



Report from Executive Director  
December 17, 2015

#### I. Update on Commission Initiatives

- Countywide Strategies
  - 2-1-1 Information Resource and Referral Hotline
    - 2-1-1 is developing a guided search web portal to make its extensive resource/agency database more accessible to everyday users.
      - Guided search web-page provides links for most commonly accessed services, arranged in logical categories.
  - Help Me Grow Developmental Screening Collaborative (HMG)
    - HMG working with partner agencies to look at parent participation rates in developmental screening across participating sites and strategizing ways to inform and engage parents.
      - Working with CDI preschool providers to identify opportunities for providing screenings during enrollment at busy preschool sites.
    - HMG Collaborative will showcase the Help Me Grow Toolkit at the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs Conference.
  - Ventura County Children's Oral Health Collaborative - United Way
    - Oral Health Collaborative's Care Coordination and Referral System has expanded to include the greater Oxnard Plains area.
      - 59 referrals have been processed with the majority of referrals coming from zip code 93036, where there has been focused outreach with school nurses.
    - 12 new organizations now participating with the Oral Health Collaborative.
      - New partners for the parent education program include: CalSafe, Ocean View School District, MICOP, Reiter Affiliated Companies, CASA, Boys and Girls Club Ventura, Rio School District, and the Oxnard School District.
- Results Based Accountability – Capacity Building
  - WestEd Training on Special Needs Inclusion for Early Learning PACT Teachers
    - NfL PACT teachers attended the second of a 4-part training on how to tailor programming to accommodate children of all abilities in PACT programs.
  - Zero to Three 30th National Training Institute Webcast
    - First 5 hosted a 2 day live broadcast of the national training.
      - Conference hosted a series of panels, bringing together some of the leading researchers and practitioners from the field of early child development, trauma and infant mental health.
        - 17 funded partner staff attended sessions of interest in the F5VC conference room.

- Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL)
  - Pleasant Valley NfL – Multicultural BookFest
    - Sixth Annual Children’s Multicultural BookFest held at the Camarillo Community Center in early November in collaboration with Camarillo Public Library, Pleasant Valley School District and Mrs. Figs’ Bookworm.
      - Booths represented cultures from around the world and incorporated dozens of volunteers to read to more than 450 families.
  - Oxnard NfL – Service Coordination and Case Management
    - NfL Family Liaisons provided services to 112 families within the first 3 months of this fiscal year, with an average of 2.25 contacts for each family and 53 referrals to service agencies.
    - MICOP Promotoras case managers at Chavez and Harrington Family Resource Centers bridge the connection between families and access to systems of care.
      - Promotoras worked with 199 families through September, with an average of 4 contacts for each family and 263 referrals to service agencies.
  - Moorpark/Simi Valley NfL – Partnerships
    - Justin Early Learners Academy was established by Simi Valley Unified School District in August, representing several years of partnership with the NfL. (see attached)
      - Academy houses NfL’s Simi Valley Family Resource Center, PACT classes and preschool program along with the district’s special needs program for children, parent-child education program and a soon to be opened preschool for school district employees – offering tremendous opportunities to collaborate with local partners.
    - “Breakfast with Santa”
      - Partnering with Moorpark Kiwanis, NfL hosted an event providing toys for 350 children and their parents.
        - Partners also included Moorpark Unified School District, Moorpark McDonald’s, Moorpark Presbyterian Church, Moorpark High School Key Club, Campus Canyon School Builders Club, Conejo Valley Youth Orchestra and a local dentist who donated dental kits for Moorpark NfL participants.
  - NfL Learning Community – Family Support Workers
    - Second Family Strengthening Learning Community held in November with approximately 25 NfL case workers in attendance.
      - Group found that basic needs represent a high need area but staff tend to be less familiar with resources or experience difficulties with referrals.
        - Housing/shelter and immigration/legal were identified as common needs that are particularly challenging for referrals.
    - F5VC staff reaching out to relevant agencies to arrange information sessions on available resources for learning community participants.

- Preschool
  - IMPACT Action Plan
    - First 5 Ventura County submitted proposed IMPACT Action Plan to First 5 California in collaboration with the Ventura County Office of Education and Child Development Resources, Inc.
      - Action Plan seeks to seamlessly integrate all available resources, including IMPACT and CSPP Block Grant funds, to create one Quality Rating and Improvement System.
        - To receive the full amount of IMPACT funds, Ventura's QRIS must serve 111 sites, requiring expansion to 24 new sites.
    - F5VC recently received notification that the 5 year total allocation will be increased by \$30,855, for a total of \$2,748,785.
  - QRIS Professional Development
    - For the 4th year, VCOE is partnering with WestEd to offer Teaching Pyramid training at QRIS sites.
      - Curriculum is highly regarded as a best practice for addressing the social and emotional needs of children.
      - Approximately 67 teachers participate in the training.
        - 6 coaches will work with new training participants and one mentor site (Harrington, administered by Child Development Incorporated).

## II. County, Regional and National Updates

- VC Star Early Literacy Partnership
  - F5VC is partnering with the Ventura County Star in a collaborative effort to make early literacy the social norm in Ventura County.
    - Celebrity Reader event will host dozens of local leaders and community stars reading to young children at sites across Ventura County to raise awareness, share the joy of books, and build a cadre of champions for early literacy.
- Collaboration with Ventura County Probation Agency
  - F5VC staff working closely with the County Probation Agency to coordinate services and resources for youth in probation who have children or who are currently expecting, and their extended families.
    - Community partners in this effort also include the Rio Neighborhood for Learning and Kids and Families Together.
- Strengthening Families Workgroup – Advancing Understanding of ACEs
  - Trauma Informed Brown Bag in December marked the third in a series of learning forums.
    - Approximately 55 participants attended the December forum focused on resilience.
  - Presentation to Interagency Coordinating Council
    - F5 staff presented to approximately 25 Early Start and provider agency staff, many of whom were learning about ACEs for the first time.

- Perinatal Substance Use Task Force
  - First 5 co-sponsored event with the Perinatal Substance Abuse Task Force on marijuana use in pregnancy.
    - Approximately 22 health care providers attended, which included physicians from the Health Care Agency and Los Robles, members of the Perinatal Substance Use Task Force, and public health nurses.
      - Dr. James Nocon, retired obstetrician from Indiana University, was the featured speaker
        - Dr. Nocon created a comprehensive prenatal recovery program for all forms of substance use; 80% of patients became drug free at delivery.
- “Baby friendly” Hospitals
  - Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Paula Hospital have received renewal of their "baby friendly" status by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund. (see attached)
    - Only 315 hospitals in the US have this designation (According to the AHA, there are 5,759 registered hospitals in the US.)
- “Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay Off” - James J. Heckman
  - New study released by Professor Heckman gathers the effectiveness of a wide range of program. (see attached)
    - Results show “program effectiveness and the economic value of providing disadvantage children with access to quality early childhood programs.”

III. Upcoming Events

- **First 5 Committees**
  - **Administration/Finance Committee**, January 11, 2015, 3:00 – 5:00 a.m., F5VC offices

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**PROVIDER ANECDOTE**

**Hueneme NfL**

Many families start their journey through the doors of the NfL under desperate circumstances and in the end, frequently report that they are thankful to have a safe place to ask for help and that as a result of NfL support systems, their living conditions have improved in numerous ways. It is often the case that the adults convey their triumphs and gratitude to the NfL. However, this year it was a kindergarten child who first reported her feelings about the EL/ PACT classes, during an outreach event that took place in front of Hathaway Elementary School where the FRC and new PACT classroom is located.

The Port Hueneme/South Oxnard Hueneme NfL reopened their doors to the community on August 24, 2015 after the end of summer break. In order to encourage participation in the numerous

program offerings, Early Learning Specialist, Claudia Vargas, had set up a table adorned with the First 5 NfL tablecloth, several colorful balloons and children's books that had been donated.

Ms. Vargas was talking with parents who had arrived to pick up their children who were in their first week of Kindergarten. As she was handing out flyers that contained information about the services provided through the NfL, a little girl happened to be walking by with her mother. She ran up to Claudia and asked if she could help. Ms. Vargas recognized the child, "Mari", who had been in her PACT classes the two previous years and she gave Mari two flyers to distribute to the parents. Not satisfied with the two flyers, Mari returned to the table almost immediately and picked up an armful of flyers! Claudia was surprised and watched as Mari eagerly handed out the flyers. Ms. Vargas heard Mari yelling excitedly to the parents, "Hey, please, come see the teacher! Meet her! I was in her class and I played and learned in her class and my mom did too! Suddenly, all eyes were on the NfL table and on Claudia. More families began approaching. Mari continued telling anyone who would listen, "I was happy in the class and I am not afraid in my class now. I am brave!" By far, Mari is the youngest and most effective volunteer that the NfL has had in helping get the word out to the community about the power of the NfL.

Mari began her journey through the NfL when she was three years old. She and her mother started attending PACT classes at the Haycox Elementary School site with her younger brother, "Tomas", who had been diagnosed with autism following a developmental screening and referrals provided by VCPH through the NfL. At that time, Mari was an independent, keen learner who consistently helped her brother in class. She also served as a role model for him and for the other children in class. With boundless enthusiasm, Mari was always eager to participate in all of the classroom activities. However, after a few months her mother became depressed and exhausted by the burden of having to take care of Tomas, her special needs son.

One day Mari's mother took an opportunity to share with Claudia that she was at the breaking point. She felt that she spent most of her time worrying about Tomas and his needs and felt she was neglecting herself, her daughter and the family. Claudia had also noticed a change in Mari's behavior. Mari had apparently fallen into a depressed state and appeared to be distracted, became easily upset, and refused to participate in class. During one particular class session, Mari had even accused her mother of not loving her.

It was about this time that the parents in Claudia's PACT class requested a piñata making workshop. Claudia agreed and she understood the significance of piñatas in the Mexican culture as a principal symbol of celebration. Parents brought in small clay pots which they and their children papier-mâchéd in the traditional Mexican style. Mari attended the series of piñata classes with her mother and it was at this point that Claudia began to observe a complete and positive change in Mari. Mari and her mother began to return to their former selves, filled with positivity and a passion for being together and enjoying themselves as a family.

Currently, Mari is attending Kindergarten at Hathaway Elementary School and continues to be an advocate for the Port Hueneme/South Oxnard Neighborhood for Learning. Through the assistance of the NfL and the Hueneme School District, Mari's brother is currently attending San Miguel School for children with special needs. Mari and her family were able to overcome their challenges and improve their lives by taking advantage of NfL services including attending EL/PACT classes, Triple P Seminars, Parent Support Groups, individual counseling through City Impact and received a

developmental screening provided by VCPH, which helped Tomas receive services from Addison Behavioral Resources. Mari's mother was able to regain her sense of hope and faith in herself and strengthen her natural abilities to be a positive parent to all of her children

### **Mis Padres y Yo - Creating Generational Impact - Oxnard NfL**

"Rosa" and her grandson "Robert" began attending Mis Padres y Yo workshops in September. Robert is almost two years old, and his grandma is a primary caretaker while his parents are at work. When Rosa and Robert started attending the workshops, Robert was not interested in sitting and playing with his grandma. And she sat quietly observing, also struggling to engage in play with her grandson. Very quickly, however, Rosa began to reflect on her past parenting experiences and share her hopes for change in this generation with her grandchildren. "I am coming to understand the emotional aspect of a child," she said, "and I think that is where I failed with my own children."

After each class, Rosa would ask the facilitators questions about how to really put the learning from each topic into practice. And each week, Rosa eagerly shared her efforts to put new habits into practice. Following the class that focused on communication and strategies for supporting language development, Rosa shared with the group that she and Robert had read lots of books together throughout the week and had visited the library.

During the class that focused on positive discipline, the whole group reflected on the struggle to focus on and praise positive behavior. The class nodded in agreement, saying that they sometimes spend too much time scolding and chasing and not enough time praising the good. Taking this idea to heart, Rosa hesitated for a moment and then asked the facilitator, "What should I say when I want to tell Robert that I am happy with his behavior and happy that he sat and played with me today?" The facilitator responded, "Exactly that. You should just look at him and say exactly what you feel." Rosa stooped down and held Robert's hands in hers, looked into his eyes and said, "Thank you sweetie. I'm so happy that you played with me today; I like that you sat with me in my lap." Robert reached up to his grandma and gave her a big hug.

In only a few short weeks, the dynamic between Robert and Rosa has changed dramatically. Robert seeks out his grandma for play and companionship, and each week they describe their new play activities. One facilitator remarked, "Rosa has really entered the child's world; she's not an observer anymore." Rosa has also reflected on her new appreciation for play and its positive impact on Robert's emotional development. She recalls that play was not a big part of her childhood, and she has expressed regret at not having played more with her own children.

The Mis Padres y Yo team is proud of Rosa and Robert's growth together, and feels especially proud to be able to provide a safe space in which Rosa could express herself, reflect, and commit to new patterns of communication. Rosa said, "This experience is really helping me communicate with my own children too; I tell them what I'm learning, so hopefully it will help them too." Mis Padres y Yo offers a safe environment and creates connections to a cohort of parents and grandparents who offer social support that is critical to health and wellness.