Monday Morning Report

August 20, 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

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 2-1-1 and LAUP, will feature 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 is presented by Hyde Park Ready for School at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, 3650 W. Martin Luther King Blvd., L.A. 90008. This is a free event for children ages 2-to-8. For more information call Antoinette Johnson at (323) 753-4551.

August 26, 2:00pm-6:00pm: "2nd Annual Back-to-School Community Connections: Inclusion Event," presented by Special Needs Network, Inc., at the AbilityFirst Harry A. Mier Center, 8090 Crenshaw Boulevard, Inglewood 90305. Free backpacks and school supplies for ages 2-16. Free tennis shoes for the first 50 children. For more information call (323) 295-8358 or email events@specialneedsnetwork.net.

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 www.citymatch.org.

Non-Profit Community Responds to New Funding Opportunity
Representatives from more than 150 L.A. County non-profit organizations recently attended First 5 LA’s information sessions about a new and exciting funding opportunity. The Community Opportunities Fund is designed to assist in the sustainability of programs that have a long-term impact in specific areas including supportive parenting, good health for families, and prevention of unintentional injuries through organizational capacity building, policy and advocacy.

The First 5 LA sessions convened at various locations throughout the county, including the Antelope Valley. Because the Fund is intended to address specific needs in each community, potential applicants were excited to share their ideas about a range of topics, such as increasing their target populations' access to nutritional foods and physical activities, and improving resources for parents and caregivers.

If you were unable to attend one of the sessions, but would like more information on the fund, please visit our Web site www.first5la.org/cof.htm to review the Funding Guidelines, as well as the presentation and questions and answers from each session. Please direct any questions to cof@first5la.org.

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.

Banked Breast Milk: Giving Babies Liquid Gold
A woman’s breast milk has a unique composition of nutrients, enzymes, growth factors, hormones, and immunological and anti-inflammatory properties that can reduce the risk of a wide range of illnesses for a child well beyond infancy. Essentially, it is like “liquid gold” for a growing baby.

But not all women can breastfeed their children, often because of their own illness or the illness of their baby. To help in situations like these, organizations like Prolacta Bioscience or the San Jose Milk Bank step in. Created to give babies access to breast milk who may not otherwise have it, these agencies keep a stock of pasteurized human milk that has been donated by lactating mothers who produce more milk than they need for their own child.
September 7-8, all day: Universal Preschool Conference and Education Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center. This FREE event will feature guest speakers, parent workshops and an education expo. Childcare will also be available for children ages 3 and up, on Saturday, from 9 am to 12 noon. For more information or to register, call (866) 581-LAUP (5287) or visit www.laup.net

September 8, 11:00am-4:00pm: “1st Annual Burbank Block Party,” presented by Assemblymember Paul Krekorian along part of San Fernando Blvd., (between Olive and Angeleno). Refreshments, “adopt-a-pet,” and informational booths. For information contact Chief of Staff Adrin Nazarian at (818) 240-6330.

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 is being 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 www.breastfeedla.org and go to upcoming seminars.

October 13, 9:00am-1:00pm: “5th Annual Community Fair,” presented by Virgil Middle School at the Physical Education Field, 152 N. Vermont Avenue, L.A. 90004. For information contact Lilian Hernandez at (213) 368-2824.

Donor mothers are screened for health behaviors and communicable diseases in the same manner as blood donors. When the mother’s milk arrives at the milk bank it is pasteurized to kill bacteria and viruses. After a sample has been cultured and shows no bacterial growth, the milk is dispensed.

“Direct breastfeeding is the preferred method of providing optimal infant nutrition,” said Karen Peters, executive director of the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles. “When that is not possible, then mother’s own expressed breast milk is the second choice. The third choice is pasteurized human donor milk available from human milk banks.”

Older children and adults sometimes also receive human donor milk to treat digestive and immunologic diseases such as Chron’s disease. In many ways human milk banks provide a valuable service for families who may not otherwise be able to get breast milk. For more information on the human milk banks in the area go to www.prolacta.com or www.milkbanksj.org.

POLICY PICK

Mental Health Services Act Assists Angelinos with Mental Illness

In 2005, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors approved a three-year, $280 million spending plan to assist the mentally ill, drawing down funds from the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act. Board members voted to allocate nearly half of the $90 million in annual funds to provide housing for 4,500 county residents with severe mental health problems, many of whom typically end up in jail or homeless.

The other half is slated to provide mental health services to more than 52,000 residents, including foster children, youth in the county’s probation system and juvenile halls and those who routinely seek care at county psychiatric facilities. Approximately $60 million has been allocated toward Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), of which at least $30 million will fund programs targeting youth ages 0-to-25 years old.

First 5 LA recognizes the importance of mental health to a family’s overall development and well-being. This is why we are voicing our concerns in discussions on the development and implementation of PEI guidelines. At the state level, we have already participated in public forums requiring that the county commit a minimum of 51 percent of PEI funds toward youth ages 0-to-25 years old. In L.A. County, our goal is to ensure that developmentally appropriate prevention services are made available to children ages 0-to-5 and their families.

CHAMPION PROFILE

John Whitaker: Working for the Greater Good

John Whitaker is the Project Director for the First 5 LA-funded Partnerships for Families program in the Antelope Valley and the Children’s Bureau Director of Community Services. He has been a counselor, educator and consultant for more than 25 years.
Toy Recall: Better Safe than Sorry

In the past two weeks, giant commercial toy-maker Mattel recalled nearly 19 million toys due to unsafe levels of lead in the paint used on several types of toys, and loose, high energy magnets that could cause internal damage if swallowed.

Toy safety is very important for any parent to pay attention to and I encourage parents to always investigate the toys their children play with.

Although in small doses lead-based paint is generally not harmful, when ingested slowly over time, the insidious effects can include mental retardation and even death. Children are particularly susceptible because they absorb 50 percent of all ingested lead, compared to the 10 percent adults absorb. Lead is often used in paint to make pigments brighter.

Unfortunately, Mattel’s finding about unsafe lead levels in Chinese made products is not unique. This past summer the Center for Environmental Health in Oakland sampled four types of baby bibs bought at Toys "R" Us and Babies "R" Us and found lead levels that exceeded federal safety limits. The bib manufacturer, Hamco, encouraged parents to throw away any bibs that appeared to be ripped or damaged, but has not issued a recall.

Parents should also be very careful when it comes to any toy that has magnets. The Mattel recall reminded us of a frightening story about a Washington state toddler, Kenny Sweet, who died in 2005 after ingesting several magnetic bearings from a toy building kit. The swallowed magnets drew together and ripped through his stomach tissue, twisting his bowels and ultimately killing him.

Any parent whose child has one or more of the recalled Mattel toys should remove the toy from the child’s reach and contact Mattel to receive a pre-addressed and stamped package to return the toy(s) back to the manufacturer. You should receive a voucher in exchange for the recalled toy.

To find out if you have one of the recalled toys, go to www.mattel.com and click on the Voluntary Recall Information box. If you are a provider, please encourage all parents you work with to check this site, or call 800-524-8697. For information on the Hamco made bibs go to www.hamcobaby.com.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

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With two Masters Degrees and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the Professional School of Psychological Studies, San Diego, Whitaker’s major focus spans the development and implementation of clinical educational, training and community service delivery programs.

He has developed more than 20 programs in the areas of human and social services, including the design and implementation of an art-focused curriculum for adolescents with learning disabilities in Williston, Vermont; a prototype for an independent living skills training curriculum for the caregivers of cerebral palsy patients in Tucson, Arizona; and a model for community organizing and multidisciplinary service delivery targeting the homeless and mentally ill in North San Diego County. He has also developed college and masters-level courses in psychology and teaches at Chapman University.

He currently serves as a Board Member and President for the Yes2Kids-Antelope Valley Child Abuse Prevention Council; is the Steering Committee Chair and SPA 1 Co-Convener for the LA Children’s Planning Council; and a Steering Committee Member for ICARE, the Department of Mental Health’s Infant and Child Mental Health Initiative.

Which book has most influenced your life?
Kahlil Gibran’s “The Prophet”.

What makes you happy?
Intimate, tender moments with family and friends, and working together with community members to build an environment that is nurturing to children and families.

Angry?
When I forget that the world is not here to live up to my expectations.

Which historical figure do you admire most and why?
St. Francis of Assisi for his unswerving commitment to loving and all that is expressed in his beautiful prayer.

What is your idea of a perfect world?
One in which all people are dedicated to have loving and mutually respectful relationships, and one in which differences are valued as opportunities to expand that learning.

What is the greatest challenge the children and families of LA County face today?
Each person taking responsibility for their lives and moving away from victim mentality.

What is your motto?
Leave it better than you found it.