August 13, 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) 492-5902.

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CALENDAR
August 25, 10:00am-8:00pm: A Back to School Fair and Community Celebration is sponsored by the Office of L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe, at Adventure Park in South Whittier. First 5 LA grantees, L.A. County 211 and LAUP, will be representing their First 5 LA programs. For more information call Joseph Matthews at (562) 807-7350.

August 25, 11:00am & 12:30pm: “Summer Sizzle” featuring The Reader’s Theatre and Zhakanaka – The Word, presented by Hyde Park Ready for School at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, 3650 W. Martin Luther King Blvd., Los Angeles 90008. Free event for children 2-8 years-old. For more information call Antoinette Johnson at (323) 753-4551.

August 26-28: 17th Annual CityMatCH Maternal and Child Health Leadership Conference “Building the Best Environments for Families and Children” is sponsored by CityMatCH at the Denver Marriott Tech Center, 4900 S. Syracuse, Denver, CO 80237. For registration fees and/or more information call (402) 561-7500 or visit http://citymatch.org/apps/conf_index.php.

September 7-8, all day: "LAUP Conference and Education Expo" is being held at the Los Angeles Convention Center, West Wing - Petree Hall, Exhibit Hall C & D - 1201 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 90015. For more information visit or call (866) 581-LAUP (5287)http://www.laup.net/.

L.A. County Helps!: Reaching Families through the Web
As more L.A. County low-income families turn to the Internet for information, social service agencies are increasingly using the Web to reach out. LA County Helps! is an excellent example of an easy-to-navigate Web site for families trying to determine which state and local services they qualify for.

The English/Spanish site describes over 25 government programs. It also utilizes an easy-to-fill-out form that, once completed, will determine a family’s potential eligibility for much needed resources, including food stamps and health insurance. The site also has downloadable forms and descriptions of how to apply for services.

“The site is a collaborative effort between County departments and other outside government agencies,” said Connie Sullivan, Manager of Data Integration for the Service Integration Branch at the Chief Executive Office for the County of Los Angeles. “It brings together all of the governmental agencies in L.A. County that want to reach families who may not know that they qualify for services.”

Launched in June 2006, the site has had more than 55,000 visits so far, and expects continued growth. Planned for December, phase two of the site will include several new components, including housing, consumer protection, and child care resources. It will also be translated into seven additional languages.

To learn more about L.A. County Helps! go to http://www.lacountyhelps.org/, or call Connie Sullivan at (213) 974-5121.

BREASTFEEDING SERIES
Many organizations dedicated to infant health recognize August as World Breastfeeding Month. The following article is part of a Monday Morning Report four-week series on how communities support breastfeeding.

LA Best Babies Network Promotes Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplaces
Considerable scientific evidence shows that breastfeeding is an important contributor to infant and maternal health. It is one of the best gifts a mother can give her baby. But new mothers who breastfeed can face barriers when they return to work as they seek the time, and private space to express milk.
September 14–16, 9:00am–6:00pm: Certified Infant Massage Instructor Training is being held at The Heart Touch Project, 3400 Airport Ave. #42, Santa Monica 90405. Registration is $650. For more information call Jennifer at (310) 391-2558 x5 or jennifer@hearttouch.org.

September 14, 9:00am–4:00pm: Secure Attachment and Successful Breastfeeding: Evidence Based Practices presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at Valley Presbyterian Medical Center, 1107 Van Owen St., Van Nuys 91405. For more information call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit http://simplesend.com/www.breastfeedla.org and go to upcoming seminars.

Given that 60 percent of women return to the workplace within the first year after childbirth, it is no real surprise that at the time of hospital discharge, not even a fourth of mothers choose to exclusively breastfeed. According to the The Hospital Breastfeeding Report, 2006, L.A. County ranks 47th out of 50 counties in California for exclusive breastfeeding, and returning to work is one of the reasons mothers gave for discontinuing.

First 5 LA-funded LA Best Babies Network is working to reduce some of the challenges that working moms face by encouraging employers to adopt workplace policies that support the practice of breastfeeding. Suggestions include offering lactation accommodation areas in the workspace for women who are breastfeeding, and giving employees time to express milk or breastfeed.

The Network’s Healthy Births Learning Collaborative (HBLC) in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys is currently developing a ‘breastfeeding-friendly workplace’ policy brief that provides resourceful information for business owners and agencies. LA Best Babies Network is also promoting its policy brief, Pregnancy and Family Friendly Workplace Policies, which gives an array of family-friendly recommendations.

To learn more about how to encourage your employer to accommodate and promote breastfeeding, contact Julie Gates, HBLC Coordinator for the LABBN, at Gates@LABestBabies.org.

GRANTEE PROFILE
Project SAFE Provides Haven for Young Mom

Now living in a hotel room in the San Fernando Valley, Project SAFE participant Elsa F. recalls her long struggle to leave her abusive ex-spouse. Project SAFE, a First 5 LA-funded Partnerships for Families program, helped her find a safe way out of the abusive relationship.

Elsa chokes up while describing the support that Bobreta Franklin, her case worker, has given her. “If it had not been for the help of Project SAFE, I would still be living with my ex,” said Elsa. “They have helped me so much. It is unbelievable.”

The 29-year-old mother of six moved in with the father of her children at age 15. Dropping out of school in ninth grade, she had known no other support than his. After sustaining his abuse for years, and giving birth to her sixth child, Elsa finally decided to seek a way out.

She first tried a domestic violence shelter, but her 13-year-old decided to call his father, violating the strict anonymity shelters require. They were asked to leave, and she was forced to move back home. Soon afterward, Elsa and Bobreta put together a plan for her to move out of her estranged husband’s house, with her children, and enroll in vocational school. The project is funding her family’s current hotel stay and is also providing the child care she needs to go to school and get on her feet, away from the toxic environment she had lived in.
EVIE’S DESK
Media Matters

Last week, two news reports on separate studies made me think about a powerful force in our society: how products are marketed to parents and children.

As it turns out, Baby Einstein wasn’t as smart as thousands of well-meaning parents thought it was. We also learned that, when it comes to kids, anything packaged with “Golden Arches” seems to suddenly taste better than it did in plain wrap.

A study that appeared in the Journal of Pediatrics uncovered that the well known Baby Einstein videos, marketed as a tool to increase a child’s intelligence, actually worked against kids’ abilities to build vocabulary. The study showed that every hour a child spent watching the baby videos, their language development slowed proportionally.

The other report published by researchers at Stanford University found that children rate food with McDonald’s branding as “tasting better” than other packaged food — even if the food itself is exactly the same! The “Golden Arches” have made their way into the minds of more than 70 percent of our children who think that carrots from Ronald McDonald are better than any other.

Marketing is a powerful thing, and when used for good it can make a tremendous impact on the way our society cares for its children. First 5 LA has tapped the media market many times to disseminate positive messages about how to support children. But we also encourage parents and caregivers to be smart about commercial trends that may put dollar signs above our children’s well-being or skew their views on what is of real value and what is not.

To learn more about the studies click here.

“She really has incredible strength,” said Bobreta, who meets with Elsa every week. “We can provide the basics, but it is Elsa who is parenting her children, going to school, and recovering from years of abuse right now. She is doing it with grace,” added Bobreta.

Project SAFE is designed to support families living in the San Fernando Valley area (SPA 2) who are considered at risk. Many families like Elsa’s have been referred to the program by the Department of Children and Family Services, and participate until they are considered to be stable. The Project currently has 81 families enrolled, and has served 185 families since it began last year.

Project SAFE’s collaborating partners include the San Fernando Community Mental Health Department, Friends of the Family, Child Care Resource Center, The Village Ready for School program, El Proyecto del Barrio, Now and Forever, El Nido, Jewish Family Service, Mission City Community Network, and the Help Group.

To learn more about Project SAFE contact Deborah Brownstone, Program Director at (818) 267-2754.

POLSICY PICK
SCHIP Sails through Congress

As Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and state legislators consider plans to provide health insurance coverage for all Californians, the U.S. Congress is moving toward a final consensus on the reauthorization of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Earlier this month, the House and Senate each passed their versions of the reauthorization bill, now in conference committee. Once an agreement is reached, the bill will go to the President.

First 5 LA supports a permanent legislative solution to the health insurance crisis faced by too many impoverished families and children. To help secure benefits for Los Angeles County children and families, First 5 LA government affairs staff and the Children’s Health Initiative of Los Angeles County (CHI) – which administers the Healthy Kids program – have met with state and federal legislators in recent weeks, to urge coverage for all children.

Our coalition informs individual lawmakers about the health insurance needs of children in their respective electoral districts and about the Healthy Kids program, a local, free or low-cost health insurance program for children in L.A. County. Healthy Kids is funded through First 5 LA grants and donations from charitable institutions. Much of the funding for this program is set to expire by January 2008, which would leave many children without much-needed health coverage, unless lawmakers act.

First 5 LA is committed to working with state lawmakers and other government officials to help children reach their full potential by providing them with the best start possible.