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**First 5 Ventura County Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at State Capitol on May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

F5VC Executive Director and Program Manager join three legislators in receiving awards for backing bills benefitting young kids

**SACRAMENTO** –First 5 Ventura County celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the statewide First 5 network with a Family Fun Day and awards presentation on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the capitol steps in Sacramento.

First 5, which was created in 1998 when California voters passed Proposition 10 and operates in all 58 counties, celebrated the local partners and state legislators who support its mission of ensuring California’s kids thrive. Kids’ games, a visit from Sesame Street’s Walkaround Rosita, and appearances by several state legislators marked the event.

“First 5 is pleased to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary alongside the partners we work with, every day, to meet the needs of California’s young children. Now more than ever, we believe that California’s success will be measured one day by the success of its youngest children,” said Petra Puls, Executive Director of First 5 Ventura.

First 5 Ventura County is kicking off their local 20th anniversary celebration with the Take 5 and Read to Kids! event on May 4th. More than 55 local celebrities will read at local preschools on Friday. The public can attend events at the Ventura Police Department on May 4th at 10 a.m. and at their local library during Storytime the week of May 7th.

More than 13,000 kids have attended preschool as a result of First 5 Ventura funding, and kids who are prepared for Kindergarten are 75% more likely to graduate High School.

Assemblymembers Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters), Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno), and Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) received Champion for Children Awards for prioritizing young children. The legislators are backing efforts this session to increase pay and recruitment of child care providers (Aguiar-Curry, AB 2292); bolster home visiting for CalWORKs families with young children (Arambula, AB 992); and advance more rigorous developmental screening practices (McCarty, AB 11). Senator Mike McGuire (D-North Coast), a former First 5 commissioner, will receive a Champion for Children award earlier in the day.

“Our kids are our collective future. These legislators’ commitment to the wellbeing of California’s youngest children is a step in the right direction,” said Moira Kenney, Executive Director of First 5 Association, which represents First 5s in the state’s 58 counties. “Families are struggling across our state—with poverty, quality child care, and access to early intervention services. By supporting kids in the early years, we can shape the course of their lives—and our society.”

### **About First 5 Ventura**

*Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a significant impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on tobacco to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 Ventura County distributes more than \$10 million each year to programs and services that support children's health, learning and families, including the 11 community based Neighborhoods for Learning (NfLs). [www.first5ventura.org](http://www.first5ventura.org)*