TELEMUNDO SERIES
Expectant Mothers Receive Free Information and Food From WIC Centers

Alma Flores, a diabetic mother of a preschooler and a toddler, knew that she would encounter health problems during her third pregnancy if she didn’t seek the advice of her doctor. The Highland Park resident also turned to PHFE-WIC, a federally-funded nutrition education and food supplement program for women and children, which also provides a wide range of free services for expectant mothers.

In Los Angeles and Orange Counties, PHFE-WIC serves 316,000 low-income individuals like Flores annually—and last week First 5 LA and Telemundo Los Angeles took viewers inside a local nutrition center to talk to Flores and other participants about how they’re changing their lifestyles as a result of the education they’re receiving.

Part of the weekly Spanish TV news series, "Primeros Pasos," which airs Wednesdays from 6-6:30 p.m. on KVEA Channel 52, the segment that ran last week focused on how women are giving their children a better start in life—starting with prenatal education.

Due to a scheduling change, this week’s segment will feature the latest information on 4-dimensional ultrasounds, which can detect birth defects and genetic disorders, such as Down Syndrome. The series is produced by First 5 LA and Telemundo anchor Lucia Navarro.

For information on WIC services, call (888) FIRST5 LA.

Exposure to Nature Opens Up a Whole New World For City's Preschoolers

Exposing young children to nature is opening up a whole new world of learning for preschoolers from Los Angeles' inner city.

It starts with educators, such as Michael Lopez-Breaux, a teacher at Monte Vista Early Education Center, who participated in a “Young Scientists at Work” workshop hosted by Child Heath Works, a First 5 LA-funded program sponsored by Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.

EVIE’S DESK
Don’t Let Children’s Holidays Be Marred by Unsafe Toys

The holidays can indeed be “the most wonderful time of the year” for families with children-but use caution when shopping to ensure health or safety risks. Here are some holiday shopping tips for parents and caregivers of infants and young children.

Young children should avoid:

- Magnets and small parts - These can cause choking, serious injuries and/or death if swallowed.
- Ride-on toys - Carts, wagons, skateboards and in-line skates can cause falls; always use appropriate safety helmets, knee pads, etc.
- Projectile toys - Air rockets, darts and sling shots can result in serious eye injuries.
- Chargers and adapters - Adults should always supervise use to avoid thermal burn hazards to children.

Once the gifts are open:

- Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys before they become dangerous play things.
- Keep toys appropriate for older children away from younger siblings or neighbors.
- Pay attention to instructions and warnings on battery chargers to prevent overcharging.

To check that gifts do not include any recalled toys or children’s products, click here.

On behalf of everyone here at First 5 LA, I want to wish you all the happiest of holidays and the best in the new year.

Evelyn V. Martinez  
Executive Director  
First 5 LA

The workshop, held at Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge in September, showed teachers ways to incorporate nature into their preschool curriculum. The youngsters had a chance to tour the 160-acre site, which has been developed by the County of Los Angeles into a world-class rosarium, as well as a Japanese tea house, lilac garden, bird sanctuary, and xeriscape (landscaping that does not require supplemental irrigation).

"Although our center is all asphalt, we are starting our own gardens as a result of this project," said Lopez-Breaux. "The kids can’t stop talking about it. We’re harvesting vegetables and herbs and making recipes with them."

Teachers from Meridian, Brooklyn, Murchison, and Eastman early education centers are working nature into their lesson plans as a result of the workshop.

“We wanted students to begin developing scientific inquiry - asking why. Why are the bees here? Why are the leaves falling?” said Mary McLennan, a child developmental specialist with Child Health Works.

“This is also helping kids become aware of benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, and how they can be more active as a way to keep fit,” added McLennan. She noted that as many as half of the children in the early learning programs targeted are considered overweight or at risk for becoming overweight.

Child Health Works was created by Children’s Hospital Los Angeles to help early education teachers and parents address health, nutrition, and behavioral needs of young children.

For information, visit www.childhealthworks.org or contact McLennan at mmclennan@chla.usc.edu.

More Mothers Taking Breaks From Jobs After Childbirth Despite Financial Strains

More mothers are taking job breaks after the birth of their child but are staying away from the workplace for shorter periods than in the past, according to a recent study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Florence Nelson, regional policy manager for ZERO TO THREE's Los Angeles office, says the study suggests parents are putting particular focus on their child's first year, a timespan experts have long said is crucial for development.

"Consistency and continuity are key," said Nelson. "Someone who knows the child, reads the signals, recognizes their needs, and can provide for those needs is critical, especially in the first years of life."

But experts say the decision to stay home after the birth of a child, even for a short time, can put financial strain on many households, ending discretionary purchases, investments and college savings.

The loss of income also adds stress on the caregiver, and can play out in the attentiveness to the child and the quality of parent-child interactions, said Nelson.
One way to offset the loss of income is for parents to apply for California’s Paid Family Leave Program, said Nelson. Mothers and fathers whose employers participate in the State Disability Insurance Program are entitled to a maximum of six weeks of partial pay while taking off time from work to bond with their newborns.

The family leave law, enacted in California in 2004, is being proposed in 24 other states. For information, visit www.paidfamilyleave.org.

CHAMPION PROFILE

Yoland Trevino Helps Individuals And Organizations Manage Change

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

Yoland Trevino is an educator and trainer who focuses on issues related to personal and organizational change.

The former executive director of the nationally-recognized Vaughn Family Center in Pacoima, Trevino has trained diverse groups in the United States and abroad, including corporations, academia and community-based organizations.

After 25 years in the fields of education, health, psychology, family support, and community development, Trevino founded the Altadena-based Transformative Collaborations International, which helps unleash the talents of children, youth and families.

Trevino holds MA degrees in human behavior and psychology from Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena.

Which book has most influenced your life?

The Crack in the Cosmic Egg, Challenging Constructs of Mind and Reality by Joseph Chilton Pearce.

What makes you happy?
Contemplating and embracing nature.

Which historical figure do you most admire?
Mother Teresa.

What is your idea of a perfect world?
Where we see ourselves in each other.

Which living person do you most admire?
Nelson Mandela.

What is your motto?
"To live each day fully as a ‘present’ that the universe is gifting me."