



Children's ADVOCATE



PUBLISHED BY ACTION ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN



News from the
CHILDREN'S ADVOCATES ROUNDTABLE ... 2

Grassroots snapshot
**PARENTS STOP POWER PLANT
 EXPANSION 3**

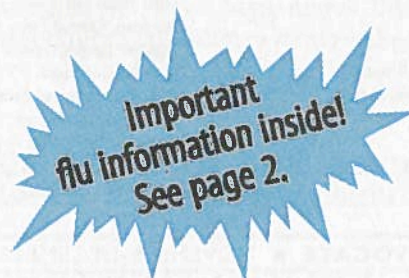
Hot topic
**RECESSION SQUEEZES FAMILIES AND EARLY
 CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS. 4**

Early care and education
HELPING KIDS WITH STRESS 6

Raising kids
EATING HEALTHY ON A BUDGET 8

News from the
**CALIFORNIA CHILD DEVELOPMENT
 CORPS 10**

News from
PARENT VOICES 11



Non-Profit Organization
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Oakland, CA
 Permit # 1846

Protect your family this flu season

The seasonal flu plus H1N1 flu (swine flu) may cause a more dangerous flu season this year, say health officials. A lot more people may get sick—and children under five are at higher risk for complications from the flu.

Both types of flu viruses have similar symptoms: high fever, chills, runny or stuffy nose, coughing, body aches, a sore throat, and fatigue.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that people:

- get a flu vaccine—especially adults who care for or live with young children, and children over 6 months. The CDC says vaccines are the single best way to protect against the flu, and that flu vaccines have a very good safety record
- prevent the flu from spreading—wash hands frequently with soap and water, cough or sneeze into a tissue or shirt sleeve, don't share utensils
- stay home when you're sick—and keep sick children home
- encourage healthy behaviors—eating well, sleeping well, playing outdoors.

Early childhood programs should also:

- encourage staff to get vaccinated

- remind children about good hygiene
- ask parents to keep sick children home
- do daily health checks and make sure parent contact information is up to date
- separate ill children and staff
- make sure to do routine cleanings—particularly of areas and objects children frequently touch with hands, mouths, or bodily fluids.

If children get sick:

- Keep children home if they are mildly ill. Give lots of liquids and rest. Children shouldn't return to school or child care until they have been fever-free for 24 hours.
- Visit your child's pediatrician if your child
 - ◆ is younger than three months and has a fever
 - ◆ gets sick and has a chronic medical condition
 - ◆ is very tired, irritable, vomiting, or not interacting normally.
- Get emergency care if your child has trouble breathing, can't keep liquids down, shows signs of dehydration, or has seizures.

For more info:

- **Flu.gov** has information for families, early care and education pro-

grams, and schools from the US Department of Health and Human Services—in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese, www.flu.gov

- **Flu tool kit for early childhood programs** offers tips for teachers and providers, fact sheets, parent handouts, and posters in four languages, www.flu.gov/professional/school/childtoolkit.html
- **Child Care Health Program** (510-204-0930) has compiled resources about the flu for families and early care and education programs, www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/html/pandr/swine_flu.htm

Campaign for paid sick days:

The Labor Project for Working Families is working to make sure California workers have paid sick days when they or a family member gets sick—or to recover from domestic violence or sexual assault.

Legislation (AB 1000) is on hold, but advocates will continue the campaign in 2010.

FOR MORE INFO, contact the Labor Project for Working Families, 510-643-7088, <http://paysicksdaysca.org>

More news on p. 12

ACTION ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN (AAC), publisher of the *Children's Advocate*, is a nonprofit dedicated to informing and empowering people who work with and on behalf of children. AAC is supported in part by a California Department of Education (CDE) grant.

Executive Director Lisa Ruth Shulman, JD

Accountant Pam Elliott

Administrative Coordinator Eric Foss

Outreach Associate Blanca Rivera

Volunteer Patty Overland

Legal Counsel Nonprofit Legal Services Network

Board of Directors Rosemary Obeid, President; Marion Cowee, Vice President; Lea Austin, Secretary; Catalina Alvarado; Charles Drucker; Randy Reiter; Maria Luz Torre

THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE is published bimonthly by AAC. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of CDE and opinions expressed by contributors or writers do not necessarily reflect the opinions of this paper. We reserve the right to refuse advertising for any reason.

Editor in Chief Lisa Ruth Shulman, JD

Editor Jessine Foss

Translators (Chinese) Evelyn Chen, Carol Jin, Iris Lin

Translator (Spanish) Lucrecia Miranda

Intern Nicole Moreno

Publication Design and Production lockwood design

Printing Fricke Parks Press

Distribution Jane Welford

Circulation: *Children's Advocate* is available at select child care centers, social service organizations, and public libraries throughout California. Available by bulk order or individual subscription. **For subscription info, call 510.444.7136.**

© Children's Advocate Newsmagazine ASSN 0739-45X

Next Issue: January-February 2010 ■ Printed on recycled paper

Action Alliance for Children
1201 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Oakland, CA 94612-1217

Tel: 510-444-7136

Fax: 510-444-7138

www.4children.org ■ e-mail: aac@4children.org

Chula Vista parents block power plant expansion

By Nicole Moreno

In 2007, when Diana Vera heard that the California Energy Commission planned to build a bigger power plant in her neighborhood, the Chula Vista mother and grandmother took action. A larger plant would have been “like putting a dinosaur in the middle of the living room,” she says. “It was so unfair to the community.”

The Energy Commission plan would have more than doubled the size of an existing power plant—which is near an elementary school and a retirement community. The plant “would have run more often and could have emitted significantly higher levels of pollution,” says Laura Hunter of the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC). Air pollution can cause asthma and other health problems, particularly in children.

EHC brought together Chula Vista residents to successfully fight the power plant’s expansion. Residents worked to:

LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES: EHC helped hire an attorney and educate the community. Residents attended a training session about the health impacts of the power plant and how to take action by writing letters and testifying at public hearings.

Residents got involved in the campaign, says Hunter, because “they saw what happened when they didn’t speak out [about the original power plant]. They got stuck with a power plant that they didn’t want.”

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY: “We went door to door to inform neighbors and educate people about what they [would] be inhaling,” says Carlos Lopez, father and community activist. “We encouraged them to fight for their right to breathe clean air. We had to protect the children,” he adds.

“A lot of people would say, ‘You’re just wasting your time,’” adds Vera, “but I kept going because I believed in this.”

GET SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Residents asked City Council Member Rudy Ramirez to support the campaign. “We went to speak with him,”



Chula Vista parent Diana Vera speaks out after a public hearing

says Lopez. “He already knew about the issue [and] really thought of the children.”

Ramirez, father of an 8 year-old, says he supported the campaign “not only [because] of the possible health effects—I thought, how would the children feel knowing that their community allowed something like this to happen?”

TAKE ACTION: “We wrote letters, got petitions signed,” says Lopez. Residents also testified at hearings held by the Energy Commission in Chula Vista, and at City Council meetings. At first, immigrant parents were hesitant to become involved, says Ramirez, but “many who ordinarily would not come to City Hall protested and had their voices heard.”

The Energy Commission held all the hearings in Chula Vista, says Hunter, which “allowed the community to share their input.”

SUCCESS! In June, the Energy Commission voted to deny the power plant expansion. “I’m very proud of my community,” Vera says about the victory, “and I’ve gained more confidence in myself—I said I would never give up and I didn’t.”

FOR MORE INFO: Environmental Health Coalition, 619-474-0220, www.environmentalhealth.org



Recession squeezes families and early care and education programs

By Aimee Lewis Strain

Many families are going through tough times, as employers cut back and lay people off. Early care and education programs are also struggling with budget and other funding cuts. The combination worsens the impact of the recession—as programs cut hours and try to fill vacancies, and families juggle child care changes or pull their children out of programs they can no longer afford.

PUSH FOR MORE STATE FUNDING

Some organizations are working to lessen the impact of the recession by calling on the state to increase investment in children and families:

- ❖ **The California Partnership** is building a network of community leaders around the state to help strengthen grassroots advocacy by low-income families around the state budget. For more info, contact Kim Kruckel, 510-301-1456
- ❖ **California Majority Rule** is working to get a measure on the Nov 2010 ballot that would end the two-thirds majority for passing a budget. This would make it easier for the state to raise revenues—for example, by reinstating the top tax brackets or taxing oil extraction—that could be used for children's programs. www.camajorityrule.com
- ❖ **Parent Voices** (see p.11) and the **California Children Development Corps** (see p.10) advocate for more state funding for affordable, quality child care. Alarcón says she also gets support from her Parent Voices chapter—"I can share my issues with everyone and feel better."

Parents and early care and education staff share how they're getting by.

DONOVAN HARRISON: "I've had to cut out a lot"

Sacramento dad Donovan Harrison says budget cuts forced his son's child care program to cut hours and staffing—and raise rates. "[It's] about \$100 more a month," he says, "so I have had to cut out a lot. I do a lot more cooking, we rent movies instead of [going out]. There was a time I felt the bills were never going to stop. I had to take a few days off of work, because it was flooding my mind. [But] you really have to be there for your kids, try to hold your emotions together," he adds.

His son's center is open fewer hours, so "a lot of us had to change our work shifts," he says. "It was hard to ask for a change in hours. There was a purposed furlough and I needed to show I was dedicated. Thank God I have an understanding manager."

The change affected his son, too. "We wait in the car for his school to open and my son feels antsy," he says, adding "I always [feel] rushed during pick-up because [I work] 30 minutes away."

JULIE GIROUX: "I could go out of business"

Julie Giroux, who runs Julie's Day Care in Elk Grove, says she's never seen things so bad. Earlier this year, she lost her home and filed for bankruptcy. She's had an open spot in her program for months, which used to be unusual. She's drastically cut her spending and also sells jewelry to make ends meet. "I love what I do, but if things don't pick up soon, I could be out of business," she says.

Parents in her program are struggling, too. "Parents have been laid off, received a pay cut, and pulled their kids out," she says. "Parents are still forced to find [care]—based on price, not quality." Some unemployed mothers now watch an additional child to supplement their income, she adds.

Sacramento County saw a 17% drop in family child care homes between 2006 and 2008 and lost 10 centers,



adds Rachel Minnick of Child Action, Inc, because of the economy and foreclosures.

LOURDES ALARCÓN: “I don’t know how I do it”

Lourdes Alarcón, a single mother of 4-year-old Javier and 2-year-old Itzel in San Francisco, lost her job more than a year ago—and also her child care subsidy. “Thank God [Javier] turned 4 and is in Preschool For All,” says Alarcón. Preschool for All offers free, half-day preschool for four-year-olds in San Francisco.

“Sometimes I take care of other children to make ends meet or I do odd jobs and ask friends to care for Itzel. I am short \$100 each month for rent. I don’t know how I do it each month,” says Alarcón, a Bolivian immigrant who moved to California about 10 years ago. She relies on unemployment, food stamps, and Medi-Cal.

“I had to tell [Javier] what was happening, sometimes he sees me sad and asks why I am worried,” Alarcón says. “We had to sell our car and he wonders why we take the bus.”

FAMILY CONNECTIONS: “We’ve cut back dramatically”

Teachers at San Mateo’s Family Connections have had to “sharpen their pencils a little shorter,” says Executive Director Renee Zimmerman. “In the past we’ve had a very healthy budget for activities. We’ve had to cut back dramatically.” Now the center relies entirely on a local food bank for snacks.

“Families are more stressed out,” says Zimmerman. Most families in the program have been dealing with job loss, which is hitting them much harder because it’s so hard to find new jobs—some immigrants have even returned to their home countries. “A lot of relationships

COPING WITH THE RECESSION

For early care and education programs

- ❖ **Provide support to parents:** “Parents need support, even if it means an after-hours phone call. It’s not easy, but we all have to stick together,” says Zimmerman.
- ❖ **Advertise:** Hand out brochures and make signs. Offer discounts if parents refer others or sign up during a certain time.
- ❖ **Network:** Be active in your local resource and referral agency, family child care association, or child care planning council. Join the Chamber of Commerce for small business support. “Together, we can make things easier,” says Maxine Gervin, co-president of the California Association for Family Child Care.
- ❖ **Take classes:** “It’s a perfect time to educate yourself, it’s another networking tool, too,” says Gervin.
- ❖ **Make a spending plan:** “Are you in a position to receive low-income [assistance]? [Don’t] use credit cards to maintain business. Cut back and weather the storm until you’re back at full capacity,” adds Financial Consultant Otis Ward.

For families

- ❖ **Contact your resource and referral agency** to find out if your child is eligible to be put on the waiting list for a child care subsidy—and for a list of child care programs if your child’s program cuts its hours or closes.
- ❖ **Find out if your family is eligible for other assistance programs** (see Resources for families going through tough times, from the January *Children’s Advocate*, at www.4children.org/issues/2009/january_february/, scroll down)
- ❖ **Get together with other parents** to share child care arrangements and support.
- ❖ **Make changes** to your family’s spending or work schedule, if possible.

are struggling,” she adds. “For example, a father [leaves] his wife and child here, and the mother [doesn’t have] money, so [we] figure out how to get services to that mother.”



Teachers help children cope with stress

By Jean Tepperman

Families are feeling the stress of the worsening economy—and so are children. This translates into pressures on children in many ways, says early childhood consultant Pam Gingold—from witnessing domestic violence to “a home where things don’t feel safe and stable.”

Early care and education teachers and providers may see more children acting out—other children may get discouraged or withdraw. Children may have problems paying attention, and stress makes it hard to learn. Any sudden change in behavior can signal stress, says early childhood consultant Cherida Gruenfeldt.

Children’s stress has been a hot topic among San Francisco Peninsula child development center directors, adds Teri Stewart, President of the local Association for the Education of Young Children. Experienced teachers have some powerful strategies for helping children cope.

DAVID: Predictable routines

Gruenfeldt remembers when three-year-old “David,” went from being “so happy, ready to try anything, [to] not playing, [always] checking with me.” She asked David’s mom about it, but “[Mom] chose not to share.” Gruenfeldt chatted with Mom every day and soon found out the family was going through a very difficult divorce.

To calm David’s anxiety, Gruenfeldt “stayed with him [during] transitions and talked him through it in a warm, inviting voice.” She added pictures to the schedule so he and others could see what came next. She also let him do “‘sensory water play.’ It helps them soothe.”

David improved but remained clingy, so Gruenfeldt helped his mother find him a therapist. The following year, he was still anxious when his mother left. “I suggested she read a book or play with him and [say], ‘In five minutes I’m going to leave and you can come over with Cherida,’” Gruenfeldt also reminded David, “If you’re nervous you can stay by me.”

NICOLE: Story book

Four-year-old “Nicole” pinched, Gingold recalls, so children didn’t want to sit near her. She didn’t pay attention and yelled at the teachers.

Gingold created a book with photos of Nicole, a technique developed for autistic children (see resources). She took pictures of Nicole throughout the day, happy and smiling—and even took photos of her at home. The book included simple captions: “Nicole wakes up. She looks forward to school. She eats breakfast—she loves Cheerios!”

“When I first read her book to her, she just sat and cried,” Gingold says. “I asked, ‘Are you feeling sad?’ She shook her head. Then she had me read it again.” Later, when Nicole was crying because “someone said

RESOURCES

- ❖ **Helping Children Cope With Stress**, from North Carolina State University, www.nccc.org/Child.Dev/child.pdf
- ❖ **Social Stories**, from the Gray Center, describes how adults can write simple stories to help children better understand their world, www.thegraycenter.org/store/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&page_id=30
- ❖ **Hand in Hand Parenting** offers parenting classes and support groups, 650-322-5323, www.handinhandparenting.org
- ❖ **Books:** *Helping Children Cope with Stress*, Avis Brenner, Jossey-Bass, 1997; *Caring: Supporting Children’s Growth*, Rita M. Warren, NAEYC, 1977
- ❖ **Workshops:** Cherida Gruenfeldt, 510-482-5173; Pam Deyell-Gingold, 209-631-5252

For more resources, see www.4children.org/issues/2009/november_december



something mean, I showed her a picture of herself happy outside. She smiled and got up to play.”

Nicole’s family situation was rough—her mother used drugs and experienced domestic violence, while her father and stepmother were very strict. Gingold worked with the father and stepmother, even suggesting they relax some rules. “They know I really care about her. They would say, ‘We tried something you suggested and it helped a lot.’ Nicole still has issues, but she got much better. I paid special attention to reminding her she could make it.”

MARTIN: Special time

Happy Hall Director Mary Lou Johnson recalls when teachers asked her for help with “Martin,” a second grader who wouldn’t participate in activities. Johnson visited the classroom several times a week, to spend “special time” (see box) with Martin.

“I hate school. I hate homework,” Martin told Johnson. He was in a tutoring program over the summer—with homework! “He was having a lot of anger,” Johnson recalls. “His parents told him, ‘In September we still want you to be smart,’ so he felt like tutoring meant he wasn’t smart.”

Academic pressure adds stress for preschoolers, too, says Johnson. “I’ve seen four-year-olds get ‘in trouble’ because they didn’t know how to answer questions in circle time and felt stupid.”

“[Martin] started to open up,” says Johnson—and told her about a secret mountain of dirt he and a friend had constructed, with elaborate tunnels and water from the drinking fountain (against the rules). He worried he’d get in trouble.

“I saw how engaged he was. They worked on it for weeks. I told him, ‘You can write about this for your

GIVING CHILDREN TOOLS

“The gas that children run on, what allows them to feel peaceful and safe, is attention from adults,” says Patty Wipfler, director of Hand in Hand Parenting. Wipfler and Gruenfeldt offer strategies to help children deal with stress.

- ❖ **SPECIAL TIME:** “When a child is clearly stressed, [have] one person handle the [group while] the other gives that child three minutes of ‘special time.’ Use eye contact, touch, a generous tone. Children plump up like a wilted flower that’s been watered,” says Wipfler.
- ❖ **STAY LISTENING:** “When a child is bouncing off the walls, put your arm around him, saying ‘I’m not going to let you throw blocks (or whatever it is).’ Make eye contact. Don’t judge or teach. The child needs to feel the attention coming in. They may say, ‘Go away,’ but we say, ‘No, I’m going to stay with you.’

Then the child begins to express that emotional tension. Let the child have their feelings [or] they’ll stumble over themselves all day, carrying around tension,” says Wipfler.

- ❖ **BREATHING EXERCISES:** “One boy couldn’t stop crying,” says Gruenfeldt. “I said, ‘Take deep breaths in through your nose and breathe out your mouth.’ A few days later he said, ‘You know when I was crying and I did that breath thing? I tried it again.’ ‘Did it work?’ ‘Yeah!’”

- ❖ **SIMPLE YOGA:** “One place I worked,” says Gruenfeldt, “before circle time, children would sit cross-legged with their hands over their heads, palms together [the ‘mountain pose’], breathing in and out. When they felt calm, they put their hands down.

Sometimes when children came in [from the playground] pushing, we did the ‘lion pose’—sit [on] your knees, breathe in, and make claws. Roar until you have no more breath. Roar like a mouse, ‘eeeeee.’ Roar like a rabbit. What does rabbit say? Nothing! Just breathe! They started doing it on their own.”

homework,’ and took photos.” This helped Martin develop confidence to ask for permission next time: “[Adults] might be able to say yes.”

By Julieta Santana

Hayward fifth-grader Nathaly Garnica knows about healthy food, saying, “it’s better to eat vegetables because you get sick [less often], have stronger bones, and better eyesight.”

But in the store, adds her mom, Ana Garnica, “you are bombarded with foods high in saturated fats and chemicals. [Eating healthy is] very difficult, because we are tempted by these foods and sometimes don’t want to pay attention to what nurtures our bodies.”

With the rise in childhood obesity and diabetes, families have a growing concern with eating well. But many families are tightening their budgets in the worsening economy and worry healthy food is too expensive. And it can be challenging to get kids to eat healthy food.



Families share how they overcome these barriers and create healthy, affordable, kid-friendly meals.

MORE TIPS

Buying food

- ❖ Buy food in bulk and on sale—especially rice, pasta, beans
- ❖ Buy more vegetables (in season or frozen)
- ❖ Shop at a farmers’ market
- ❖ Try healthier ingredients, such as brown rice or whole wheat
- ❖ Buy organic when you can
- ❖ Store extra food, if you can, in case your family’s budget gets tighter
- ❖ Grow food—on a sunny windowsill, in your yard, in a community garden

Preparing food

- ❖ Cook instead of eating out—and add vegetables
- ❖ Make soups, stews, chili
- ❖ Freeze extra portions for a quick meal later on
- ❖ Drink water instead of soda or fruit juice
- ❖ Breastfeed infants and make your own baby food

Talk about healthy food

Families should explain the importance of healthy food to kids—and make it fun, says Cynthia Navas, mother of a ten- and six-year-old in Los Angeles. “You can make faces with vegetables,” she suggests.

“[Tell kids,] ‘This is healthy for you and delicious too.’ Encourage [them] gently to experiment,” adds Sissy Nga Trinh, Project Coordinator for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center.

Eat Grandma’s way—take the best from traditional recipes

“My mother gave us many legumes—pinto beans, chick peas, kidney beans—as well as vegetables and fish. Now I know she did right by us and have eagerly adopted the same foods for my family,” says Garnica.

“I prefer Puerto Rican and Asian food to American food because it has more vegetables,” says 12-year-old Bruce Sang in Bakersfield. “My favorite foods are Pho (rice noodle soup) and Puerto Rican tamales made with green bananas, potatoes, pumpkins, yams and wrapped in bananas leaves.”

“Much of a family’s food budget in the US goes into meat,” adds Nga Trinh, but many traditional ethnic foods are heavy in vegetables, which are less expensive.

“Healthier ingredients can be substituted for [traditional] ones without losing the taste,” says Navas, who is originally from Nicaragua. “People who can’t live without tortillas can buy sprouted wheat tortillas or you could make salad dressing from olive oil and sea salt.”

“If you boil vegetables too much, they lose vitamins [and flavor],” adds Berta Verenga (not her real name), who has a family of five in Bakersfield. “I don’t use lard anymore. I also avoid prepared foods because they have so much added fat. I steam fish I have seasoned with spices instead of frying it.”

Prepare kid-friendly snacks

“Always have fruits and vegetables ready for the kids. Cut [them] up. If I put a watermelon whole in the fridge it stays there for weeks, but if I slice it up, the kids eat it right away,” says Nora Ortiz of the Greenfield Family Resource Center (FRC) in Bakersfield.

Bruce adds that he likes apples and carrot sticks for snacks and loves mango.

Eat at home

“People shouldn’t always go for the easiest thing [like] a fast food breakfast,” emphasizes Navas. “When I was working, I got up earlier [to prepare a healthy meal].”

In the community Nga Trinh serves, students often eat Ramen or items from fast food dollar menus because they don’t know how to cook and don’t have much money. “We found [teens are the ones who] often cook for younger siblings. The adults don’t have time because [they work] low-wage jobs with long hours.”

So Nga Trinh teaches teens how to make recipes with roots in the community, from burritos to purple Thai rice. “Last week we fed 20 people with \$20,” she says. “That’s cheaper than a fast food meal. Diet is a place where [kids] can have decision-making power, deal with frustrations, build community without racial and social conflict. It’s an intimate act.”

Find affordable food

Buying affordable, healthy food can be a challenge—particularly in low-income communities. “The few groceries in the neighborhood carry mostly low-quality produce,” says Nga Trinh.

Maria Marquez, who has a family of five in Huntington Park, buys food in bulk at wholesale markets to help her afford organic tomatoes, broccoli, and cauliflower. She shops at a discount grocery store and buys “quart-size yogurt and [beans and rice in] five pound bags.”

Verenga says she shops at a Mexican supermarket chain and also gets food from the Greenfield FRC and a local food bank. Family resource centers, schools, and churches may host farmers’ markets, nutrition classes, community gardens, and food banks.

Take advantage of community programs

“Everything we made was so delicious!” says Verenga about the six-week cooking class she took through the Greenfield FRC. “They showed us how to make many easy and quick recipes including smoothies and two bean and corn salad.”

Bruce also went to a Greenfield FRC cooking camp last summer—now he cooks for his younger brothers. He still remembers the veggie pizza, smoothies, and pancakes he learned to make. Before, he says, he only knew how to fry eggs.

Garnica volunteers in her children’s school garden and listens to *Univision’s* Spanish-language nutrition program on the radio. Nathaly participates in the school’s garden club and also in Project Eat, which offers “nutrition in the garden” lessons. “My favorite part was cooking and watering plants,” she says. “When it was rainy we would make squash soup.” Last year she tried kale and sugar snap peas for the first time.

RESOURCES

- ❖ **Healthy Eating on a Limited Budget**, a radio show from Childhood Matters, provides tips from health educators and parents. www.childhoodmatters.org/2009.html (scroll down to July)
- ❖ **Healthy Food on a Budget**, a blog from a dietician in Boston, offers recipes and tips. <http://healthyfoodonabudget.wordpress.com>
- ❖ **Champions for Change**, from the Network for a Healthy California, provides recipes and tips for healthy food and activity. In English and Spanish. www.cachampionsforchange.net/en/index.php
- ❖ **For local farmers’ markets** (some take WIC vouchers or food stamps), visit www.cafarmersmarkets.com
- ❖ **For food assistance programs**, see Resources for families, from the January *Children’s Advocate*, at www.4children.org/issues/2009/january_february/ (scroll down)

For more resources, see www.4children.org/issues/2009/november_december

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Corps participants tackle payment problems



CATHERINE SCOTT

Catherine Scott with children in her program

Long-time family child care provider Catherine Scott was concerned when she heard some Long Beach providers weren't getting paid on time for taking care of children with state-funded child care subsidies. Scott is part of the California Child Development Corps, so she brought her concerns to Sara Hicks-Kilday, Working for Quality Child Care's Public Policy Officer and support staff to the Corps.

The Corps "helped us reframe the issue" as a need for statewide payment procedures, "rather than just a local problem," says Scott. Hicks-Kilday also drew on policy contacts to connect the providers with organizations taking action.

Impact on providers—and families

"When you're counting on receiving payment for work you've done, and you don't receive it, it's a problem," says Scott. "I've had to go into my personal funds to compensate my staff."

Parents are affected too, she adds. "[Because of the payment issue] some providers don't want to accept subsidized children, [so] parents don't have access to some of the quality programs."

Joining forces

During the Corps' monthly conference call, the issue of late payments was brought up. Many providers said they were having similar problems. Hicks-Kilday connected them with Child Care Providers United (CCPU), a union for family child care providers.

CCPU sponsored legislation (AB 315) which would require agencies that run child care subsidy programs to pay providers promptly—and set up systems for dealing with complaints and late payments.

"I never thought I would want to participate with a union because I'm self-employed," says Scott. "But it turned out [to be] the most valuable thing for us."

Taking action

Corps participants and the union arranged a conference call with the California Department of Education to discuss the problem. "[CDE] listened to us and took our concerns seriously. They want to talk with us again to see if their efforts to address the problems, and the solutions we suggested, work for us," says Scott.

"Virtually no other professions do work and then [fail to] get compensated in a timely manner. I'd like us to be able to dialogue and work together, so that everybody wins," she adds.

—Amanda Montague

Announcement

Corps legislative visits: Tell your legislators about the impact of program cuts—and how important child care is to keep California working! The Corps also wants to partner with other organizations and individuals. Contact your county representative to participate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

- ❖ **Alameda:** Marva Lyons, 510-521-3997 and Margaret Costello-Chevis, 510-226-9414
 - ❖ **Butte:** Jennifer Ferrini, 530-893-2443
 - ❖ **Contra Costa:** Donna Daly, 925-833-0834
 - ❖ **Humboldt:** Danielle Koren, 707-443-2497
 - ❖ **Los Angeles:** Catherine Scott, 562-572-9939
 - ❖ **Riverside:** Tamara Dobson, 951-340-3186
 - ❖ **San Diego:** Katy Kenshur, 760-436-3725
 - ❖ **San Francisco:** Valentina Feldman, 415-861-5361
 - ❖ **San Joaquin:** Bettina Engleman, 209-601-9467
 - ❖ **San Mateo:** Silvia Espinoza, 650-359-4675
 - ❖ **Santa Barbara:** Christine Fleenor, 805-937-0675
 - ❖ **Shasta:** Carol VonBrandt, 530-365-1931
 - ❖ **Solano:** June Regis, 707-439-0876
- If your county is not listed above, contact Sara Hicks-Kilday at cares@caccwrc.org, 415-808-7327. For Spanish, contact Teresa Calle-Streicker, 415-821-7871.



A parent-run, parent-led grassroots organization fighting for affordable quality child care for all

Parent Voices chapters are hosted by child care resource and referral agencies throughout California.

Parent applies to join Marin's Child Care Commission

Jessica Dwyer was shocked to get a letter last year saying her child care would end in a month, due to the state budget crisis. "I couldn't believe they could cut you off like that. They were basically saying we can't afford to let you work," recalls the San Rafael mom of Rio, 10 months, and Lana, 3 years.

So Dwyer got active "calling other parents and signing petitions," she says, and joined the newly formed Marin Parent Voices chapter. A year later, Dwyer hopes to take her advocacy to a new level—as a parent representative on Marin's Child Care Commission.



Jessica Dwyer, with her son, Rio, making a sign for Stand for Children Day

waiting list [for child care subsidies] for years."

"My own advocate"

The hardest part about being on the Commission will be finding the time, says Dwyer—but she's committed to doing it because "I'm a single mom and I want to show my children that these obstacles don't overcome you, you overcome them."

"If no one's screaming out for child care, who's going to fight for it? I have to be my own advocate," she adds.

—Amanda Montague

Building on advocacy experience

With Parent Voices, Dwyer has written letters to legislators, marched in rallies, and attended Stand for Children Day in Sacramento. As an extension of this advocacy, she decided to apply to be on the Child Care Commission (Marin's Local Child Care Planning Council, which sets local priorities for child care funding, planning, and advocacy).

Dwyer is looking forward to sharing her perspective as a parent, saying, "if we leave everybody else to do it, how do they know what we need? [Child care is] always on the chopping block, and I feel like I'm in a constant state of panic."

She also plans to represent Parent Voices. "I'm excited to ask what issues they think I should bring to the front," she adds.

Need for more child care funding

Dwyer applied to be on the Commission because she cares "really deeply about mothers and fathers who are lower-income [and can't] go to work and have people we trust watch our children for fair wages. A lot of mothers I know either get welfare or leave their children in unacceptable child care."

Parents need more help paying for child care, says Dwyer. "I have lots of friends who have been on the

Parent Voices contacts:

Statewide: Mary Ignatius, 415-882-0234, mignatius@rrnetwork.org

Alameda (Hayward): Jennifer Greppi, 510-584-3115, jenniferf@4c-alameda.org

Alameda (Oakland): Janet Zamudio, 510-658-7353, janet@bananasinc.org

Amador: Amy Jones, 209.223.1624 x109, ajones@hrcccr.org

Butte: Jane Haberman, 530-895-1677, jhaberman@valleyoakchildren.org

Calaveras: Cheryl Berg, 209-754-1075, ext. 115, cberg@hrcccr.org

Contra Costa: Candy Duperroir, 925-778-4739, candy@cocokids.org

El Dorado: Heather Della Ripa, 530-541-5848, hscfslt@pacbell.net

Fresno: Lourdes Hernandez, 559-456-1100, louh@cvcsn.org

Los Angeles: Dawn Lovelace, 323.421.2602, DLovelace@crystalstairs.org

Marin: Leah Benz, 415-491-5776, leah@mc3.org

Sacramento: Rachel Minnick, 916-369-3387,

Rachel.Minnick@childaction.org

San Francisco: Maria Luz Torre, 415-343-3383,

parentvoices@childrenscouncil.org

San Joaquin: Ana Tacan, 209.461.2933, atacan@frrcsj.org

San Mateo: Child Care Coordinating Council, 650.655.5078

Santa Barbara: Children's Resource and Referral Program, 805.962.8988

Santa Clara: Mario Del Castillo, 408-487-0747, mariod@4c.org

Solano: Kathy Lago, 707-864-4620, klago@solanofcs.org

Sonoma: Lorie Siebler, 707-522-1413, lsiebler@sonoma4cs.org

Thanks to the San Francisco Foundation for its support of this page.

Early Learning Challenge fund

ACTION: Tell Senators Boxer and Feinstein your views on the Early Learning Challenge Fund (HR 3221). The fund would provide \$8 billion in grants over eight years to help states create early care and learning opportunities for young children. The House already passed legislation.

BACKGROUND: The Fund would offer grants to states to improve early learning systems for children from birth to 5—and increase the number of disadvantaged children in high-quality programs. The fund would help states strengthen:

- access and quality in early learning programs
- support and professional development for providers
- early education standards
- parents' awareness about child development

- support for infants and toddlers, English language learners, students with special needs

FOR MORE INFO, contact Preschool California, 510-271-0075, www.preschoolcalifornia.org

Leadership Program in Early Childhood

Mills College is recruiting students for an advanced degree program in education with an emphasis in leadership. The program covers child development theory, policy analysis, administrative practices, diversity—and includes an interactive leadership seminar. Applications due Feb. 1. **For more info,** contact: 510-430-3170, www.mills.edu/academics/graduate/educ/programs/early_childhood.php (scroll down)

Healthy Families saved—for now

When Healthy Families funding was cut by \$174 million in the state budget, advocates worried that children would lose their health insurance—and that California would lose federal matching funds. Then First 5 pledged \$81 million to cover the gap and legislators voted to partially extend a tax on health insurers—but these funds are only for one year.

Healthy Families will not drop or waitlist children, though families will pay slightly higher premiums. **For more info,** contact the 100% Campaign, 510-763-2444 x122

Five key laws for parents

The Labor Project for Working Families has put together a poster highlighting state laws that every parent should know. Parents may be eligible for:

- **Pregnancy disability leave**—up to four months of job-protected leave if you can't perform an essential job function because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a related health condition
- **Family and Medical Leave Act**—up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave to bond with a new baby, newly adopted child, or foster child
- **Paid Family Leave Act**—up to six weeks of leave with partial pay each year to bond with a new baby, newly adopted child, or new foster child—or to care for a

child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner with a serious health condition

- **Sick leave use for family care**—up to half of each year's sick leave may be used to care for a sick child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner
- **Family-School Partnership Act**—up to 40 unpaid hours a year (eight hours a month) can be taken off from work to attend a child's school or child care activities, such as field trips, parent-teacher conferences, and graduations.

For more info or free posters, contact the Labor Project for Working Families, 510-643-7088, www.working-families.org/organize/pdf/cafamilylaws_poster.pdf

Future of First 5?

First 5 is scaling back programs because of declining tobacco tax revenues. The commission plans to focus future funding into two or three signature programs and some additional pilot projects.

“Less funding is available,” says Communication Director Elisa Bupara. “Programs will need to be re-evaluated”—though some county commissions have funds to continue some existing programs, she adds.

First 5 is deciding future priorities in four areas:

- family functioning
- child development
- child health
- systems of care

People gave input on these goals at three August hearings and online. First 5 is reviewing this input and will provide an update at the next State Commission meeting, October 21st in LA. **For more info,** visit www.first5california.com/press/legacy.asp