

## Early Intervention Matters - Vanessa's Smile

Early Childhood programs play an important role in identifying children with special needs.

It is in the first three years of a child's life that the most brain development occurs. During this period, a child needs secure, loving relationships in healthy environments in order to develop physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Unfortunately during this critical growth period, unexpected obstacles and barriers may arise; and for some families this period is experienced as intense, demanding, and often overwhelming - especially for parents of children born with special needs.

Here is just one example of many. Paula, a young mother, joined Mothers' Club in September with her first child Vanessa (a little over one-year-old). On the very first day, there were immediate signs of stress from both of them. Paula shared with staff her concerns for her daughter's well-being. She had many questions about Vanessa's development. What did Vanessa need in order to thrive, be happy and grow? Why was she having difficulty focusing and playing with others? Why did Vanessa cry or fling her arms, throwing herself on the ground each time she was frustrated?

In the early childhood classroom, Vanessa developed a close relationship with her teacher, Rocio Zarazua. One day, after a couple of months in the program, Vanessa started to move her body; she swayed, delighted with the music being played. Her teachers noticed her reaction and incorporated more music into their daily schedules. Each day, Vanessa smiled and laughed more and more. But she still had difficulty communicating with others. She flitted about the classroom,



sometimes stopping to watch the other children, seemingly wanting to join in, but unable to do so.

Mothers' Club referred Vanessa to Regional Center where a formal assessment was completed. She was diagnosed with a developmental delay. A speech therapist began seeing Vanessa weekly while she was at Mothers' Club. Soon after, our staff met with Regional Center professionals to learn more about their services; and attended specialized training on ways to help children with special needs.

Now, after seven months in our program, Vanessa makes regular eye contact with her teachers, she eats by herself, hugs her mother frequently, cuddling up to listen to her mother's voice. In less than a year, Vanessa and her mother received help and support they needed. But I wonder how many families there are who do not have someone to turn to for guidance? I know each child and each family deserves a chance to reach their potential. And all of us need to do our part to help when we can.

- Julie Espinoza  
Family Literacy Coordinator

If you still haven't thought of a good way to spend your **Economic Stimulus Payment** - why not donate it to Mothers' Club! What a great way to help us *stimulate* the minds of our community's youngest and most vulnerable children.

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## Mothers' Club Family Learning Center

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Visit our website at  
[www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org)

# A Season of Awards

The Mothers' Club facility and program garner awards for design and contribution to the community.

Mothers' Club has been selected by the **Pasadena Arts Council**, whose theme this year is "Gold Goes Green", to receive its Gold Crown Award for our new family learning center. The Council commended us for "modeling environmental responsibility for other organizations, the families they serve, and the community as a whole." The 2008 Gold Crown Awards reception and ceremony will be held Thursday, June 5 at 6PM.

The **Pasadena Beautiful Foundation** has bestowed on Mothers' Club its Honor Award for the renovation of the building and grounds, emphasizing our use of native, drought tolerant plants, the preservation of a mature oak tree, and the enhanced building appearance in Northwest Pasadena. The Design Awards will be held at the new Langham Hotel at 6PM on May 29.

The **Soroptimist International of Altadena/Pasadena** is presenting Mothers' Club with an award at their annual Service Awards Luncheon. Each year the club selects one or more organizations to honor and this year, Mothers' Club Family Learning Center will be the only award recipient. The luncheon is scheduled for 12PM on May 28 at the Beckham Grill.



Finally, on April 24, Mothers' Club received a 2007 Cornerstone Concrete Excellence Award from the **Southern California Concrete Producers** for the use of pervious concrete in the building's parking areas. Unlike traditional concrete used in so many urban areas, pervious concrete permits storm-water to percolate through the soil, filtering pollutants and recharging the water table.

We continue to acknowledge the wonderful team that executed our vision for a model facility to house our model programs:

- *Architects:* John Dale, FAIA and Tim Morneau, AIA, Harley Ellis Devereaux
- *Landscape Architect:* Ronnie Siegel, Swire-Siegel Architects
- *Project Developer:* Jaylene Moseley
- *LEED Consultant:* GreenWorks Studio
- *Construction:* G .L. Kaplan Construction Company

## Part of the Mothers' Club Community

Ana Gallegos, our new Children's Program Director, reflects on her first months at Mothers' Club.

Early one morning in March, as I left home for my first day at Mothers' Club, I was acutely aware that I was going into the field that I love and hold true to my heart. I was not only inspired by the Mothers' Club environment, but also excited to launch a new chapter in my life. I quickly found Mothers' Club to be a refreshing place where staff greeted me with open arms and great food; parents were delighted to learn that a new staff member had joined the team; and children observed me in their environment and began trusting me as I entered their classroom each morning to welcome them. When I joined this team, I became part of something that many centers only yearn to accomplish.

My name is Ana Gallegos and I am the new Children's Program Director at

Mothers' Club. I began working with young children and families sixteen years ago and have since experienced quality programs including USC, UCLA, Los Angeles Conservation Corps and Loyola Marymount University; all of which have allowed me to grow into different leadership roles and have led me to where I am today. For the past five years, I have focused on accrediting centers through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. I have developed policy to improve children's programs and provided support to teachers in their classrooms so that they can improve children's learning environments. I love what I do and children are my inspiration because I believe all children deserve to be in beautiful places with quality caregivers.

Mothers' Club is a place where true partnerships between mothers, children, teachers and service providers



Ana (center) and two participating mothers prepare for a special Mother's Day celebration.

are evident as one walks through the corridors. The warm smiles that greet you on a daily basis, the children you see socializing with their peers, and the hands-on support that administration provides to our families is true of a community that cares for families.

I have to say that after working in the field of early childhood for the past sixteen years, "a sense of community"

See **Community**, page 3

# Parents Model Leadership

For the 4th consecutive year, mothers present at regional parent conference.

**B**uilding our Children's Future was the focus of this year's **4th Annual Family Literacy and Health Parent Conference** in the city of Carson. This parent conference is sponsored by the Los Angeles County Office of Education in collaboration with the Family Literacy Support Network. And this is the fourth year that mothers from Mothers' Club were chosen to be speakers at the conference for 400 parents.

This year their topic was "Enjoy Doing Homework with Your Child". The workshop was standing room only and our mothers were nervous, but excited. Alejandra Chavez, Rocio Rubio, Dolores Cisneros and Carmen Tiscanero, worked as a team to develop a PowerPoint presentation, presented section topics and rehearsed in front of their peers at Mothers' Club before setting off to the conference. They shared how parents can help change their child's attitude towards homework, strategies that make homework fun, and how parents can help children learn to manage their time. They also spoke about how parents can moti-



*Alejandra Chavez presenting in a crowded conference room.*

vate, negotiate, and establish positive routines for homework and the future success of their child's academic life.

As the presentation progressed, you could see from the audience's response that these women had crossed over and become teachers: helping others understand and share their knowledge. For me, the most exciting and gratifying part of our lead-

ership program at Mothers' Club is observing mothers take on such leadership roles, and develop the skills that enable them to share with others in our community. It is a long process for a parent to reach this point, one that has long lasting effects, creating role models and community leaders.

- Silvana Casalegno  
*Parent Program Director*

## **Community, cont. from page 2**

is an important component to the success of a program. Mothers' Club represents quality in all facets of an individual's development and it is manifested through the children's and mother's laughter in the classrooms as well as the meeting rooms and kitchen. Developing a sense of community is critical, and Mothers' Club is an example of a true "family away from family."

I witnessed this community firsthand at our Mother's Day Tea celebration. Teachers and children made beautiful flower pots as gifts for the mothers; performances were prepared by the preschool children; and mothers wore colorful hats that brought out the creativeness and uniqueness in each of them. From cowboy hats to home-made hats, it brought the sense of community that Mothers' Club models so well.

Programs like Mothers' Club need to be available; our mothers and children

need places where they can be part of a community that embraces them and supports them. I believe I've come across one of the best examples of where parents learn to be active participants in their children's lives. Mothers' Club works on the development of the whole family; we provide quality experiences and support the family in an effort to prepare them for the best possible future.

My journey with Mothers' Club has commenced. I am extremely excited to be part of a vision that is giving me the opportunity to reflect on best practices in my field; and is also giving me the



*A special community tea party for Mother's Day.*

opportunity to work with a group of individuals that are vested in the best interest of families, children and programs.

- Ana Gallegos  
*Children's Program Director*

## Recent Grant Awards

Our sincere gratitude to these grantors for their recent support of our programs for children and their parents in Northwest Pasadena:

The Atlas Family Foundation  
Avery Dennison Corporation  
The Kathyne Beynon Foundation  
Edmund A. and Marguerite L.A.  
Burke Foundation  
Charles and Henrietta J.  
Detoy Foundation  
First 5 Los Angeles  
Community Opportunities Fund  
The Lluella Morey Murphy Foundation  
Office Depot  
P.K. Foundation  
M. Piuze Foundation  
Dwight Stuart Youth Foundation

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## Thank you to Our Guardians

*Individuals who sustain our programs with annual giving of \$1,000 or more:*

Judy Smith Asbury & Greg Asbury  
Ann Kelsey Babcock  
Gwen & Guilford Babcock  
Carole & Mike Babcock  
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Ellen & Harvey Knell  
Annette Kunzman & Douglas Soloman  
Valerie & George Leiva  
Rosemary Lonergan  
Maria Low Way  
Kathy & Tony Magistrale  
Judy & Stephen McDonald

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## Grant Focus

In April, Mothers' Club was among 14 agencies to receive a capacity building grant from a new **First 5 Los Angeles** initiative, the Community Opportunities Fund (COF). The COF represents a new approach for First 5 LA that dedicates funding for assisting organizations with capacity building and policy and advocacy projects. The intent is that programs will be strengthened to provide long-term support for children and families.

First 5 LA reports that, "Each new grantee was selected for their impressive and thoughtful project idea. The range of projects funded include an evaluation project that will use data to improve the agency's parenting services, to a policy and advocacy project that will increase access to nutritional food in underserved communities. The intent of the projects is to achieve one of the three long-term goals - the improvement of parents' and caregivers' ability to support their children; the improvement of children's health

conditions related to nutrition, physical activity, and oral health; or the prevention of unintentional injuries."

With our three-year grant, Mothers' Club will hire a Volunteer Manager to develop new volunteer opportunities for members of Generation X, while strengthening our overall volunteer program. At the completion of the grant, Mothers' Club will have increased our capacity to manage, track and cultivate volunteers; we will have an active volunteer program; and we will have created a revolving pool of potential individual donors and volunteer leadership who are invested in the agency's mission through their first-hand participation as a volunteer.

**Evelyn V. Martinez**, First 5 LA Executive Director, commended the selected applicants, stating, "I congratulate the 14 grantees for their tremendous work in the community, and look forward to partnering with each of them on our shared goal of improving the lives of young children and families throughout L.A. County."



*Volunteers enhance every day programming. Seen here, two music education students from Pasadena City College volunteer in our toddler classroom.*

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Betty & Charles McKenney  
Patricia McLaughlin  
Margaret & David Mgrublian  
Maria & John Minervini  
Norah Morley  
Janice & Richard Morris  
Jennifer & E. David Murphy  
Mary Lois Nevins  
Celia Gomez Newman  
Judy & John O'Neill  
Beth & Christopher Orndorff  
Kathleen & Donald Orth  
Claudia & Ramon Pack  
Sue Parilla & Theodore Krontiris  
Teresa Payton  
Sylvia & Benjamin Paz

Peggy Phelps  
Gay & Ron Redcay  
Marsha V. Rood  
Aty & Howard Rotter  
Michael Schneickert &  
Karen Leiko Otamura  
Carol & Carl Selkin  
Joyce & Richard Summerwill  
Victoria & John Tongish  
Maxine Tongish  
Heather & Michael VanMeter  
Lori & David Watson  
Julie & Stephen Webber  
Judith & John Whiting  
Cindy & George Wiley  
Judy & Randy Wilson

## From the President...

Dear friends,

Mothers' Club board of directors and staff are in the midst of a listening campaign. We are reaching out to our friends and neighbors in other non-profits and in the community. We're asking: 'What are you providing?' 'Who are you serving?' 'What are the un-met needs in the community?'

All of this information is being collected as data to help us in our process of discovering the best way for Mothers' Club to grow. Our new home allows us to have programs throughout the day and evening - even on the weekends, if our budget allows. But first, we need to determine what is needed and wanted by the community.

And "community" means many things. First and most obvious, our community means families in Northwest Pasadena. From there, our definition of community expands to include all of Pasadena, greater Los Angeles, and even nationwide for our fields of family literacy and early childhood education.

Many of our funders have called us a model for other non-profits in family

literacy and early childhood education. Our mission is not necessarily to be a model. But, if we could find a way to communicate what we have learned for others to utilize, perhaps we can help many more "families succeed in school and in life." And that is our mission. Should we seek to offer programs as a model and provide training for teachers and non-profit leaders in our field?

Others in the community have noticed that there are few free or low cost programs for our very youngest children aged 0 - 3. We have begun a program in the afternoon to address this need called *First Connections*. Should we expand it? Are there other programs Mothers' Club could or should be doing? What other agencies could or should we partner with?

These and many more questions are keeping us in meetings and discussion groups these days. And it is why we are listening very intently.

It is an exciting time at Mothers' Club. We have a strong, committed board, a wonderful stalwart group of donors that grow each month, and a



*A mother helps her toddler on the slide in Mothers' Club's new afternoon program, First Connections.*

staff that is passionate about what they do. The future is indeed very bright.

With Warm Regards,

Judy Smith Asbury  
*President of the Board*

## From the Director...

We often point out that Mothers' Club strengthens families by reducing isolation among parents and by promoting a sense of being part of a community. As the first school year in our new home comes to an end, I asked our children's program teachers to reflect on some of the changes they have experienced, and I was struck by how our new home is building community among our staff.

One of the most appreciated features of our building is the use of windows and glass. For those of you who are familiar with our old space, you will remember that the classrooms were separated from each other. As a result each classroom operated alone, and teachers now report that they felt isolated at times and it was difficult to feel a sense of community. Now, with our open design of four classrooms surrounding an atrium, separated by sliding glass doors, there is a strong feeling of being connected with each other. The teachers are more able to see their classroom as a part of the whole and they remark on how they

appreciate feeling the flow of the program day as children enter and exit classrooms for various activities. Appropriately, our fifth classroom, the infant room, is set a little off to the side from the other classrooms, creating a peaceful cocoon where the youngest of our children can safely explore their surroundings.

The outdoor space has also helped bring us together. Instead of having separate outdoor areas, children from 2-5 years old share a play area. The classrooms sometimes take turns using the area, but at other times they are all together. This is a great way for the younger children to observe the "big" kids at play. Quite often the older children will climb up onto the play structure and engage in a make believe game that includes the younger children who have claimed the lower ground. The teachers and parent assistants interact with all of the children, regardless of which class they are in, again building community on a daily basis.

And then there is the social kitchen.

It may be that at some workplaces, employees regularly go out for lunch or eat their lunches alone in their little cubicles. Not at Mothers' Club, where any meal is a time for community. One of my favorite times of day is after the children and parents have gone home and our teachers bring their food to the kitchen where they fall into the familiar routine of making a salad, heating the beans, scrambling eggs, combining this and that into a shared meal. They share stories of their work day, reports from home, and plans for the upcoming weekend. It is comfortable and comforting to see the people who care for our children, care for each other.

Our new home is strengthening us as an organization, helping us build our internal community so that we can be a source of strength for the broader community. We are grateful every day for this opportunity, grateful to every family who trusts in us, and grateful to everyone who has helped us get here.

- Sue Kujawa  
*Executive Director*

**Executive Director**

Susan Kujawa

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**The Power of Two**

May 2008  
*Editor*, Sarah E. Orth  
*Photos*, Mothers' Club staff

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**About Mothers' Club**

Founded in 1961, Mothers' Club prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life. We promote strong parent/child relationships and encourage friendship and mutual support among mothers through our educational programs and social services, thereby creating a stronger community for all families. Since our inception, we have evolved in direct response to the needs of families in our community. Today we are a model family support and education center.

Learn more at [www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org)

## Community Open Houses

Join us at the new Mothers' Club Family Learning Center for a tour and conversations with staff and Board members.

Upcoming Open Houses:  
June 10  
July 8

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

To provide a courtesy RSVP, or for more information, please call us at (626) 792-2687 ext. 122.

## Don't Miss our 2008 Annual Gala!

Sunday, June 22nd, 5:00 PM  
In our New Home

honoring **Judy & Randy Wilson** and the **Pasadena Chapter of the National Charity League** for their dedication to our agency & the community

Reservations/Questions, call (626) 792-2687, ext. 122

Download event materials online at <http://www.mothersclub.org>

## There's No Place Like Home



**Mothers' Club  
Family Learning  
Center**



Mothers' Club Family Learning Center  
980 N. Fair Oaks Avenue  
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