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MOTHERS’ CLUB TO BE AWARDED VALIDATION FOR ITS ‘EXEMPLARY FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM’

The Pasadena-based Family Learning Center is one of only three programs in the greater LA area to receive this designation from the Los Angeles County Office of Education

PASADENA, Calif. When the Family Literacy Support Network (FLSN) – a department established within the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to support family literacy programs – invited Mothers’ Club Family Learning Center to seek validation as an “Exemplary Family Literacy Program,” the Pasadena-based nonprofit organization immediately accepted the challenge.

For one thing, the invitation itself was an honor.

“FLSN considered all 24 programs in First 5 LA’s Family Literacy Initiative,” explains Susan Kujawa, Executive Director of Mothers’ Club. “There were certain criteria, however, that the programs had to meet in order to take part in the Exemplary Program validation process. Ultimately, only four were invited to participate. We’re extremely proud that Mothers’ Club was one of them.”

“The Exemplary Validation Program (EVP) pilot is an exciting opportunity for invited First 5 LA family literacy grantees to engage their stakeholders in improving the quality of their family literacy program," adds Evelyn Martinez, Executive Director of First 5 LA.

First 5 LA, which was established to distribute Los Angeles County’s share of tobacco tax funds after California voters approved Proposition 10 in 1998, supports programs designed to help ensure that children aged five and younger receive the best possible start in life – that they are physically and emotionally healthy, safe and ready to learn.

The two-generation “Power of Two” programs offered by Mothers’ Club fit easily within this parameter. Time and time again, studies have shown that in order for significant, long-term change to occur within an at-risk family, a parent and child must be educated together. In addition, the optimum time to participate in such programs is when children are most vulnerable and impressionable – between birth and five years old.

As it turned out, only three of the four organizations invited – Mothers’ Club, Hawthorne School District and Rowland Unified School District – opted to embark upon the rigorous eight month long journey to validation. For Mothers’ Club, this involved amassing an
almost 100 page portfolio of evidence documenting the array of “best practices” utilized by the agency throughout its family literacy program.

Among the “best practices” – or services – Mothers’ Club provides the impoverished, at-risk families turning to it for help are: free early childhood education for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, the years proven to be most critical to achieving future academic success; parenting education; adult literacy classes; and parent/child literacy activities. A panel of experts from the Goodling Institute at Penn State and RMC Research and Evaluation Corporation then reviewed these “best practices,” to verify that they indeed lead to “exemplary outcomes” for young children and families.

On October 11, LACOE – with support from First 5 LA – will formally recognize Mothers’ Club as an Exemplary Family Literacy Program. The ceremony will take place at 4:15 PM at First 5 LA’s headquarters, 750 N. Alameda Street, Los Angeles.

“It’s been a long journey, but it’s definitely been worth it to document the strategies and programs we’ve implemented so successfully for nearly 50 years,” says Kujawa.

Nor is the validation process the only “long journey” the nonprofit has undertaken recently. Less than a month after the agency receives the “Exemplary Family Literacy Program” validation – on November 1 – Mothers’ Club will celebrate the Grand Opening of its new home at 980 North Fair Oaks Blvd. in Pasadena.

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By ‘green-certified,’ Smith is referring to the certification the new building will receive from the U.S. Green Building Council as part of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System, a national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Mothers’ Club set the goal early on to attain LEED certification and engaged a design team – Harley Ellis Devereaux and GreenWorks Studio – with experience in making this happen. Under discussion throughout the design process were such “green” considerations as water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

“We can’t wait to show off our new building,” says Susan Kujawa. “It’s yet another example of Mothers’ Club’s commitment to engaging in ‘best practices’ that lead to exemplary outcomes. Our ‘green’ building will provide a solid gold environment in which to learn.”

First 5 LA is a unique child-advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children in Los Angeles County, from prenatal through age 5. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families.
Founded in 1961, Mothers’ Club Family Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life. The organization promotes strong parent-child relationships and encourages friendship and mutual support among mothers through its education programs and social services, thereby creating a stronger community for all families.

For more information about Mothers’ Club, visit www.mothersclub.org or call 626.792.2687. Mothers’ Club is currently located at 526 East Orange Grove Blvd in Pasadena, California.

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