@first5la.org or (213) 482-5902.

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CALENDAR
July 7, 9am-12pm: "Summer Safety Fun Fest" sponsored by First 5 LA in collaboration with the Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center (EPICC) at EPICC/Los Angeles Swim Stadium 3980 South Menlo Ave., L.A. 90037. For information call Ruben Vidales at rvidales@first5la.org.

August 3, 9am - 4pm: Critical Updates for the Lactation Professional presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles’ Saban Building Auditorium, 4661 Sunset Blvd., L.A. 90027. For more information call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org and go to upcoming seminars.

August 25, 10am-8pm: Back to School Fair and Community Celebration, sponsored by the Office of L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe, at Adventure Park in South Whittier. Call Joseph Matthews at (562) 807-7350.

Come one, come all!
Summer Safety FunFest!
First 5 LA cordially invites parents with young children to join us this Saturday at the historic Los Angeles Swim Stadium in South Los Angeles for a morning of fun and learning around the topic of safety. The Summer Safety FunFest will feature interactive safety workshops for children and parents, car seat trainings, basic CPR and water safety classes, fire trucks for kids to explore, giveaways and more. Admission is free and refreshments will be provided.

Parents should sign up for classes in advance as space is limited. The Exposition Park Intergenerational Community Center and Swim Stadium serves more than 50,000 community members yearly.

To register for classes and workshops at Summer Safety FunFest contact Mayra Gomez at (213) 482-7551 or mgomez@first5la.org. For a copy of the event flier in English click here, or in Spanish click here. We look forward to seeing you there!

Roundtable Gives Childcare Providers Opportunity to 'Step' Up
If you're an Angelino looking for childcare, it's very likely that you may feel lost in a sea of information. With few regulated standards that are widely recognized in L.A. County to help determine what makes a quality program, the hunt for good care can be nerve-wracking. That is until now.

L.A. County's Policy Roundtable for Childcare just rolled out the Steps to Excellence Program, which is designed to engage childcare providers in a systematic rating process that will ultimately give clear and concise information about the quality of their childcare settings. The ratings will be similar to restaurant letter ratings - the "A", "B" and "C" you see in windows - allowing a family to easily determine if the program is worth investigating.

Partially funded by First 5 LA, the rating system borrowed from existing measurement systems, including the "5-star" ratings developed by First 5 LA-funded LAUP.
August 26-28: 17th Annual CityMatCH Maternal and Child Health Leadership Conference “Building the Best Environments for Families and Children” sponsored by CityMatCH at the Denver Marriott Tech Center, 4900 S. Syracuse, Denver, CO 80237. For registration fees and information call (402) 561-7500 or visit http://citymatch.org/apps/conf_index.php

September 7-8, all day: “Los Angeles Universal Preschool Conference and Education Expo” at Los Angeles Convention Center, West Wing - Petree Hall, Exhibit Hall C & D - 1201 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 90015. For information visit www.laup.net or call (866) 581-LAUP (5287).

EVIE’S DESK

Kids and Summer, Focusing on Safety

While fun in the sun is what most kids think about during summer, unintentional child injury is what many paramedics are dealing with as the temperatures rise. According to a study by Safe Kids Worldwide, 42 percent of all unintentional injury-related deaths and nearly 40 percent of all unintentional injury related hospitalizations for children ages 0 to 14 occur from May to August. And since the Fourth of July is just around the corner, it’s important to emphasize that more than 4,000 of those child victims are treated for injuries involving fireworks.

Learning about ways to keep kids safe in the summer can be fun for the whole family, and First 5 LA’s Summer Safety FunFest! is a perfect way to get up-to-date tips on how to keep kids safe. I hope you join us for this fun filled day. And remember: They go where you go! So keep your kids close by this summer.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

For the next three years, “Steps” will be piloted in nine L.A. County communities and will include 400 large centers and 210 family childcare homes in those communities. Although the program is not mandatory, providers will receive incentives and training support to work toward a higher rating.

The program was publicly announced June 22nd at a news conference at the California Endowment. Roundtable Chair and First 5 LA Commissioner Matt Rezvani, L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe, and a host of other speakers ushered in the program to an audience of movers and shakers in the childcare field.

To learn more about the Steps to Excellence program, please visit their website or contact Patricia Lozano at (213) 482-7572 or plozano@first5la.org.

First 5 LA Hosts Sustainability Resource Forum

Imagine you’re a non-profit with a full day of access to a captive audience of leaders in the foundation and non-profit world who are there to help you figure out what your organization needs to do to survive well into the future... Imagine what you’d learn... Imagine the possibilities that could come from such an encounter...

Sixteen First 5 LA-funded agencies don’t have to imagine because they experienced just that opportunity recently. Grantees presented a prepared three-year plan for sustainability to a panel of 14 local foundation, county, and non-profit leaders and then received guidance from panelists on the strengths of their presentations as well as areas of improvement.

Panelists included the California Endowment, the Annenberg Foundation, the Weingart Foundation, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, the Social Enterprise Institute and county agencies. As it is unlikely that agencies ever experience a chance to meet with so many leaders in the field, articulate their long-term sustainability plans and receive immediate, open feedback, the forum set a new precedent for learning and sharing in the non-profit sector.

For the grantees, the forum was the last in a seven-month series of trainings focused on sustainability planning. “The resource forum allowed for valuable peer-to-peer exchange with the added benefit of insight and feedback from expert panelists,” says Sara Maranowicz, First 5 LA Program Officer and co-coordinator of the event and training series.

Panelists also expressed their gratitude in having such an effective, focused opportunity to connect with colleagues around sustainability, and new partnerships are already beginning to form out of the engagement. For more information on the Resource Forum or the First 5 LA Sustainability Project contact Sara Maranowicz at (213) 482-7556.
GRANTEE PROFILE

Milk, Eggs... Health Insurance?
Asian Pacific HealthCare Venture
Reaches Families in Unconventional Ways

When Luy Van Le goes to the supermarket, it is usually not to buy food. Rather, it's to sign people up for health insurance.

Raised in Vietnam, Le joined the outreach team at First 5 LA-funded Asian Pacific Health Care Venture (APHV) eight years ago to help new Vietnamese immigrant families take advantage of available health insurance programs. Using the unconventional approach of placing a sign-up table outside local supermarkets, he reasons that, while not everyone is going to seek out programs, well, everyone has to eat.

"I usually sign up around 40 people a month," says Le, who received government assistance as an immigrant in 1998, something that enabled him to earn a Masters in Social Work from Cal State LA. His service areas include El Monte, San Gabriel, Alhambra, Temple City and Monrovia. "Everyone knows me in these neighborhoods, so they feel comfortable asking me how to get help."

And everyone should know Le. For six years, APHV has run a weekly column in the Saigon Times that includes Le's photo, phone number and what he can do for families. Interested families can go to his "mobile office" at one of the frequented markets, sign up for insurance if they are eligible, and have a tasty snack too.

Last year, APHV signed up more than 1,400 children and pregnant women using unconventional methods like these. Each member of their team of six utilizes their knowledge of the community to reach new immigrants who might not know what is available for them.

To learn more about APHV and their Health Insurance Outreach efforts, go to www.aphcv.org or call Carolyn Barragan at 323-644-3880.

CHAMPION PROFILE

Mercy Valezquez: Activist - Angel

True to her name, Mercy Valezquez is a merciful servant of the people. A volunteer Promotora for Pueblo que Camina with the First 5 LA-funded GEM project, Mercy has traveled from her native Ecuador to the United States, changing the lives of those in need with each step.

In Ecuador, Mercy completed a three-year accounting degree in one year, was valedictorian of her class, and worked as secretary for a political candidate. By the age of 22 she was a school principal.

She then worked as a public health assistant for low-income families with the same politician whom she assisted in her teens and, after six years in that position, decided to join her sister in the United States.
As a U.S. citizen and working mother, Mercy underwent training in organizing and political activism by Industrial Areas Foundation/LA Metro. Involved in several marches and campaigns, she was instrumental in mobilizing 2,000 Azusa residents to become citizens during Wilson's governorship.

In addition to her time with GEM, Mercy is the board president of Familias Unidas in California, an organization that serves poor families in Ecuador and other Latin countries.

**Which book has most influenced your life?**
The Bible was a great influence in my life.

**Which historical figure do you admire most and why?**
President Ronald Reagan, for his courage to make this country very respected throughout the world.

**What is your idea of a perfect world?**
Where people understand each other in a loving way and peace prevails.

**What is the greatest challenge the children and families of LA County face today?**
The polluted environment - gangs, drugs, alcohol, and domestic violence. It can be difficult to overcome.

**Which living person do you most admire and why?**
Hillary Clinton, for her prudence in bad times.

**What is your motto?**
Maintain a balance - physical, mental, and spiritual - to be able to help others.