

# The Power of Two



Issue 22

June 2013

## A Night Out to Celebrate the Power of Two!



*Left to Right: Hector LaFarga, Jr., Begonia Bautista, Antonia Hernández, Rep. Judy Chu, Ellen Knell, and Harvey Knell*

On May 5th, 2013, we gathered at Pasadena's Pandora on Green to celebrate the Power of Two, our annual gala benefiting Mothers' Club's two-generation learning programs. Bright centerpieces, colorful décor, and music from Mariachi de Mi Tierra brought the spirit of Cinco de Mayo to our event space and made for a festive evening.

*Power of Two, Continues Page 4*

## Moms Work Toward High School Diploma

In January, four parents from Mothers' Club, Ana Flores, Leticia Garcia, Ana Barraza and Andrea Melgoza, enrolled in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) class at PCC's Community Education Center. At Mothers' Club, they took classes that taught them to speak and read English as a Second Language. ABE has an academic focus and prepares students to enter into the high school diploma program or GED class.

They recalled their first day in ABE class: "We wanted to be there, but we were so scared, literally terrified we couldn't do the work. The vocabulary the teacher, Mrs. Hebran, was using in class was so difficult! We weren't sure we could pass the class, but we decided to try and not give up so soon."

*Diploma, Continues on Page 3*



*Left to Right: Ana Flores, Leticia Garcia, Ana Barraza, and Andrea Melgoza*

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## A Letter from the Executive Director



*Hector LaFarga, Jr. speaks during the press conference with Representatives Judy Chu and Adam Schiff.*

This is an interesting time for the field of Early Childhood Education. During his State of the Union address in February, President Obama unveiled his “Preschool for All” plan, which brought new light to the importance of early education for all children. His 2014 budget proposal includes a \$77 billion early learning investment, bringing the benefits of universal preschool to the forefront of a national conversation. More and more political and community figures are standing behind the nation’s youngest learners and talking about the importance of high quality early childhood education programs for children ages 0-5.

At the same time, current government funding for early childhood and preschool programs continues to suffer from cuts. Across-the-board reductions, known as sequestration, threaten to dramatically reduce federal funding for Early Head Start and Head Start programs.

On March 8th, Representatives Judy Chu (CA-27) and Adam Schiff (CA-28) chose Mothers’ Club as the location for a joint press conference to discuss the disastrous impact of sequestration cuts on educational resources for our community. Mothers’ Club was honored to host such an important dialogue and to be chosen as the site that exemplifies high quality education programs.

In addition to calling on

Congress to halt sequestration, Representatives Chu and Schiff emphasized the importance of early education programs such as Mothers’ Club and commended President Obama for his commitment to “Preschool for All.” I was invited to say a few words illustrating how funding cuts will directly affect the families who rely on our services.

Mothers’ Club currently serves 100 families each day. However, our waiting list stands at more than 160 families – families who have the desire to succeed in school and in life but lack the skills and education needed to get there. We have the space and capability to expand our services for preschool age children

but without critical government funding, we are unable to cover the cost of providing free high quality programs for children in need. Cuts in government funding will severely limit the number of children we are able to help each day. This is very meaningful for the families who rely on our services - families who are struggling with poverty, isolation, illiteracy and domestic abuse. Due to the many stressors that affect their daily lives, their children are at-risk for failure in school. And they will fail early if they enter kindergarten with little or no school experience. This is why early childhood education programs such as Mothers’ Club are so critical to the well-being of our entire community. Our children should not have to start the race already behind.

Mothers’ Club is thrilled to be involved in such a critical time for early childhood education. We look forward to becoming an active model for other programs and providers through our commitment to best practices in parent engagement and education, our two-generation learning strategies for at-risk parents and children, and our high-quality early childhood development environment and curriculum. With the support and advocacy of community members like you, Mothers’ Club will continue to have a voice in the discussion and offer critical services to families in need.

- Hector LaFarga, Jr.  
Executive Director

### Thank You to Our Foundation Partners for Their Recent Grant Awards

*Angell Foundation for our Family Literacy Program*

*Dwight Stuart Youth Fund to fund our Early Childhood Education Program*

*Green Foundation for our Family Literacy Program*

*Pasadena Child Health Foundation to support First Connections*

*Pasadena Tournament of Roses for our Volunteer Program*

## Getting Ready for Pre-K Graduation

Here at Mothers' Club, our Pre-Kindergarten students and their parents are busy preparing for the big graduation ceremony planned for June 14th. Pre-K Graduation is very important at Mothers' Club and families invest a lot of time and effort to make sure that it is a grand affair.

In fact, the Pre-K Parents have been raising money for the event for a full year! At the beginning of the school year, they organized themselves into small groups, each tasked with hosting a fundraising activity. Once a month, one of the small groups created and implemented an activity to raise money. One group made and sold enchiladas during break time, another delivered homemade "Candygrams" for Valentine's Day, and another plans to sell homemade pozole.

This year's graduation theme is "What Does Mothers' Club Mean to My Family." In line with the theme, parents will create centerpieces that showcase their child's connection to our agency. The centerpieces will

take the form of "family streamers," including five pictures of each child and ribbons that demonstrate what Mothers' Club means to them.

The kids, very excited to enter the next phase of their education, have been preparing early by practicing the two performances they will put on for their audience. As a parent-child project at home, the soon-to-be-graduates made animal masks to accompany their "Do the Monkey" song. They will also perform "The Family Song," which celebrates the friendships they made while at Mothers' Club. All dressed up in Mothers' Club's traditional purple caps and gowns, the graduates will be accompanied by a godparent or special friend as they walk to receive their degrees.



*Joshua, Naomi and Alexis pose in their caps and gowns*

At Mothers' Club, we think it is important for Pre-K Graduation to be a big celebration that everyone looks forward to. It gives our parents a chance to take on leadership roles and become active in their child's education, a skill they will need to use once their child goes on to kindergarten. We stress the importance of this graduation as the first of many for the children and as a symbol for the lifetime of educational achievements that awaits them.

- Lara Nassar  
Development Assistant

### Diploma, Continued from Page 1

As the weeks went by, they settled into a routine of attending class, focusing on their school work, helping one another with difficult topics, and seeking out help from others. When they didn't understand what the teacher was saying, they looked up words in their computer dictionary and after class they did their homework together.

Sarah Hilbert, Mothers' Club's Volunteer Program Coordinator, found a tutor for them, Christina Tran, with experience tutoring ESL students in academic subjects. It was a perfect match! One mom, Leticia, used her time with Christina to practice her speaking skills. Christina brought in books for her to read to build her comprehension skills and math games to learn fractions.

At the end of the semester, Mrs. Hebron told our moms they were excellent students—always turning in their assignments and never missing class. And best of all, they were ready to move to the High School Diploma program! With hard work and dedication, these four moms have gained the confidence, knowledge and skills they needed to begin the High School Program in the fall. Leticia says, "I now sit with my 12-year-old son and we do math fractions together!" All of the moms agree, "We are so proud of our accomplishments. We are ready to go to the High School Diploma program. What we have learned in adult basic education allows us to help our own kids with their school work too!"

- Julie Espinoza  
Director of Education

### Join us for a Tour

The best way to learn about what happens at Mothers' Club is to visit our Center and take a guided tour with staff.

#### Upcoming Tours:

Tuesday, June 4 - 9am  
Thursday, June 13 - 11:30am  
Tuesday, July 9 - 9am  
Thursday, July 18 - 11:30am  
Tuesday, Aug. 6 - 9am  
Thursday, Aug. 15 - 11:30am

To RSVP or for more information call  
(626) 792-2587 ext. 122 or  
email [mara@mothersclub.org](mailto:mara@mothersclub.org)

## A Night Out to Celebrate the Power of Two!

### Power of Two, Continued from Page 1

This year at the Power of Two Gala we honored Antonia Hernández, President and CEO of the California Community Foundation (CCF) as well as our long-time supporters Ellen and Harvey Knell. We also honored Mothers' Club participant Griselda Soto, who bravely shared the story of a tragic accident that left her husband paralyzed and created many challenges for her family. As she explained how her close-knit family is overcoming its hardships, Griselda



exemplified strength and resilience.

Our honorees were presented with Power of Two awards in recognition of their commitment to Mothers' Club and two-generation learning—the idea that educating a parent and child together helps the entire family grow to its full potential.

The program was led by our Masters of Ceremonies—our Executive Director, Hector LaFarga, Jr., and a very enthusiastic Mothers' Club participant, Begonia Bautista. A leader at Mothers' Club and president of the Parent-Teacher Organization at her son's elementary school, Begonia showcased her talent and charisma throughout the evening.

We also heard from Congresswoman Judy Chu, whose unwavering support of early childhood education we are thrilled to have. A long-time volunteer and 11th Grader at Westridge School, Nicole Probert, charmed the room with her poise as she spoke of her love of volunteering at Mothers' Club and her commitment to "paying it forward." Nicole impressed everyone with how much she has accomplished before even graduating high school!

The Power of Two gala could not have been a success without

the support of our sponsors and attendees. With your help, we raised more than \$80,000 in support of our programs for low-income families!

- Lara Nassar  
Development Assistant

To see more pictures from the event, visit Mothers' Club on Facebook!  
[www.facebook.com/MothersClubFLC](http://www.facebook.com/MothersClubFLC)



*Volunteer Nicole Probert gives a big hug to preschooler Oscar Soto*

### Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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*Above: Ellen & Harvey Knell accept the Power of Two Award  
Below: Antonia Hernández poses with Hector LaFarga, Jr. and CCF Program Officer, Peter Rivera*

## Griselda Shares Her Story

Mothers' Club participant, Griselda Soto, shared her personal story with guests at the Power of Two Gala.



*Griselda Soto and her daughter, Cecilia, (center) are flanked by Masters of Ceremonies, Begonia Bautista and Hector LaFarga, Jr.*

Hello my name is Griselda Soto. I was born in Mexico and came to the United States five years ago. I am married to Ricardo Trejo and have 3 children: Cecilia 12, Heriberto 7 and Oscar 4. I want to share how important Mothers' Club has been to me and my family for the last 5 years, how the staff has been part of my life and how they have supported me through everyday challenges and big life changes.

I started Mothers' Club shortly after arriving to the US. A friend told me about Mothers' Club and how they helped educate the children. I was very scared to call but I wanted the best for my children. I was only able to finish 9th grade so I wanted more for my children. I forgot my shyness, my nervousness and forced myself to call. I was so scared that the teachers would only speak English or that I would be forced to drop off my son to strangers but something inside me said, "call."

Immediately, I felt supported by the teachers and staff. There was a feeling of home. The teachers and Parent Education classes taught me how to communicate better with my children, to understand their needs and to be a better parent. I felt supported by their encouragements, their information always helped me and I am grateful for their friendships.

One of my favorite memories was the Pre-K graduation for

Heriberto. He looked so great in his cap and gown, a preview of what he would look like at his University graduation. The teachers taught him to control his behavior, play well with the other children and love to read. In Mexico we don't read for fun but now the whole family reads every day. He was well prepared for Kindergarten.

I continued at Mothers' Club with my youngest son, Oscar, he will graduate next year. I still had a lot of questions about the small challenges of raising my family. We are a very close family. We do everything together: soccer games for Cecilia and Heriberto, school activities, shopping for groceries or just gardening in the yard. Everything is done together. My husband and I are true soul mates.

Then last November, my world was turned upside down. I received a call from the hospital saying my husband was injured. They said I should go immediately. I don't drive so I frantically looked for a ride; finally my brother answered the phone. I don't remember breathing during the ride to the hospital.

At the hospital, I stood at the door of the emergency room. Ricardo had blood all over, there were tubes on him, and everyone was running around. I remember we looked at each other and then a nurse tried to get me out. I felt like crying, shouting, running away but I stayed next to my husband. Ricardo was taken to

surgery and the waiting began again.

The doctors knew that Ricardo would never walk again but no one wanted to say anything. Everyone said that the swelling had to go down but after two weeks he knew life had changed. Ricardo was transferred to Downy for rehabilitation. That was one of the biggest changes for us as a couple. We had never been apart and now he was miles away. My heart broke every time I had to leave him or was thinking that he was alone. Our world had changed forever.

After the accident, we were lost, emotionally and financially. Mothers' Club again was there to provide support, information and a shoulder to cry. I mostly received hope from everyone at Mothers' Club. The families, staff and board members raised money to pay for four months of rent. I was driven out to Downy to see my husband and Oscar was allowed to have a normal routine at school. I found advice and a place to speak about my fears.

After five months I can say that we are doing better. We have put in ramps and rearranged the small apartment to fit my husband's wheelchair. He is attending physical therapy and the children are doing well. Cecilia is part of a special group of children that are being trained as leaders and plays on two soccer teams. Heriberto is doing great in school and Oscar will be a Pre-K student next year. We still have a very long road and some days are good and some are filled with challenges. I look forward to the day that Ricardo will feel happy. I don't know why this happened to my family but I know that we will all come out stronger.

I want to thank everyone on staff, the Board Members and donors of Mothers' Club. The work that you do is not only to provide classes for us but you give us a safe place to land when life becomes difficult. I pray that we could have more places like Mothers' Club. Thank You from my heart.

- Griselda Soto  
Mothers' Club Participant

## Partnering with Polytechnic School



Volunteer Gaby Maarse and infant Mai

For many years, Mothers' Club has benefited tremendously from our long-standing relationship with Pasadena's Polytechnic School volunteers. The school is committed to connecting its students to the outside community through volunteering, community service, and service learning, starting in the elementary grades and extending through high school; even parents and graduated alumnae get involved.

Each December, the young children in our Early Childhood Education program are visited by the Poly 3rd Graders, who bring book donations, read with our little ones,

and enjoy outdoor time in the play yard. It's a hectic day to be sure, but one full of friendship, laughter, and play. The Mothers' Club children get so excited to see "big kids" in their classrooms!

One of our most treasured relationships is with the Poly 8th Grade Service Learning Class. Each semester, 8-10 students select Mothers' Club as their agency of choice and visit us each Thursday morning for one hour. The teens work directly with teachers and children in the

*I loved playing with the kids at the park – especially the "monster" game because it was fun to be outside playing with the kids. I didn't know that I would have as much fun as it turned out to be.*

*-Luke Scheidemantle  
Poly 8th Grade Volunteer*

classrooms, allowing them to experience our mission first hand and to form important bonds with the children. We love their dedication and playful energy – they serve as incredible assistants and role models. This immersive experience also helps the 8th Graders get a deeper sense of

important issues in our community and why our center is so important in Northwest Pasadena. Says Katie Callero, one of our Fall 2012 volunteers, "I learned not everyone has it easy, and Mothers' Club gives kids a chance to learn and be in a good environment."

Our school year partnership

culminated in March, when we were chosen as one of the destinations for the Poly Community Service Day. On one Saturday morning, students, parents, and alumnae fan out through our community to assist non-profit organizations in all kinds of ways. We



8th grader Katie Callero plays with Gael

decided our center could use a good spring cleaning, and the team of 25 volunteers who visited spent three hours scrubbing the classrooms and organizing our storage units. They took a massive job off our hands and accomplished it in three hours. The center glowed when they were through!

We thank Polytechnic School and look forward to many more years of working together side by side.

- Sarah Hilbert

Volunteer Program Coordinator



Poly 3rd Grader Derek plays with two-year old Samantha

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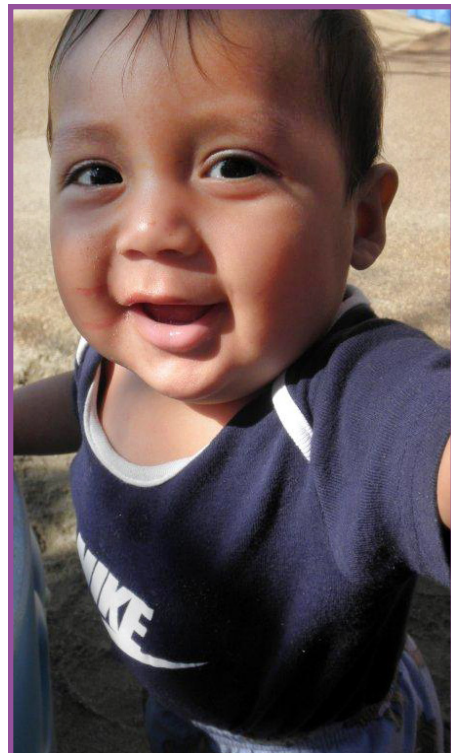
The *Guardians* provide sustaining support for our programs and operations by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.



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## Leave a Legacy to Future Generations, Remember Mothers' Club in Your Will

All gifts to Mothers' Club provide you with the personal satisfaction of providing critical services to our community's most vulnerable children and families. Planned gifts can give you even more in return.

By including Mothers' Club in your will or living trust, you can ensure that Mothers' Club will remain a valuable resource for generations of families to come. We can refer you to professionals who can help you design a charitable gift plan that benefits Mothers' Club and enables you and your family to fulfill your personal financial goals.

If you would like to learn more, please contact our Development Office at (626)792-2687, ext. 122.

Thank you for partnering with us to meet the needs of future children and parents.

## Thank You to Our Program Partners

*Mothers' Club programs are funded in part by the following agencies:*

California Department of Education, Even Start Family Literacy Grant

Community Development Institute

First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Los Angeles Universal Preschool

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program

City of Pasadena, Community Development Block Grant

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## Our Mission & Guiding Principles

Mothers' Club Family Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life through two-generation learning programs. Our programs are built on two guiding principles: in order for significant, long-term change to occur within a family, you must reach both parent and child and educate them together; and, the most critical time to reach a family is when children are proven to be most vulnerable and impressionable, between birth and 5 years-old.

## The Power of Two-Generation Learning

We fulfill our mission by providing FREE programs to disadvantaged families with children ages 0-5. Our two-generation learning model helps mothers and children gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they will need to break out of poverty. National research and our own evaluation results confirm that increasing the education levels of both a parent and their child is an irrefutable way to promote long-term, positive change within a family and a community.

**Donate On-Line & Learn More at [www.mothersclub.org](http://www.mothersclub.org)**

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### The Power of Two - June 2013

Editor: Mara Leong-Nichols

Mothers' Club is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.  
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## **Save the Dates!**

**Fall Food & Wine Event  
Saturday, October 19, 2013**

**Power of Two Gala  
Sunday, May 18, 2014**