

The Power of Two



Issue 20

August 2012

Pen Pal Program Brings Moms Together

The old-fashioned art of hand-written letters remains alive and well at Mothers' Club among several students in the advanced ESL class, all participants in the popular Parent Literacy Pen Pal Program. During the 2011-2012 school year, 25 mothers served as Pen Pals and exchanged eight letters with a volunteer writing partner. Volunteer Pen Pals are female and ideally also mothers themselves – we know how much mothers love to brag and share advice about their little ones!

To hone their writing skills, client Pen Pals create a first draft and visit me for a one-on-one editing session. Once editing is complete, they rewrite the letter on stationery, which is scanned and emailed to their volunteers. The volunteer has 10 days to write back a letter, which I deliver to the moms as a hardcopy letter.

Our Pen Pal teams actually get to meet in person at the end of each semester – a very exciting event that our moms truly look forward to. They can practice spoken English with someone they have grown to know and offer their own perspective on Mothers' Club by giving their new friend a personal tour of the facility.

Pen Pal, Continues on Page 3



Tieu-My Nguyen and her daughter, Mila, meet Pen Pal Guillermina Hoyos and son, Rafael

A Mother's Story



Fany Arita-Moran is a Mothers' Club participant and the mother of two young boys.

At our Annual Benefit on May 20, 2012, Fany courageously stood in front of a 200 person audience to share her poignant story. She illustrated her personal struggles with motherhood and education and how her life has been forever changed by Mothers' Club.

Fany is a true Mothers' Club success story. Since speaking at the Annual Benefit, Fany is happy to report that she has received her GED and will begin classes at PCC in the fall.

Read Fany's story on Page 5

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From the Executive Director

Mothers' Club had a fantastic 2011-2012 for many reasons: the unwavering individual and foundation support we receive, our impressive volunteer program, and the outstanding dedication of our Board and staff.

Our mission of preparing families living in poverty and isolation to succeed in school and life through our two-generation learning programs is what drives our work and focuses our staff to deliver the quality programs and services with great passion day in and day out. It is such an honor to be associated with such talented and mission-driven professionals.

As our year was winding down, I experienced three events that really moved me: our **Parent Recognition Luncheon**, our **Pre-Kindergarten Graduation** and a **personal testimonial by one of our mothers** at our recent Annual Benefit.

Our **Parent Recognition Luncheon** is focused on acknowledging our parents for their commitment to participate in our programs, for their leadership/volunteerism, and for their completion of coursework. This is really their time to shine and be appreciated. They take this event seriously: they get all dressed up; they are beaming, smiling and anxious to hear their name called; and you can see that their confidence is building. The simple fact that this event is just about them really goes a long way and we know that, as with every service we provide, it gives

them more strength to face and overcome the challenges that their daily lives bring.

Our **Pre-Kindergarten Graduation** is truly a family affair and confirms that what we do has an impact on the whole family - and extended family! In attendance were proud parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles,

godparents and friends. Each of our Pre-Kindergarten graduates chose a career they aspired to and their parents created a child-size poster cut-out of them as doctors, policemen, astronauts, firemen, nurses, etc. That is indeed our hope for our children, a future that includes succeeding in the educational system, fulfilling their childhood dreams and lifting their families with them!

Finally, there was **Fany Arita-Moran's powerful and moving testimonial at our recent Annual Benefit**. Fany is an example of a mother who is now prepared to succeed in school and in life - and she credits Mothers' Club! Fany grew up in an orphanage, with no mother or father, and experienced abuse instead of love. With two young chil-



Hector LaFarga, Jr. with Pre-Kindergarten Graduates

dren, she felt isolated. As a parent, she lacked the skills to understand her kids' behavior and educational needs. She valued education, but did not know how to pursue it. After experiencing all the educational programs and support services that Mothers' Club offered, Fany is now very capable of guiding her children and has plans to continue her own education - she recently received her GED and now plans to become a Certified Public Accountant! What an incredible transformation and a real example of our mission at work. [You can read Fany's Story on Page 5.](#)

Thank you all for your incredible support this past year and we look forward to a successful 2012-2013!

- Hector LaFarga, Jr.
Executive Director



Mothers' Club moms at the Parent Recognition Luncheon



Pre-Kindertener, Isaac, with his cut-out

Pen Pal Volunteers are Saying...



Pen Pals, Julie Ward and Begonia Bautista

"I always look forward to letters from my Pen Pal, they're such a happy break in my busy week. I really enjoy hearing all about her life, her kids, and the things she is passionate about."

- Julie Ward
First Year Pen Pal

"We really aren't that different from one another when it comes to caring for our little ones."

- Kristy Clougherty

"I think the Pen Pal program is a great way to connect with other moms, share ideas, and remember how much the joys and challenges of parenthood are the same for all moms."

- Mary Henriques



Kristy Clougherty and her daughters with Pen Pal, Lorena Olvera



Mothers' Club mom, Ximena Toro, with her Pen Pal, Heather Baraga

"Regardless of country of origin, language, or culture, we are all mothers who care deeply about our children. Getting to know each of these women through the Pen Pal program has helped me gain perspective on my own role as a mother."

- Heather Baraga

Pen Pal, Cont. from Page 1

Mary Henriques, one of our long-time Pen Pals, has especially enjoyed this aspect of the program, noting, "It's different from reading on the website or taking a typical tour. With a mom as a guide, you see her connections and what is most important for her at Mother's Club."

The 2011-2012 program culminated in a delightful Pen Pal Playdate in early June. Because the children of both our volunteers and our clients are "featured topics" in nearly all letters, we felt their inclusion was important during our final meet-up. For 90 minutes one Saturday morning, most of our Pen Pal teams and their children met in our beautiful play yard for games, crafts, and refreshments. The moms got to chat together while the children played with one another and our great team of teen volunteers. It was a great morning!

If you're interested in learning more about the Pen Pal Program, visit our website - www.mothersclub.org. We're actively recruiting new volunteer Pen Pals for the upcoming year. If you are female and a mother yourself, please contact me at sarah.hilbert@mothersclub.org.

- Sarah Hilbert
Volunteer Program Coordinator

Save the Date!



The Mothers' Club Fall Event Saturday, October 20, 2012

Food & Wine Tastings * Entertainment * Fun & Activities

For more information visit www.mothersclub.org

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, Aug. 7 - 9am
Thursday, Aug. 16 - 11:30am
Tuesday, Sept. 11 - 9am
Thursday, Sept. 20 - 11:30am
Tuesday, Oct. 9 - 9am
Thursday, Oct. 18 - 11:30am

To RSVP or for more information call
(626) 792-2587 ext. 112 or
email mara@mothersclub.org

Local Author and Early Childhood Expert Visits Mothers' Club

On June 19th, local author, child psychotherapist and parenting expert Dr. Tina Payne Bryson shared her expertise with teaching staff at Mothers' Club. In a very informative workshop, Tina presented ideas from her new book, ***The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*** on "how to cultivate healthy emotional and intellectual development in young children." The book was co-authored with Dr. Daniel Siegel and released last fall.

Tina stressed the importance of the impact adults have on children during their daily interactions. According to her, young children are seeking to understand and make sense out of their experiences and adults can help by providing support and using strategies from her book to teach children how to manage their strong emotions and problem solve effectively.

Mothers' Club teachers learned how to help children

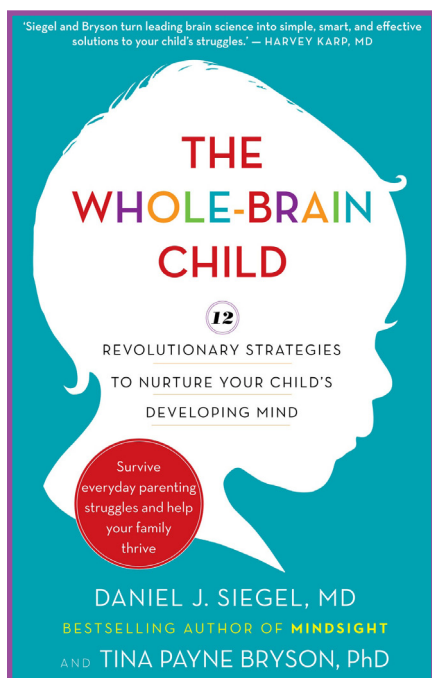
handle conflicts, cope with stressful situations and minimize out of control behavior. When asked about Tina's presentation, one teacher said, "I learned we can help children build their brains! When a child is having a tantrum they are telling us 'I need to build skills to handle stress'."

Tina believes that it's not just about teaching children new behaviors or language skills—it's much more than that. The young child's brain is growing, developing its capacity to regulate emotions and to solve problems.

Teachers and caregivers can help children by using the strategies Tina discusses in her book. "Connect and redirect," for example, instructs us to help a child by connecting to their strong emotion and then redirecting the



Dr. Tina Payne Bryson (center) with Mothers' Club Executive Director, teachers and staff



Dr. Tina Payne Bryson's Book

behavior. We also learned that the brain is not finished developing until we are 25 years old!

There are so many things adults can do to promote children's healthy brain development, including using the nurturing approach outlined in Tina's book. Anyone who has a relationship with a young child should read *The Whole-Brain Child*. It is full of practical ideas that make sense and really work with young children.

- Julie Espinoza
Director of Education

Shop at Ralphs? Earn Money for Mothers' Club!

By registering your Ralphs Rewards card with their Community Contributions Program, a percentage of every dollar you spend at Ralphs will go to Mothers' Club. Please follow these simple steps to register:

1. Pick up a **Ralphs Rewards** card at your local market.
2. Register online at www.ralphs.com and click on the upper right-hand link "Sign-In/Register."
3. Once you have an account, click on the "**Community Contribution Program**" in the left column.
4. Confirm your Ralphs Rewards card number is correct.
5. Locate Mothers' Club by entering our code: **90748**
6. Select Mothers' Club and know that you are helping families every time you buy groceries!

Like us on Facebook!



Go to
www.facebook.com/MothersClubFLC
or search
"Mothers' Club Family Learning Center"

A Mother's Story, Cont. from Page 1

My name is Fany Arita. I am from Honduras. I am married to Martin, and I have 2 kids: Martin 5 and Mateo 3. Thank you for the opportunity to share this great experience that I have had at Mother's Club. I have been in this program for over 3 years.

I am fortunate because I found in Mother's Club the perfect support for reaching my dreams. Before I joined Mother's Club, I did not know how to understand my kids. I felt frustrated and I didn't know how to manage their behavior. I felt like yelling and knew that I should not. I didn't have a loving home. I didn't grow up with a mother. I was raised in an orphanage where children were spanked instead of hugged. No one ever showed me love. I wanted to learn a better way but I could not find a place where they could take care of my children. I started to feel alone and depressed. My husband tried to help but he had to work all the time.

Another frustration was my need to continue my education. I have always loved to learn and now I could not. I did not know the language or where I could learn. I felt like I must wait until my youngest child would be in school before I could do anything and this was very frustrating because I needed to learn now. My heart was breaking.

After asking a lot of people and looking through the yellow pages, I ended up at the WIC office. There, I finally spoke to someone about my son needing to be with other kids. They first said no and then they gave me a book. I found Mothers' Club which said it educated both the child and the mother; I immediately called. I waited one year before being accepted. As soon as I went in, I knew from the very first time, this was the perfect place for me and my kids. I found a wonderful classroom for my children, and I could learn. The teachers were kind and they began to teach me how to talk to my son. On my first day, I remember sitting in the library and my son was screaming. I was scared that they would kick me out. But instead, Julie [Director of Education] came in and calmed me down and reassured me.



Hector LaFarga, Jr., Executive Director, with Fany Arita-Moran, her husband, Martin, and sons Mateo and Martin, Jr. at our Annual Benefit

I noticed that my son Martin was different since he was 7 months but no one was able to tell me why. I thought he needed to grow or that he needed to be with other kids. In my heart I felt scared but did not know why. Martin was 2 yrs old when we entered Mothers' Club. Here his teacher and Mrs. Silvana Casalegno [Director of Programs] told me about the possibility that my son was autistic. I remember a parent conference with Silvana where my husband and I first started to hear that our baby was not perfect and needed testing. I knew something was wrong but was scared to say it. I felt sad and relieved at the same time. I needed someone to tell me what was wrong and how to find help.

Mother's Club gave me support. I never felt alone. They showed me who to call, how to get the help that my son needed and how to advocate for him. Mother's Club gave me the skills to be patient with my son. Today my son Martin is attending a special program and he is well. This is one of the many reasons that I am thankful for Mother's Club. I sometimes wonder what would have happened to my son without the support of Mother's Club. How long would my son have had to wait for the help he needed.

My other son, Mateo, is doing

very well. He is in the Twos classroom, has friends and is learning a lot. He talks, likes to read, and knows a lot of things thanks to the wonderful teachers.

I am also grateful to Mother's Club for giving me the opportunity to study while my children were nearby. I began learning Basic English and in 2 years I finished level 4. I could not believe how much I learned and how much support I was given by the staff. I thought I would have to wait a long time to go to school for me but Mothers' Club supported my education too. In June, I will be finishing my GED program, next I want to begin at Pasadena City College. My goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant.

I do not have enough words to say thank you to the staff, the board of directors and the volunteers of Mothers' Club, but I will always remember Mother's Club as the beginning of a new life!

On behalf of my family- thank you very much for all your help.

- Fany Arita-Moran
Mothers' Club Participant

To support services for mothers like Fany, please send contributions to 980 N. Fair Oaks Ave, Pasadena 91103 or donate online at www.mothersclub.org.

Mothers' Club Acknowledges Our Board of Directors

Mothers' Club is led by a multi-faceted Board of Directors who provide volunteer leadership, professional expertise, and passion for our mission. Each year in June, we gather at our Annual Meeting to acknowledge the contributions of our Board of Directors, as well as welcome incoming members and pay tribute to those whose terms have come to an end.

Returning Board President, Norah Morley, began the evening by recognizing each of the three out-going Board members. Susan Futterman, former Director of Broadcast Standards at ABC with a degree in Early Childhood Education, has served on the Board of Directors for the past seven years, making extensive contributions to both the development and program committees. For the past four years, Jil Sheldon has used her expertise as a retired preschool and kindergarten teacher to aid Mothers' Club and its programs. Maye Albanez, Principal at Clifford Swan Investment Council, will be leaving the Board after a three year term but has generously agreed to continue managing Mothers' Club's investments pro-bono.

Following the acknowledgements, Julie Ward, the chair of the nominating and governance committee, introduced the five new Board members who will be joining us for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.



Left to Right: Board Member, Julie Ward with incoming Board Members, Amy Duncan, Connie Lue, Kelly McCord, Gretchen Reed, and Carmen Vargas

Amy Duncan was born and raised in Pasadena, received a BA in Political Science from California Polytechnic University, Pomona, and a JD from the Chapman University School of Law in Orange, California. Amy has worked as a litigation associate and "of counsel" in private practice for the past six years.

Connie Lue received an MS in Education from USC and a BA from Cal State. She is currently an Education Consultant for numerous organizations, including the LA County Office of Education, the California Preschool Instructional network; San Gabriel Unified School District, and Los Angeles Universal Preschool.

Kelly McCord is a licensed social worker with a BA in Psychology from UCLA, a Master of Social Work from USC, and has taken additional courses at UCLA in Early Childhood Education Administration & Curriculum. She currently serves as the Site Director for the Child Educational Center Cooperative Preschool at Caltech.

Gretchen Reed has a BA from Occidental College and an MBA from Northwestern University. She is currently the Senior Director for Professional Development of the National Business Officers Association. From 2001 through December 2011, Gretchen was the Assistant Head for Finance & Operations for Westridge School.

Carmen Vargas has a BA in Political Science and Ethnic Studies from Brown University. Carmen is an

investment banker who specializes in Public Finance. She is currently a Senior Vice President for Cabrera Capital Markets LLC.

The evening concluded with a year-end wrap up from our Executive Director, Hector LaFarga, Jr., and a presentation by our Volunteer Program Coordinator, Sarah Hilbert. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the Annual Meeting and to all of our Board members for their dedication, time and compassion.

- Mara Leong-Nichols
Development Coordinator



Susan Futterman and Hector LaFarga, Jr.

Thank You to Our Foundation Partners for Their Recent Grant Awards

Ann Peppers Foundation
for our Family Literacy Program

Angell Foundation
for our Children's Program

Rotary Club of Pasadena
to purchase books for our library

Pasadena Community Foundation
for our data collection system

Pasadena Tournament
of Roses® Foundation
for our Volunteer Program

Thank You to the Mothers' Club Guardians

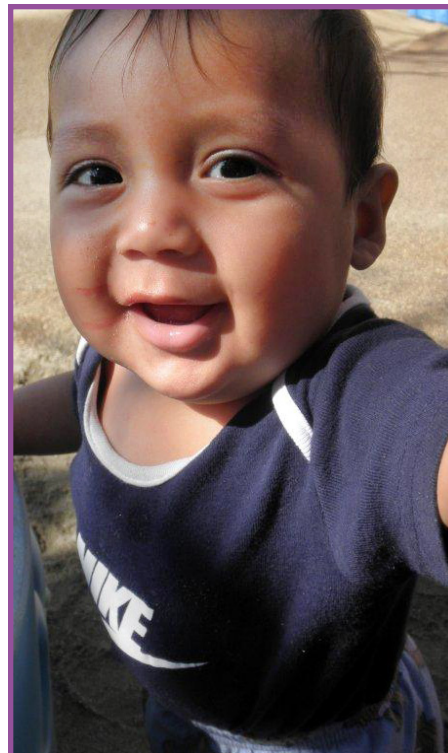
The *Guardians* provide sustaining support for our programs and operations by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.



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Carole & Mike Babcock
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Alex Hansen
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Judy & Randy Wilson



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. 112.

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

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 On-Line & Learn More at www.mothersclub.org

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