

The Power of Two



Issue 24

June 2014

Incorporating the Reggio Emilia Approach



Preschool Teacher Maria observes students during the Plum Blossom Project

Both the Preschool and PreK Classrooms at Mothers' Club are influenced by an educational philosophy called the Reggio Emilia Approach. Developed by Loris Malaguzzi in the villages around Reggio Emilia in Italy after World War II, the approach is based on a belief that children have rights and should be given opportunities to develop their potential. Rather than being seen as the target of instruction, children are seen as having the active role of an apprentice or even a researcher. The Reggio Emilia Approach puts the natural development of children, as well as the close relationships they share, with their environment at the center of its philosophy.

Reggio, Continues on Page 6

Parents Lead the Way at Mothers' Club

Throughout the year, Mothers' Club parents have been very busy planning and holding 15 different events, in addition to the daily programs they attend. For example, they made Halloween bags, put on a Thanksgiving puppet show for the children, and are now preparing for this year's PreK graduation. Over 90% of our parents participated in these events as part of our leadership program. When parents learn leadership skills at Mothers' Club, they will be better prepared to lead their families and participate at the elementary school level. Parents have learned how to budget, manage conflicts, prioritize tasks, and communicate more effectively.

Parents, Continues on Page 6



Mothers' Club moms Rosalba and Carina

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SAVE THE DATE
Fall Food & Wine Festival
October 18, 2014

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626.793.1832 Fax

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A Letter from the Executive Director

As the 2013-2014 school year comes to a close, I just wanted to **thank you** for your outstanding support of Mothers' Club Family Learning Center.

Our Two-Generation Learning Program now serves **111 children and their parents**. Each day, we strive to deliver quality services that are designed to increase literacy levels and educational outcomes and support the social/emotional well-being of both parent and child. I am so proud of our dedicated and talented staff, they are true professionals and the backbone Mothers' Club.

Pictured with me on the right is **Begonia**, a stellar example of what Mothers' Club moms can achieve. Begonia and her children arrived at Mothers' Club three years ago, isolated and with little hope. Today, Begonia has blossomed; she is fully engaged in the education of her children, who are thriving in school. Begonia is an advocate, entrepreneur and – get this – a PTA President!

This is an important time for Mothers' Club. Last July, we were able to open up a brand new Afternoon PreK Classroom that serves 16 four year olds and their parents each day. However, our waiting list still stands at over 160 eligible families.

Here are some facts to consider

- In 2013, **15,000** preschool slots were lost in California due to cutbacks;
- Over **30,000** children in Los Angeles County do not have access to preschool;
- In Pasadena, there are **3,000** children without access to preschool; and
- Research tells us that children from low-income families without access to preschool are more likely to drop out of school and wind up in the Juvenile Justice System. A study by the Rand Corporation showed that when a child enrolls in preschool for one year, the state gains a net benefit of **\$7,000**.

This is why Mothers' Club has been focusing on **expanding our programs to maximize our capacity and serve more at-risk families each day** in order to address the growing needs of our community. Mothers' Club's two-generation approach has the unique ability to lift entire families out of poverty and isolation by providing them the skills and education they need to succeed in school and in life.

This coming year, my goal



Hector with Mothers' Club mom, Begonia

is to further expand our programs to serve an additional 16 at-risk children and their parents by making use of our classroom for three year olds that, up to this point, has remained empty during the afternoon. We need your help to get there. Thank you for joining Mothers' Club on the journey to achieve our vision.

Sincerely,

Hector LaFarga, Jr.
Executive Director

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:

Thursday, June 19 - 11:30am
Tuesday, July 1 - 9am
Thursday, July 17 - 11:30am
Tuesday, Aug 5 - 9am
Thursday, Aug 21 - 11:30am
Tuesday, Sept 2 - 9am
Thursday, Sept 18 - 11:30am

To RSVP or for more information call
(626) 792-2687 ext. 122 or
email mara@mothersclub.org

Thank You to Our Foundation Partners for Their Recent Grant Awards

Angell Foundation	Los Angeles Times Family Fund, a McCormick Foundation Fund
Annenberg Foundation	Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
Atlas Family Foundation	Pasadena Community Foundation
Deutsch Foundation	Patron Saints Foundation
First Foundation	SPARC
Fitzberg Foundation	Target
Foundation of San Marino Community Church	The Rose Hills Foundation
Gesner-Johnson Foundation	Tikun Olam
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A Partnership with Occidental College

Mothers' Club benefits from a wealth of community assistance to support our mission. This spring, we embraced an entirely new experience: opening our doors to college students who wanted to hone their writing skills by learning firsthand about non-profits and their impact on local social issues.

Volunteer Program Coordinator Sarah Hilbert worked directly with Assistant Professor Julie Prebel of Occidental College's Writing and Rhetoric Department to help shape and support her undergrad *Writing with the Community* course. Supported by a grant from the Keck Foundation and Oxy's Center for Community Based Learning, the class encouraged students to make connections between their knowledge gained in the academic "bubble" and the everyday work of two community partners, Mothers' Club and the Inner City Law Center (ICLC) in downtown LA. Students used class time to identify and analyze local social concerns (specifically, homelessness, poverty, and immigration) and the



Oxy Students Left to Right: Mika Cribbs, Eleni Duret, Sarah Reyes, Luis Orozco Cardenas, Eden Mekonen, and Somer Greene

rhetoric that surrounds them. They also visited ICLC and Mothers' Club four times throughout the semester to collaborate with each organization's clientele and staff. The ultimate goal of the class was for students to produce professional pieces of

writing that served the tangible purposes of the partner organizations and their audiences.

To that end, staff members Sarah Hilbert, Lara Nassar, and Mara Leong-Nichols provided articles and research for the course packet and designed the students' assignments. We asked part of the group to generate data-driven fact sheets on the importance of universal preschool for low-income children; the other group worked directly with four client mothers, interviewing them during the span of their visits about how Mothers' Club has made a difference in

their lives and that of their children. By examining the scholarly and the personal, the students sharpened their critical thinking and shared their emerging expertise and writing skills in very useful ways. Their final reports and interview stories are powerful! Our Development team plans to use these final pieces for grant writing and public relations efforts.

In their final reflections of their work with Mothers' Club this semester, all six students noted that their engagement went beyond volunteerism: Their interactions with the children and women at Mothers' Club proved transformative. One student noted, "Our class readings about the ways that immigrants are negatively stereotyped informed my perspective in the profile. I wanted to be sure to highlight the mother's leadership in the community, her educational background, and her successes as a way to offer a 'counter-narrative' to negative discourse." Mothers' Club has been thrilled to help educate a new generation about the issues that impact local communities.

- Sarah Hilbert & Julie Prebel



Somer interviews Mothers' Club mom Carina

*"Mothers' Club is a wonderful place; it's a hope for mothers. It's hope, it's just hope. Sometimes hope's something we don't have."
- Begonia, mother of 2*

Celebrating The Power of Two!

On Sunday, May 18th, Mothers' Club Family Learning Center celebrated the **Power of Two** at our annual gala alongside 150 of our most dedicated supporters and advocates. Taking place at Pandora on Green in Old Pasadena, the Power of Two Gala saluted this year's honorees and provided support for the unique two-generation learning programs Mothers' Club provides to families in need.

The festivities were led by **Master of Ceremonies Lolita Lopez**, an award-winning reporter for NBC4 Southern California. Lolita relied on her experiences as a journalist and mother to convey the importance of high-quality early childhood education, parent engagement and social support.

Lolita joined Mothers' Club to honor **Westridge School** and **Louise & Greg Probert** for their dedication to the families of Mothers' Club and the Pasadena community. Westridge School, an independent private school for college-bound girls located in Pasadena, has been a community partner of Mothers' Club for nearly twenty years. Westridge has provided volunteers, supporters and board and staff leadership to Mothers' Club, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that will last for years to come. San Marino residents



Westridge Head of School Elizabeth McGregor, Mothers' Club Executive Director Hector LaFarga, Jr., Mothers' Club mom Anahy Maldonado, and honorees Louise & Greg Probert

Louise & Greg Probert are active philanthropists and volunteers in the Pasadena community. Along with their three children, the Probert Family has volunteered countless hours to Mothers' Club over the years.

The audience was captivated by the extremely emotional and personal story told by Mothers' Club participant **Anahy Maldonado**. Anahy, a single mother with three

young daughters, shared her story of personal, financial and physical struggles and how Mothers' Club has allowed her to pursue her education and provide her family with the skills and resources they need to succeed in school and in life.

The Power of Two has many meanings. It is the basis of Mothers' Club's unique approach to helping at-risk families by educating



Disney VoluntEARS Anne Marie Pieczarka and Kristin Bacon with Mayor Bill Bogaard



Representatives from our Community Partner, Spokeo: Matthew Chan, Vanessa Waite and Brandon Waite



Hector LaFarga, Jr. with Representative Judy Chu and Master of Ceremonies Lolita Lopez

both parent and child at the same time. **When you educate a mother, you educate a generation.** It is also about building relationships between parents, children, families and teachers. At Mothers' Club, families find a team of people they can rely on for support, help, relief and fun. Finally, the Power of Two is about community. At the Power of Two Gala, we celebrate the idea of individuals with resources and abilities coming together to support families in need.

Thank you to everyone who supported and attended this year's Power of Two Gala. **Mothers' Club is lucky to have you!**

*- Mara Leong-Nichols
Development Manager*

To see more pictures of the event, "like" Mothers' Club FLC on Facebook!



We're proud to be your community partner and look forward to sharing the Magic with Mothers' Club families for years to come!



Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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Shelly & Sean Smith
Judy & Randy Wilson
Alice & Bing Yang



*And all the other individuals
and businesses that support
the Power of Two!*



Parents, Continued from Page 1

The Spring Fling is an example of one of our leadership events. Parent classroom representatives worked with the Early Childhood Education teachers to plan activities for a fun-filled day at Jackie Robinson Park. We took



Tatiana and Fernando at the Spring Fling

over the park and created a small carnival atmosphere for the children and their families. Parents organized activities such as face painting, ring toss, basketball toss, and obstacle courses. Infants through PreK were given fun games where they won stickers, prizes and more. We challenged one another with tug-of-war games between the children, adults against adults and even the staff against staff. The children enjoyed watching their moms and dads jumping like kids while they hopped along in the sack races.

The celebration culminated in a wonderful picnic lunch and an egg hunt, all organized by the parents. This year, Disney Store VolunteERS helped to man the activities so that all our parents could enjoy the fun with their children. Our friends from the National Charity League assisted in providing each child a goody bag filled with a stuffed bunny, coloring book and more.

The parents gained valu-



Sonia and her daughter Janelle

able leadership experience while also having fun. The message is simple: Enjoy your child and they will learn.

- Silvana Casalegno
Program Director

Reggio, Continued from Page 1

This year, three Mothers' Club teachers, Saharai, Celeste and Alejandra, were able to take a UCLA Extension course titled, *Exploring Ideas from Reggio Emilia in American Context*, thanks to a grant provided by The Sue Kujawa Staff Development Fund. The course provided an in-depth exploration of the Reggio Emilia approach and equipped the teachers with strategies to facilitate children's learning process by being a co-learner and collaborator and not just an instructor.

Much of the instruction at Reggio Emilia schools takes place in the form of projects during which children have opportunities to explore, observe, hypothesize, question, and discuss to clarify their understanding. Teachers give careful attention to the documentation and presentation of the thought process the child goes through while creating a project.

For example, Mothers' Club teachers brought plum blossoms into the classroom. The children observed the blossoms using their senses to

identify their smell, shape, color and size. They then used different materials – paper, paint, markers, sticks and buttons – to create their own interpretation of the plum blossoms. The teachers took pictures of the children at different points in the process and wrote down what they said as they were creating their artwork. The activity encouraged children to use their vocabulary and express their emotions while developing their creativity. The documentation process allows teachers to gain insight into the child's understanding of a concept and provides them with information to refine their curriculum.

After completing their course at UCLA extension, the three teachers organized a workshop to share what they learned with the other teachers and staff members at Mothers' Club. As Teacher Saharai explained, *"We are so happy to work at a place like Mothers' Club that helps us to grow professionally. The Sue Kujawa fund allows us*



Preschooler Vivian examines the plum blossoms

to take classes we wouldn't be able to on our own. Then we can share what we learn with our coworkers."

As a result, all of the classrooms and children at Mothers' Club have been able to benefit from the Reggio Emilia Approach.

- Mara Leong-Nichols
Development Manager

Thank You to the Mothers' Club Guardians

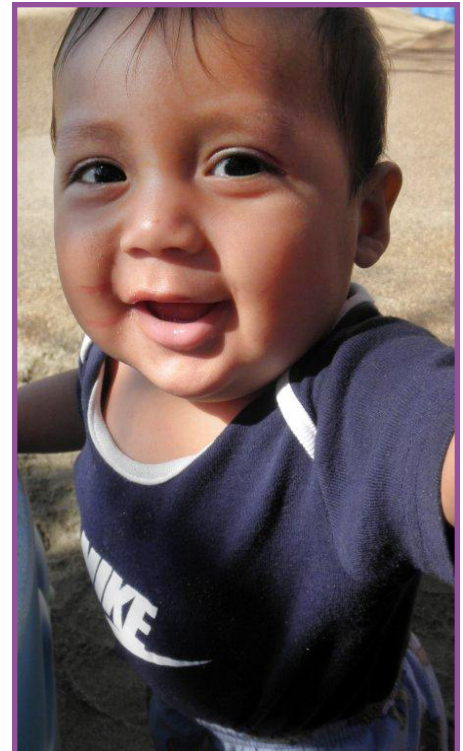
The *Guardians* provide sustaining support for our programs and operations by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.



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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 will 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:

Pacific Clinics, Early Head Start

Los Angeles Universal Preschool

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

City of Pasadena, Community Development Block Grant

Pasadena City College Community Education Center



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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 Online & Learn More at www.mothersclub.org

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The Power of Two - June 2014

Editors: Mara Leong-Nichols & Lara Nassar

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**Fall
Food & Wine
Festival**

October 18, 2014