Mayor Antonovich Honored For Service as First 5 LA Chair

LA County Mayor Michael Antonovich was honored recently for his past year of service as chair of the First 5 LA Commission.

Antonovich spearheaded the development of First 5 LA’s new oral health and nutrition expansion and enhancement project, which was approved for a $10 million allocation in October. The project will address critical issues that affect the healthy development of young children by increasing access to prevention, education, and advocacy about obesity and dental disease.

To support the project, First 5 LA has launched a multimedia public education campaign with the slogan, “They do everything you do.” The multi-lingual public service announcements and ads are running through December on television, radio and newspapers.

Under Antonovich’s leadership, First 5 LA also launched the $50 million Partnership for Families initiative, a ground-breaking child abuse and neglect prevention project.

“Mayor Antonovich has truly been a champion for children as the key driver for First 5 LA’s new oral health and nutrition project,” said First 5 LA Executive Director Evelyn V. Martinez. “His legacy will be that many thousands of children will have healthier teeth and bodies in the years to come.”

TELEMUNDO SERIES

Importance of Folic Acid Prior Highlighted in This Week’s “Primeros Pasos” on KVEA

Nicte Mack of Los Angeles was always careful about eating healthy and getting regular exercise. What she never expected with her second pregnancy was that her baby would be born with spina bifida, a neural tube defect that happens in the first month of pregnancy when the spinal column doesn’t close completely.

“I didn’t realize that I should...
have been taking folic acid as a vitamin supplement even prior to conception to reduce the risk to my unborn child," said Mack. Her interview with Telemundo Los Angeles' anchor/producer Lucia Navarro will air this Wednesday at 6 p.m.

The weekly series on KVEA (Channel 52), “Primeros Pasos,” is co-produced by First 5 LA and focuses on the pregnancy and infant development.

"I want to let all women know how important it is to pay attention to this now, because when you find out you’re pregnant, it’s too late," said Mack. Her daughter, Lourdes, now 4, was one of the 190 babies born with the condition each year in California. Nationally, spina bifida occurs in 6 in 10,000 Hispanic births, compared to 4.6 in 10,000 births among the general population.

Although conditions vary, up to 90 percent of children with the worst form have hydrocephalus (fluid on the brain) and must have surgery to insert a permanent shunt to drain the fluid. Other conditions include full or partial paralysis, bladder and bowel control difficulties, learning disabilities, depression, latex allergy, and social and sexual issues.

Studies have shown that if all women who could become pregnant were to take a multivitamin with the B-vitamin folic acid, the risk of neural tube defects could be reduced by up to 70 percent.

For information, visit www.sbaa.org.

Sacha Klein Heads First 5 LA’s New Policy Department to Support Advocacy

Sacha Klein has been named to head First 5 LA’s new Policy Department, which will lead development and implementation of policy initiatives to improve the quality of and access to health, safety and early learning opportunities for children prenatal through 5 and their families in Los Angeles County.

Klein has 13 years of policy advocacy and social work experience, having recently served as child welfare policy director at the Association of Community Human Service Agencies, which represents more than 80 nonprofit social service agencies in LA County.

As First 5 LA’s policy director, Klein is creating a team of two policy analysts, a policy intern, and an administrative assistant, who will work to create a comprehensive First 5 LA policy agenda and identify opportunities for policy coordination with key stakeholders, grantees, and strategic partners.

“As a leader in improving outcomes for young children, First 5 LA has a key role in ensuring that the lessons learned from its investments inform how policy makers, businesses and communities allocate resources,” said Klein.

“The Policy Department will work internally and externally to leverage existing programs as starting points for broader systemic change that will promote the development of family-friendly communities, greater..."
quality and access to prenatal and children’s health care, improved birth outcomes, child and family safety, and increased quality and access to early education.”

Creation of the Policy Department is part of First 5 LA’s $8 million commitment through 2009 to increasing efforts in the areas of policy and advocacy.

For information, contact Klein at sklein@first5la.org or (213) 482-6603.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Jeanne Smart Leads Perinatal Nurse Home Visitation Program

Champion Profile features individuals who exemplify First 5 LA’s tagline, “Champions for Our Children.”

Jeanne Smart is a registered nurse who is responsible for perinatal nurse home visitation program in the LA County Public Health Department’s Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health area.

She has worked as a community-based public health nurse and as a liaison to UCLA- Project TEAMS, a multidisciplinary training course for social workers, nurses, drug counselors and foster parents that focused on drug exposed infants and their family systems.

She has been a public health nursing instructor at Cal State LA and Cal State Long Beach, and is founding director of the Public Health Nursing Program at the LA County Department of Children and Family Services.

Smart earned her BA in nursing at Cal State Long Beach and her MA in nursing from Cal State Dominguez Hills.

Which book has most influenced your life?
Chaos: Making a New Science by James Gleick.

Which historical figure do you most admire?
Florence Nightingale, who, in the 1850s, changed the entire face of nursing (a profession that had been done primarily by prostitutes) to one that has helps millions towards healing and wellness.

What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child in your life?
I love to listen to what children have to say.

What is your idea of a perfect world?
Where there is no hate, no crime, and certainly no abuse of children.

What is the greatest challenge faced by LA County the children and families?
Poverty.
Which living person do you most admire?
Father Greg Boyle, who works the streets of East Los Angeles to stop gang violence.

Who was your favorite teacher?
Mr. Fox, my high school botany teacher, who convinced me to attend college and not listen to the counselor who advised me otherwise.

What is your motto?
“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”—Mahatma Gandhi