September 4, 2006
To submit comments or items (3 weeks in advance) for this e-newsletter, please contact Vivien Hao, public affairs officer, First 5 LA at vhao@first5la.org or (213) 482-7563.

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CALENDAR

September 10, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.: Fiestas Patrias at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, 3939 S. Figueroa St., LA 90037 sponsored by Univision. Visit www.lacoliseum.com.

September 15, 3 p.m.-12:30 a.m.: Fiestas Patrias at Plaza Mexico 3100 E. Imperial Hwy., Lynwood 90262. Call Christina Aguilar at (310) 631-4989 or visit www.plazamexico.com.

September 16, 9 a.m.-noon: Working 2 Change--Community Voices Advocacy Summit at the Los Angeles Speech and Language Therapy Center, 5761 Buckingham Parkway, Culver City, 90230. To make reservations, call (323) 421-1015 and leave your name, phone number and number of children who will need free childcare.

September 16-17, 10 a.m.-10 p.m.: Mexican Independence Day Celebration at Olvera Street, 845 N. Alameda St., LA 90012. Visit www.olvera-street.com.

KTTV FOX PREVIEW

Parents Get Help in Selecting the Right Preschool from "Good Beginnings"

What qualifications do the preschool’s teachers have? What’s the rate of teacher turnover? How many teachers per child? These are some of the key questions that parents should ask when selecting a preschool for their children.

This week, First 5 LA and KTTV Fox 11 give viewers an inside look at a model preschool, The Accelerated School in South LA.

Part of "Good Beginnings," the weekly TV news series on early education, health, and safety, this segment focuses on a checklist of key attributes of a quality preschool. These include a highly-qualified, stable teaching team, print-rich classrooms, and a safe and clean environment.

"Parents should ask lots of questions, and choose preschools that are comfortable and welcoming to both parents and children," said Sandra Phillips, preschool director at The Accelerated School, a charter school that emphasizes parent involvement.

For more tips on choosing a preschool, watch KTTV Fox 11, 8-9 a.m. and 10-11 p.m. Thursday and 8-9 a.m. Friday, and visit www.laup.net.

First Spanish/English Book on Spina Bifida For Children Available Free

The first Spanish and English book on spina bifida for children has just been published by Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, through a grant from First 5 LA.

Right Under My Nose, written by children's bibliotherapist Claire Austin and psychologist Stacey Mizokawa, is intended to help children as young as 3 years old to learn coping skills related to spina bifida, the most common permanently disabling birth defect in the United States.

An estimated 70,000 people in the U.S. are currently living with spina bifida, a neural tube defect that happens in the first month of pregnancy when the spinal column doesn’t close completely.
**September 16, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.:** Working for Change, a community advocacy forum for parents sponsored by Community Voices at the Los Angeles Speech & Language Therapy Center, 5761 Buckingham Pkwy., Culver City 90230. Call (323) 421-1015.

**September 20, 4 p.m.-7 p.m.:** Community Health Fair at Platt Conference Center, 1500 E. Duarte Rd., Duarte 91010 sponsored by the City of Hope and the Duarte Chamber of Commerce. Call (626) 930-5489 or visit www.cityofhope.org.

**September 21-23, 7:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m., Sunday 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.:** Training the Early Childhood Trainer Conference at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, 5855 W. Century Blvd., LA 90045. Registration is $310 for members, $340 for non-members by Sept. 15. One day registration is $175. To register online click here. For more information visit pda.caeyc.org.

**September 26, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.:** First Lady's Governors Conference: Women as Architects of Change: Leadership, Activism and Family at the Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach 90802. Visit www.california governorsconference.org.

**October 7, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.:** Family Literacy Support Network’s 4th Annual Family Literacy Learning Luau at the Sheraton Cerritos, 12725 Center Court Dr., Cerritos 90703. Limited registration is available at $75 by Sept. 29. Contact at Elida Garcia (562) 922-6560 or Garcia_Elida@lacoe.edu. Click here for registration form.

**October 7, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.:** Third Annual Councilmember Wendy Gruel Child Health and Safety Fair at the Valley Plaza Recreation Center, 6451 Saint Clair Ave., North Hollywood 91606. Call Jackie Keen at (818) 352-3287.

"The book is an important resource for parents, who often struggle with how to talk with their children (the affected child and his/her siblings) and other members of their family about spina bifida," said Mizokawa, who heads the spina bifida program at Childrens Hospital.

With three inter-related sections: a story, tips for parents and caregivers, and activity pages for children, the book provides natural opportunities for discussion.

Written with the guidance of a team of parents, children, doctors, nurses, therapists, psychologists, and nutritionists, Right Under My Nose portrays a child with disabilities as a hero who can solve problems and accept himself.

Four thousand copies will be distributed statewide through clinics, libraries, schools, and other locations. The on-line interactive edition is available at www.myspinabifidabook.org in English and www.milibrodeespinabifida.org in Spanish.

**Bill Requiring Booster Seats For Kids Up to Age 8 Awaits Governor’s Signature**

Parents will have to strap their kids into backseat car booster seats until they are 8 years old or reach a certain height if Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signs a bill the Legislature sent to him Aug. 24.

California law now requires children younger than 6 or weighing less than 60 pounds to use booster seats -- and sit in the backseat.

"Traffic accidents are the highest cause of fatality for children ages 6 and 7," said the bill's author, Assemblymember Noreen Evans (D-Santa Rosa). "This is a serious, serious issue."

"Children aged 4 to 8 who use booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children restrained only with a seat belt, according to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study," Evans said.

The bill would implement the safety agency's recommendation that children should be in a car seat or use a booster seat until they are 8. The agency made that recommendation when California became the first state to adopt car seat requirements for children up to age 6 in 2002 under legislation by state Sen. Jackie Speier (D-Hillsborough).

Schwarzenegger has not taken a position on the bill as yet, a spokeswoman said. If he signs it, the law would take effect Jan. 1, 2007.

**GRANTEE PROFILE**

**Lawndale Father Emerges As Parent Leader in School Readiness Program**

When 18-month-old Xander showed signs of delayed speech and motor skills, his father, Nestor Henriquez, wasn’t sure how to help his child.

Nestor Henriquez poses with his sons, Xander, 3, and Jamie, 6.
EVIE'S DESK
Click Off TV and Boost Interaction to Give Kids the Best Start in Life

Eager parents spent $200 million last year trying to turn their children into "Baby Einsteins." Videos, such as "Baby Einstein" and "Brainy Baby" are part of a $1 billion media industry for kids.

But new studies suggest that too much TV—even "educational" videos and programs—may interfere with learning to write and learning in general.

So my advice to parents is to turn off the TV/video player and take your children by the hand and discover the world WITH them. Share the joy of the outdoors, and talk to them about what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel in their environment.

What your child needs isn't more toys or videos, but YOU. Simple activities, such as reading rhyming books aloud, playing make-shift drums on a pot, or finger painting with chocolate pudding can help boost your child's brain development.

I encourage parents to minimize using TV as a baby-sitting tool, and maximize verbal and physical interaction with young children to give them the best start in life.

Evelyn V. Martinez
Executive Director
First 5 LA

But thanks to early learning specialists from Lawndale Elementary School District's Parents as Teachers program who came to his home monthly to show him how to work with his toddler, Henriquez quickly learned how to use everyday activities, singing, reading, exercises, and craft projects to advance Xander's development.

"He was only speaking a few words and we could tell he wasn't hearing properly," said Henriquez, a stay-at-home dad. After two ear operations, weekly visits from a speech therapist, and daily coaching from Dad, Xander now speaks in sentences and later this month, will be ready for preschool.

Henriquez says he's learned as much as his son has during the two years both have been involved in the home visitation program, which is funded by First 5 LA.

Emerging as a parent leader, Henriquez has gone on to inspire other fathers in his neighborhood to become more involved in their children's early learning.

"We have about 40 mothers, but only eight fathers who participate in our monthly parent meetings," said Ivan Marroquin, program coordinator. "Nestor has helped get other dads involved, and speaks regularly to parents about the importance of being intimately involved in children's development from infancy."

The home visitation program serves 200 South Bay families annually by providing one-on-one coaching to increase knowledge of childhood development, parenting skills, early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and school readiness.

For information, contact Marroquin at ivan_marroquin@lawndale.k12.ca.us or (310) 973-1300 ext. 2635.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Graciela Italiano-Thomas Leads Efforts To Offer Preschool to All in LA County

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

Graciela Italiano-Thomas is CEO of Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), which was created in 2004 and funded with a five-year, $600 million commitment by First 5 LA.

LAUP seeks to make high-quality preschool available to all 4-year-olds in LA County by 2014. Today, it supports the operation or development of preschool spaces for more than 10,000 children, making quality preschool available to thousands of families across the county for the very first time.

An educator, administrator, and community builder, Italiano-Thomas formerly served as CEO of Centro de la Familia de Utah, a non-profit Salt Lake City Head Start grantee that that works to strengthen the Hispanic family by promoting self-sufficiency.

Italiano-Thomas also served as a senior consultant to the National Head Start Bureau on issues relating to building accountability for English language learners and was an associate professor of education.
She holds a doctorate in Education and Institutional Management from Pepperdine University, and serves on Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's Council of Education Advisors and the Advisory Board of Pre-K Now, a national advocacy organization.

**What makes you happy?**
Small things, like a day well used, or big things, like seeing a child who is emotionally supported in this changing world.

**What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child/children in your life?**
Swimming. They love it. I love it.

**What is your idea of a perfect world?**
One in which young children are encouraged to imagine—even to imagine perfection—while adults understand reality and work to change it.

**What is the greatest challenge faced today by children and families of LA County?**
A rising indifference to the least fortunate among us, which is a challenge for both the unfortunate and the affluent.

**Who was your favorite teacher?**
My favorite teacher was my severely dyslexic student, Matthew, a second grader at the Uruguyan American School in Montevideo. He was so full of creativity and enthusiasm for learning that he was never deterred by his disability, and he taught me the meaning and importance of having patience with myself.