



Preschoolers enjoy the slide at Rio del Norte Elementary School in Oxnard.



Bella Pizaño at Rio del Norte preschool.

Mobile Dental Clinic Reaches VC Children at Their Schools

“Kids will have toothaches, and their families see that as the norm,” said Dr. Mark Lisagor, a retired pediatric dentist. “When their teeth hurt, kids don’t eat well. When they don’t eat well, they become under-nourished, and then they don’t do well in school. It’s a ripple effect.”

It’s also unacceptable to Dr. Lisagor, the Area 3 trustee on the Ventura County Board of Education. He is president of the Santa Barbara-Ventura Counties Dental Care Foundation (SBVCD CF) – a network of local volunteer dentists, hygienists and dental assistants.

Established in the mid-1990s, the foundation works closely with other area nonprofits, including the United Way, First 5 Ventura County and the Ventura County Medical Center’s Child Resource Program to provide patients of all ages with free services such as cleanings, fillings, extractions and oral health

education.

The education program covers, in both English and Spanish, the importance of oral health, the decay process, how to prevent decay with tooth-brushing, flossing and good nutrition. All attendees are provided tooth-brushes, floss and toothpaste.

SBVCD CF member dentists treat qualifying patients for free in their private offices or at free clinics, including the Simi Valley Free Dental Clinic and Westminster Free Clinic in Thousand Oaks, as well as at the Oxnard Dental Hygiene School.

In 2012, more than 10,000 low-income patients took advantage of the oral health education programs. Over 800 children and 200 adults received restorative and preventative measures such as fluoride varnish applications, teeth cleanings and sealants in the foundation’s Mobile Dental Clinic. It equates

Continued on page 10 ➤



Jessica Chavez-Rios, program coordinator for the Ventura-Santa Barbara Counties Dental Care Foundation (left) joins Dr. Mehravar Brown and dental assistant Andres Aguilar at the Mobile Dental Clinic. With them are young patients Joshua and Aldo Torres.

First 5 Supports High Quality Preschool

Increasingly more research findings demonstrate that the investment in preschool pays huge dividends for schools K-12.

That’s where First 5 Ventura County and the Neighborhoods for Learning step in.

Voters in 1998 approved Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act, giving rise to First 5. Partly through a 50-cent tax on tobacco, First 5 develops support systems for children up to the age of five, including parent education, access to health and dental care, and quality preschool programming. Many services are delivered through First 5’s 11 Neighborhoods for Learning (NfLs) affiliated with local school districts.

First 5 Ventura County helps children entering kindergarten become ready to learn and succeed.

“First 5 has truly taken a leadership role in increasing the capacity of preschool spaces as well as boosting the quality of our early learning programming,” said Carrie Murphy, Director of Early Childhood Programs for the Ventura County Office of Education.

First 5 Ventura County enhances the social, emotional, physical and cognitive foundation for children during the critical early years of growth and development. First 5 Ventura County supported start-up and operational costs, and funded stipends and scholarships, to support 1,349 preschools

spaces in 2010–2011, or approximately 20 percent of all publicly funded, center-based preschool spaces countywide.

Eighty-eight percent of all First 5 Ventura County-supported preschool classrooms were rated as “good” or “excellent” quality on measures of the preschool Environmental Rating Scale tool. As another measure of success, 85 percent of all children attending First 5 Ventura County-supported preschools last year demonstrated strong gains in developmental competency, achieving readiness to enter kindergarten.

Local school districts providing subsidized preschool include Conejo Valley Unified, Moorpark Unified, Ocean View, Oxnard Elementary, Santa Paula Elementary, University Preparation School and Ventura Unified. Community-based organizations provide preschool services in the Rio, Hueneme and Ojai school districts.

“We have room to grow in that we are currently serving one of every two children eligible,” Murphy said.

Ventura County is one of 16 counties that received several million dollars in federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants last December, Murphy said. “That money is flowing through First 5 Ventura and the County Office to work with preschool programs throughout the county to raise quality.”

PTA and PTSA

Continued from page 4

and the PTA at Las Colinas Middle School is holding a Career Day for the first time this year, Nahas said.

PTAs and PTSAs also help quietly behind the scenes. The Conejo Council PTA promotes its "Project Conejo Safe Homes," on behalf of students at Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks and Westlake high schools. The Conejo Council asks parents to sign a written pledge that they will not provide alcohol to children gathering in their homes for parties and provides a public database that a parent can check another family's pledge participation. Last summer, the program expanded to the middle schools and to date, approximately 1,200 families are on the list, said Maria Steck, vice president of Leadership for the 12th District PTA.

"I anticipate we will grow every year, as more and more people become comfortable with the idea of the program and what we are trying to accomplish," Steck said.

Dental Care Bus

Continued from page 6

to approximately \$1.25 million in dental services over the year for low-income, uninsured people in Ventura County.

The Mobile Dental Clinic visits three to four Ventura County schools and preschools each week. Children, referred by school nurses and other staff, are taken out of class for exams and treatments.

"We know it can be difficult for low-income families – many of them who are farm workers – to bring their kids in to clinics for treatment, so we bring the treatment to them, so to speak," said Dr. Betty Layne, executive director of SBVCDCE. "We try to eliminate as many barriers as possible."

A good number of families are taking advantage of the Mobile Dental Clinic at the Child Development Center at Hueneme Elementary School, according to site supervisor Amber Lopez.

"It just doesn't help children in our classrooms but the whole family in general," Lopez said. "It's been extremely important to our community."

Channel Islands

Continued from page 5

the Channel Islands kelp forest guided by a park ranger. Fitted with a special SCUBA face-mask, an underwater ranger communicates with the live audience and answers questions about the marine ecosystem.

Live Hike offers students and park visitors the opportunity to take an interactive virtual hike on Anacapa Island with park rangers, researchers and scientists to learn about ongoing restoration projects, along with the natural and cultural history of the island without ever crossing the channel.

The Eagle CAM is a live web camera that is focused on a bald eagle nest located on Santa Cruz Island. Bald eagles disappeared from the Channel Islands during the 1960s, and the Eagle CAM plays an important role in efforts to restore the birds to the islands' ecosystem. It allows people from all over the world to view the nest live over the Internet. Menard reports in 2010 there were 1.6 million viewers of Eagle CAM from 145 countries.

Susan Chapin, a sixth-grade language arts teacher at Balboa Middle School in Ventura,

takes advantage of Ocean CAM. She finds her students' creative writing juices come to the surface as they view sea creatures and kelp forests live. The Ocean CAM, she said, helps them develop writing strategies, including the use of symmetry, metaphors and personification in sentences.

"It really grabs their attention, and since it's live, they begin anticipating what may appear next," Chapin said. "Are they going to see a shark? It becomes exciting for them."

In addition to helping students learn through the Channel Islands Live program, the National Parks Service, Menard said, is also developing a school curriculum centered on sea kelp and sea birds.

"We're trying to reach students any way we can," Menard said.

Segue Program

Continued from page 4

donations from individuals, corporations and foundations.

Colby Allen, a Ventura resident who works as a senior manager of strategic planning and operations for Amgen, shared his work expe-

rience with Ventura High students during a recent campus visit in December. Allen works in an engineering division that focuses on Amgen's global real estate needs and said he wants students to know the career benefits of being able to speak either Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic or Hindi, as well as English.

"That could be a competitive advantage when getting into the workplace," Allen shared.



Colby Allen, a senior manager of strategic planning and operations for Amgen.

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B.S. Child Development 2012
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