



California

**Head Start
Association**



Winter 2004

FOCUS

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Adventures in Learning Lead to Descanso Gardens

A special program using a public botanic garden as an occasional classroom for Head Start children is quickly proving that lessons learned in nature can enrich many areas of young lives. The three-year collaboration between Descanso Gardens in La Canada-Flintridge and the Center for Community Family Services – Head Start, Altadena, began in August 2002 under a grant from the Weingart Foundation. The goal is to encourage children’s learning experiences in the outdoors. The curriculum includes sensory experiences, language and vocabulary development, art, kinesthetic experiences and group discussions.

Sensory skills of young children are sharpened in Descanso’s outdoor environment that encourages touching, looking, hearing and smelling – where new experiences connect with things they already know. Ideally, the experience offers exposure not only to science, but also to language development and math concepts, all driven by children’s natural enthusiasm to learn by exploring the world around them. Pre-school children are full of curiosity about their surroundings, about themselves and others, and about how things work. Enjoying and sharing adventures in the landscape help them build self-confidence, enhance social skills and overcome uncertainties about exploring.

To a 4-year-old child a guided walk through the forest is a quest for information through observation and questions. Look at the forest floor – what makes soil, how does it get there, why is it different in different parts of the forest, is the soil at the Garden the same as the soil at school, what do we find in the soil, why are there worms and roly-poly/pill bugs? The questions keep coming. As children explore they develop observation skills, focus on details, develop vocabulary, gain an understanding of basic concepts, and learn to enjoy, appreciate and care for the world around them.

Teachers, who need to be ready to respond to myriad questions, begin the project with several workshops at Descanso Gardens. Each year, 20 teachers participate in experiences to be shared later with students. Workshops, building on teachers’ understanding of life science, help them create ways to use the Gardens, and the outdoors at school sites, to provide

► continued on p.6



Head Start children from Center for Community Family Services – Head Start, Altadena, Ca learn and discover in Descanso Gardens, La Canada-Flintridge

MISSION STATEMENT
The California Head Start Association is the unified voice providing leadership and advocacy for the Head Start community.

VISION STATEMENT
The California Head Start Association will be an important strategic partner representing Head Start interests in California and the nation.



California Head Start Association Reauthorization Update

By Edward Condon, CHSA

With your ongoing advocacy, Head Starts' legislation has moved a step further toward final reauthorization. The reauthorization is a five-part process. Last February, the beginning steps of this process the Administration's proposal was challenged and debated. Second step, the House moved a controversial bill that introduced the field to the concept of state demonstration projects. Advocates celebrated the narrow passage of HR 2210, School Readiness Act of 2003 by two-vote margin.

Senate bills were introduced in the fall of 2003 as the third step, of five. A number of bills introduced key items such as expansion of Early Head Start, Centers of Excellences and increased involvement of state collaboration offices. The Senate bill (S. 1940), Head Start improvements for School Readiness Act has both positive and negative aspects. The good includes: building capacity in State Collaboration; increase income eligibility to 130% of the Federal Poverty Level; improve teacher/staff quality; increase EHS set-aside; provide T & TA base funding to meet the Performance Standards; five year grants to Centers of Excellences; establish an independent panel of experts under guidance of the National Academy of Sciences to recommend academic outcomes, benchmarks and assessments; and focus on full-enrollment.

We ask you to continue supporting Head Start by sharing your personal and professional experience with our two Senators. It is important to continue educating both Boxer and Feinstein on the importance of comprehensive services, local control and the extensive local collaboration Head Start is engaged in here in California.

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(202) 224-3841
Feinstein.senate.gov/email.html

Senator Barbara Boxer, (D)
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510
(202) 224-3553
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Once, and if, the S.1940 bill is passed off the floor of the Senate, the House and the Senate bills will be sent to a conference committee to negotiate differences. This will be a critical time to ensure the State Demonstration Projects/State Block Grants are not included in the final negotiated bill. Stay tuned! ▲

Check the CHSA web site for updated information on Head Start in California – enrollment data, staff and family information and more; go to www.ca-headstart.org click on Fact Sheet

Associate Commissioner Windy Hill joined CHSA November 2003 in Oakland to address parents and staff at the 2nd annual "Pathway to Action for Parents"



Pictured: Charlton Birden, CHSA Parent Rep, Pat Stroh, CHSA President, Windy Hill, Associate Commissioner, Ed Condon, CHSA Executive Director, Barbara Fielding of San Diego, Pamm Shaw of Berkeley and Barbara Gunether of Alameda

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Journey Into Early Literacy

By Mark Wachtel, Hatch Computers

The focus on literacy instruction has never been more intense. National, state, and local organizations continue to focus on the acquisition of early literacy skills and are creating preschool literacy standards to guide these efforts. The preschool standards are more rigorous than ever, requiring young children to develop specific benchmarks before entering kindergarten. In California, "higher expectations in kindergarten and the primary grades require children to enter kindergarten better prepared than ever before for new learning and skill development" (California Context: Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines, California Department of Education, Updated August 2003). In response to the intensified kindergarten standards, prekindergarten programs, including federal programs such as Head Start, now require that preschoolers graduate and enter kindergarten ready to read.

According to Teaching Reading, the collaborative advisory created among the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the California State Board of Education, and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, children are required to enter kindergarten having achieved the following benchmarks skills: "recognizing print in the environment; distinguishing separate words; recognizing rhyming words; knowing some letter names and shapes, including the letters in the child's name; beginning to demonstrate reading-like behaviors, such as pretending to read and write; beginning to demonstrate an understanding of picture books and simple stories; and, retelling stories, making predictions, and connecting stories to background experiences in a teacher-guided group format" (California Context: Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines, California Department of Education, Updated August 2003). Without a proven understanding of early literacy skills based on these prekindergarten benchmarks, young children are at risk of falling behind their classmates in reading proficiency.

As state kindergarten standards trickle down to prekindergarten programs, local organizations are being required to demonstrate their students' school readiness. While this can prove to be challenging, many early childhood educational companies are helping organizations meet those standards by developing literacy products that target national and state requirements. For example, Hatch, a North Carolina-based company, developed Journeys into Early Literacy™, an holistic program that integrates computer technology and classroom-based instruction and addresses key research-based skills, including: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, expressive and receptive language, text awareness, print awareness, letter knowledge, reading comprehension, and writing development. Containing computer software designed specifically for prekindergarten and kindergarten students, classroom activities that are integrated with the software, guidance for creating and managing the environment, family take-home activities, print and manipulative materials that support literacy experiences, and literacy assessment indicators, Journeys into Early Literacy enhances programs' existing curricula, fostering

successful implementation of their literacy goals and bolstering young children's school readiness. Moreover, Journeys into Early Literacy was designed with Head Start's Child Outcomes Framework in mind, so it meets Head Start's assessment requirements.

Journeys into Early Literacy supports teachers as they acknowledge children's understanding, model key literacy skills, provide environmental support, and deliver implicit instruction. Products like this one can help Head Start and other Early Childhood programs, teachers, and administrators meet their literacy goals successfully, fostering young children's literacy development and sending them to kindergarten ready to read. ▲

For more information about this innovative early literacy product, please call 800-624-7968, or visit http://www.hatchstuff.com/journeys/journeytolit_info.asp



CHSA Asks Parent, Staff and Head Start Friends to join \$2 Per Child Campaign

Our Goals

The California Head Start Association believes in the development of high quality Head Start and Early Head Start programs for all eligible children in California. CHSA strives to promote an inclusive professional organization open to parents, staff and corporate partners.

Our Efforts

Over the years, CHSA has become the unified voice providing leadership and advocacy for the Head Start community. Uniting people and organizations in such a large state presents many challenges. The Association gathers and distributes many points of view by its newsletters, conferences, trainings, policy alerts, web site, presentations and other avenues of communication.

Our Results

CHSA Public Policy Committee, continually monitors events in Sacramento and Washington DC to ensure California's programs are informed and apprised of the latest news. CHSA has established a strong presence in the National Head Start community, state level advocacy and policy development.

Get started now raising dollars for the National Head Start and California Head Start campaigns. All funds will be reported at the 2004 NHSA Conference in Anaheim, CA – April 19-23, 2004.

*Dollars Per Child:
Yes! Our Goal is to raise \$2 per child in 2004 for advocacy in Sacramento and Washington DC*

Corporate Sponsors for 2003 that proudly support California Head Start Association



FOCUS



Working Parents May Qualify for Tax Relief

By Jane Goldstein, Internal Revenue Service

REPORT California Head Start State Collaboration Office Report

By Michael Silver and Michael Zito

The CHSSCO is continuing to work on a number of activities intended to assist Head Start programs and the larger early care and education community:

- In October, the CHSA, CHSSCO, and California Department of Health Services Office of Oral Health conducted three regional **Oral Health Forums** in Oakland, Fresno and Loma Linda. The Forums brought state of the art information and resources to grantees and community partners from state agency and local Head Start program sources. A report on the Forums along with recommendations for improving the oral health outcomes for Head Start children is also being drafted.

- The CHSSCO will present on **proposed federal changes to the collaboration grant projects** at the CHSA annual conference in January. We have also participated on the conference planning committee and have assisted in developing sessions on State-Head Start partnership paperwork requirements and Head Start migrant programs.

- Staff participated in the review of grant proposals for the **First Five California (Children and Families Commission) Special Needs Project**, which is intended to improve coordination of services to very young children with developmental and social-emotional special needs.

- The CHSSCO is facilitating discussions on revisions to the State Desired Results Developmental Profile and the **Desired Results Developmental Profile Plus**, which incorporates Head Start outcome requirements.

- Look for the next issue of the **Bridges Newsletter** to be mailed out after the first of the year. This issue focuses on early literacy resources.

The CHSSCO has extra copies of the **Side-by-Side Comparison: Coordinated Compliance Review and PRISM Processes**, as well as the Spanish version of the **Child Support Services Handbook**. These may be requested from Michael Zito at mzito@cde.ca.gov. ▲

Parents who worked full or part-time for at least part of 2003 and earned less than \$34,692 may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC was created to help offset the tax burden and living expenses for working people with lower earnings. Every family who qualifies for the credit should claim it. If you qualify, you can claim EITC and may also qualify for some other tax credits when you file your 2003 federal tax return.

Those who qualify for EITC will also be eligible to prepare and file their 2003 federal income tax return online for free. FREE FILE services are provided by a number of commercial tax software companies – not the IRS. FREE FILE benefits include fast refunds, accuracy, and security. For more information about EITC qualifications, access to FREE FILE, and other tax assistance, visit www.irs.gov. If you would like informational materials to distribute to the families you serve, contact the IRS-SPEC office nearest you. ▲

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February 17, 2004

Last day to Register to Vote for March 2nd Primary Election
For more information go to www.myvotecounts.org

Head Start Tour of Italy October 7-16, 2004

Join CHSA Executive Director, Ed Condon to tour many of Italy's great sites including Roman Forum, The Colosseum, Sistine Chapel, Pompeii, Capri, Siena, Michelangelo's David, and St. Mark's Square. The tour includes two nights in Rome, two in Sorrento, two in Montecatini, one in Venice, and one in Milan. In addition, tours of classic Italian early education programs will be featured. Total fee is \$3095 per person, plus a \$95 registration. Fees include:

- Round-trip air travel on scheduled airlines
- Accommodations in well located 3 and 4 star hotels
- Breakfast daily and some dinners as noted
- Full time, multilingual tour manager providing commentary and managing travel logistics
- Professional city sightseeing guides
- Surface transportation and airport transfers
- Comprehensive Walking Tours and City Facts
- Medical and cancellation insurance
- 24-hour emergency hotline
- Overseas visits by ACIS® US-based staff

For more information, call (916) 444-7760 or visit www.ca-headstart.org/italy.html



Join CHSA Executive Director, Ed Condon to tour many of Italy's great sites.

Mark Your Calendars!

June 1 & 2 2004 in San Diego

Please Join CHSA June 1 & 2 2004 in San Diego, CA for our first **Summer Teachers Institute**. The focus of this two-day training, in partnership with Cluster 1 Grantees, will be to support education staff's understanding and knowledge related to literacy development needs and opportunities with children and families who are English language learners.

November 12 & 13, 2004 in Sacramento

CHSA's 3rd **Parent Training** will be November 12 & 13, 2004 in Sacramento. Building upon the past two years of success, our 3rd Parent Training will be the best yet. CHSA works closely with presenters to ensure workshops are not just for parents, but also by parent leaders.

February 11- 13, 2005 in Pasadena

The 7th **Annual CHSA Conference** will be in the wonderful city of Pasadena, February 2005. Plans are underway to make this a wonderful event in a star studded location!

Check our website for details on all CHSA events through out the year:
www.ca-headstart.org



2004 CHSA Award Winners

The California Head Start Association is pleased to recognize five very special people in key program areas. Our individual awardees were nominated and selected in the fall of 2003. Congratulations to all the winners!

Teacher of the Year:

Wilfredo Lazarte

Wilfredo is a Home Visitor for El Nido Early Head Start in Hawthorne, CA. He is patient and committed to the parents and children. He helps his families with parenting skills, while supporting them towards achieving their educational goals.

Support Staff of the Year:

Marlene Montiel

Marlene Montiel was an active Head Start parent at the USC School for Early Childhood Education for four years, including being the Policy Council Chair. She fell in love with the Head Start program, and jumped at the opportunity of leaving her work with the Los Angeles Unified School District to work with the USC Head Start program as a Family Advocate. In a span of 18 months, she was quickly promoted to the Transition and Literacy Coordinator, where she has now been able to merge her love of books and advocacy.

Administrator of the Year:

Dr. Jean van Keulen

For more than 30 years, Dr. Jean van Keulen has been a leading advocate for Head Start children and their families. As Executive Director of the San Francisco Head Start Program, Dr. van Keulen has written grants which have provided millions of dollars in funding for Head Start and Early Head Start, created partnerships with service agencies throughout the city and county of San Francisco, created on-site opportunities for parents to earn ECE college credits, and renovated all the SFHS centers.

Friend of Head Start of the Year:

Dr. Stewart Gately

Dr. Stewart Gately is both a friend of Head Start and an important member of the Quincy Head Start family. Dr Gately's annual visit to the Quincy Center begins with breakfast, includes dental exams for all the children, and concludes with a delightful and educational circle time about dental health.

Parent of the Year:

Francisca Cabrera

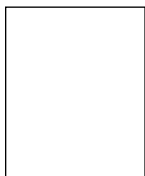
Francisca Cabrera is an inspiration to all who come in contact with her. In less than two years, she has gone from being homeless and jobless, living in a Head Start Shelter Program in Monterey County to mentoring and motivating parents inside and outside of Head Start. ▲



WINTER 2004 NEWSLETTER

FOCUS

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multi-dimensional education experiences for their young students. Participating teachers also receive a collection of age-appropriate science/literature books for the classroom.

Parents are an integral part of the program. Those who accompany their children on walks in the forest share the learning experiences and, in many cases, build English language skills and strengthen social and community ties through interactions with other parents. They receive periodic newsletter encouraging parent-child activities that build on the learning experiences at Descanso and at school. Descanso also invites families to the Gardens for a final event focused on the students' experiences there.

This program, now in its second year, is helping enrich the lives of children and is evidence of

the shared educational mission of Descanso Gardens and Head Start. Education can help these children understand the value of protecting the environment and natural spaces and is key to assure that children become fully empowered partners in their communities. ▲



Please join CHSA today!

Go to the CHSA website and print out an application www.ca-headstart.org and click on Membership, and look for CHSA membership form.



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