

The Power of Two

The First of Many Achievements

On the 21st of June 2010, twenty-one children took their first step towards greatness during their pre-K graduation at Mothers' Club.

The young students had spent the past year learning and developing the critical skills that they would need not only for kindergarten, but also for their future success in both school and life.

I recently came across a poster that said, "All the things I need to know in life, I learned in preschool." As I watched the children dressed in their purple caps and gowns march to Pomp and Circumstance, I truly believed that they had learned some of life's most important lessons.

As a two-generation learning agency I also witnessed the growth of our Mothers' Club parents. The parents of our graduating class took on the challenge of organizing an evening for almost 200 parents, friends, staff and board members.



Five-year-old Stephanie shakes the hand of her pre-k teacher with Executive Director Sue Kujawa and Children's Program Director Ana Gallegos looking on.

The parents formed various committees that handled tasks ranging from renting tables and chairs to decorating and coordinating the delicious food for the event. The parents also spent months teaching the young children to dance a waltz, which is no easy feat.

These extraordinary parents used many of the skills that they learned at Mothers' Club and hosted a great evening that was enjoyed by everyone.

Best of all, the parents celebrated with the knowledge and hope that this graduation was the first of many achievements for both their children and their families.

*- Silvana Casalegno,
Program Director*

*Proud pre-k graduate
Bayardo shares his
enthusiasm with his family.*



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Mothers' Club Family Learning Center

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From the President: A Time for Thanks

Mothers' Club is a place where time is charted on many calendars. There is the standard calendar year, January through December, by which we track the seasons and plan our lives.

There is the calendar for the school year, beginning in September, which for students and staff is the most important gauge for the passage of time.

And we have another calendar, beginning on July 1, which delimits our fiscal year and the term of our Board of Directors. Each June 30, we say good-bye to members whose service is ending, and on July 1, we say hello to new members whose service is just beginning. So it was again this year.

We owe them all thanks -- to those who are departing for their many accomplishments in a time of great change; and to those who are arriving for the talents and commitment they will be called upon to use in confronting changes to come.

This year, six Board members are leaving us because, under our bylaws, they simply cannot serve any longer. Each of these members joined the Board when Mothers' Club was still operating out of its long-time home on Orange Grove Boulevard.

They were on the Board when we made the courageous decision to buy a new facility. They served during the successful capital campaign that turned the dream into a reality, donated generously toward that success with both time and money, and helped chart an expansive course in the years since.

The future of Mothers' Club was highly uncertain when they arrived on the Board; as they leave our future is brighter than ever. Each has contributed in special ways.

Judy Smith Asbury - During Judy's seven years on the Board, she served as President for the first two years in our new facility, and oversaw the smooth transition and expansion of programs. She led the Board during the development of our 2009 strategic plan, helping to align Board and staff around a common vision for our future. Before that, Judy served as Development Committee Chair and was instrumental in creating the Mothers' Club logo and working to "brand" the organization's identity throughout our community.

Leslie Dennis - For six years, Leslie brought her sensitivity, common

sense and sunny disposition to numberless Board and committee meetings. She could always be counted on to chip in wherever needed throughout her eventful years on the Board.

John DeWitt - During his six years of service, John brought a business perspective to the Board, which was sorely needed as the organization was thrust first into a capital campaign, and then into a major construction project. His service on the Finance Committee helped us stay on sound financial footing even in the midst of a struggling economy.

Ellen Knell - Ellen's association with Mothers' Club began many years ago when she and her children were part of the cooperative nursery school that existed in the 1970's. Then she served on the Board in the 1980's, before returning in 2004 to complete another six years of service. It was on the porch of her home in September 2005, that the Board unanimously voted to purchase our facility at 980 N. Fair Oaks Avenue. This past year, Ellen shared her professional expertise as a member of our new Program Committee. Prior to that she served on the Finance Committee, among many others.

Kathy Magistrale - Kathy concluded her six years of service by chairing our 2010 fundraising event, which netted \$60,000 for our programs and operations. Prior to that, Kathy worked on the Development Committee, leading our outreach efforts and helping to establish our program of open houses that support Board members in developing friends of Mothers' Club.

Marsha Rood - Marsha also served on the Board for six years, providing critical Board leadership during the building of our new facility. She was on the team that selected our architect and contractor, worked through the design phase with the staff and architect, and served on the building management team during construction. In addition, she led the Building and Grounds Committee during the first year in our new home, and was responsible for developing the Facility Policies and Procedures Manual regulating the use of the building.

In addition to the Board members who are termed out, **Linda Lopez** has resigned after two busy years to attend



John Carlton, President of the Board

to her new twins. **Manny Perera** and **Peggy Coleman** also stepped off the Board to tend to career and family obligations. We thank each of them for their service and hope that they will return to Mothers' Club in the future.

As we say good-bye to so many, we are fortunate to welcome two new Board members, each of whom already has a long association with Mothers' Club.

Judy Brown - Judy previously served for six years on the Board in the 1990's. Since then, she has remained involved by serving on our fundraising event committee year after year. In addition, she chaired the agency's Community Advisors for the last three years. Judy brings a wealth of experience not only with Mothers' Club, but also with other organizations, complementing her insight, intelligence and demonstrated capacity for hard work.

Fran Norris Scoble - Fran is the immediate past Head of School at Westridge School for Girls in Pasadena, a post she occupied for seventeen years that saw Westridge grow and prosper in dramatic ways. She has been a champion of Mothers' Club for many years, and a member of its Board of Community Advisors since 1992.

To those who are leaving, and to those who are arriving, we thank you for your service. It is public spirited people like yourselves who have helped keep Mothers' Club going strong for almost fifty years, and on whom we will depend for the next fifty.

*- John Carlton,
Board President*

From the Executive Director: Summertime - and the Learning is Easy!

The classic picture of summer is one of a day at the beach, building sand castles, jumping in the waves, going home sun-burnt, sandy, and tired. Another image that comes to mind is playing all day in the outdoors - running through the sprinklers, riding bikes to the neighborhood store to buy a Popsicle, eating peaches with the juice running down your legs.

Today, there are many things about those images that don't hold up. We now know that getting sun burned is not a good thing. Parents don't feel safe letting their children roam the neighborhood on bikes, even if they wear the required helmets. And it's sad, but true, that peaches are just not as juicy as they used to be!

We also know that during the summer months, the gap in achievement increases between low-income children and their more advantaged peers. In fact, research shows that two-thirds of the achievement gap occurs during the summer. While children with higher socio-economic backgrounds continue to build skills during the summer break, underprivileged children do not. Over time, the result is an insurmountable gap in academic achievement.

Because of this, we encourage families to continue to attend Mothers' Club during the summer months, and we work extra hard to make sure we offer engaging programs and activities that will entice everyone to get out of bed and off to school. The preschool children have explored our neighborhood through weekly trips to La Pintoresca Park and Library for story

time and splashing in the wonderful park fountains.

The younger children enjoyed lots of water play - building their fine motor skills by carefully filling and pouring cup after cup of water into a variety of containers. Each day brings the comforting routine of breakfast, group time, outdoor time, story time, snack time - each activity and transition helping to build critical learning skills.

Children also benefit immensely from daily interactions with our teen volunteers - youth from more advantaged families who are building their skills, and helping their community, by providing one-on-one experiences with our children.

These young adults sit with a child who is learning to write, take a young child by the hand on the walk to the park or snuggle up with a toddler to read a book. They are also getting up early each day to make a difference in the world, and it is clear from their happy expressions that they feel well rewarded by their efforts.

And, because we believe so strongly in two-generation learning, the parents of our young children also continue to learn over the summer.

This summer they have benefitted greatly from our partnerships with the nursing programs at Azusa Pacific University and Cal State University, LA. Each day nursing students come to Mothers' Club, sometimes just to be an informal resource in the children's classrooms, other times making presentations to the parents on topics ranging from the importance of sun screen, to CPR, to nutrition, and cancer screening.

Again, this is a mutual learning experience, with the nursing students gaining valuable real-life knowledge of the challenges our families face, and our parents having the opportunity to



Executive Director Sue Kujawa congratulates a graduating pre-kindergartner at our annual graduation ceremony.

learn important, practical health information.

A particular adult class this summer has been especially meaningful to our parents. Board member Maye Albanez, a Principal at Clifford Swan Investment Counsel presented several workshops on matters of finance. It is amazing how the mastery of budgeting and money management is linked to a person's self image and self esteem.

Our mothers struggle each day to provide for their families, but they often feel they have very little, or no, control over their limited financial resources. Maye shared about her experience of working with the mothers, "If I am able to get through to one mother and influence the way she thinks about her finances, I may help improve one child's life. That is the gift I received from this class and one which I cannot put a price on."

As you can see, for the families who come to Mothers' Club, summer continues to be a time of exploration, adventure, and learning.

And yes, we even celebrate summer the old-fashioned way - with a trip to the beach where mothers and children, all protected by sunscreen, still play in the water, build sandcastles, eat sandy sandwiches, and ride back home on the bus, tired and full of happy memories of summer.

*- Sue Kujawa,
Executive Director*





Summer Volunteers Give and Get

Summer provides a unique opportunity for teens to test their wings and assert their independence. It can also be an anxious time for parents who scramble to find enriching activities for their teens during the long summer break. Fortunately, Mothers' Club offers an excellent summer program for student volunteers to work with at-risk children.

Every summer, Mothers' Club opens its doors to over 70 middle and high school students from the Pasadena area. Student volunteers help our children develop the language, critical thinking and social skills they will need for kindergarten. Parents agree that the student volunteers get back as much as they give.

"Shaheen has learned to consider the needs of others," says her mother Choi Catterjee. "I would highly recommend the Mother's Club summer program as a wonderful experience for teens to learn about the importance of community and diversity."

"I have seen Katy mature through her experience at Mother's Club," says her mother, Lynn Chu. "It is very enlightening for her to feel that she can have an impact by educating these children. And there are times when she appreciates how difficult parenting can be."

- Jason Wurtz,
Manager of Volunteer Programs



What I Did This Summer

By Nicole Probert, Mothers' Club Student Volunteer

I LOVED working at Mother's Club over the summer, especially with the infants and toddlers. They came in everyday so full of energy and ready to play. I got tired a lot faster than they did! I just loved it whenever one of them followed me around and how excited they got when they saw me come in.

I loved teaching the little ones new things. I think being a teenager helped the kids relate to me better, especially when I got on the floor and played like a little kid myself. I can see the difference in the kids over the three years I have been working with them. When they were small they were shy and quiet. Now they are self-assured, talking, laughing, and know where everything is. It's almost as if they are the seniors on campus!

I'm glad that I could help care for the children so that their mothers could improve their literacy skills and learn how to be better parents. I think it is great that these moms have the opportunity to better themselves, because it will help them as well as their families in the future.

Mother's Club has made me really consider a future profession where I can help people in my own community. I am considering being a pediatrician because I like the way kids view the world; or opening up my own organization that will help those in need in my neighborhood. I feel good helping others and knowing that I can make a difference in my OWN community!



Student Volunteer Nicole Probert with a Mothers' Club toddler.

"I'm glad that I could help care for the children so that their mothers could improve their literacy skills and learn how to be better parents."

Volunteering at Mothers' Club isn't Just for Students!

Adult Volunteer Opportunities

Group Service Projects: Corporate employees or members of service organizations volunteer in the children's program or for special events.

Early Readers Book Club: Volunteers read aloud to families and guide children through a literacy-based activity. Families receive a copy of the book and a take-home activity.

Parent Pen Pals: Volunteers exchange letters via "snail mail" with advanced and intermediate ESL students.

Adult Literacy Coaches: Volunteers provide one-on-one or small group tutoring to adult learners in ESL, computer and GED preparation.

Children's Program Aides: Volunteers assist teachers in the Children's Program during the fall and spring semesters.

Special Events & Fundraising: Volunteers partner with staff and Board members to raise funds for programs through events and other efforts.

To volunteer, contact Jason Wurtz at 626.792.2687 or jason@mothersclub.org.

Learning to Teach

Mothers' Club mentors the next generation of early childhood teachers.

This past year, Mothers' Club was not only a learning center for over 100 families in need, but also for student teachers enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Assistant course at LAUSD's Garfield Community Adult School.

Children's Program Director Ana Gallegos noted that, "Over the semester I saw a shift in their thinking about teaching. They began to see that children are learning all the time - during play and in groups, and that teachers can be facilitators and guides to help children throughout the day, not just during direct instruction."

In the fall, students completed a series of classroom observations. Then in the spring, three student teachers, Maribel Sanchez, Gladys Vintimillo,



Student teacher Gladys Vintimillo facilitates an activity with two-year-olds.

and Alicia Cervantes spent two days a week in our center gaining valuable mentorship from our Children's Program Director, Ana Gallegos, and fieldwork practice in the classrooms with our highly skilled early childhood teachers.

Ana reviewed their lesson plans and helped them brainstorm ideas for

appropriate activities for the children to fulfill the coursework requirements. According to Ana, "This is when their creativity came out! I saw their confidence and skills begin to grow. They came in with so many big ideas. I worked with them to identify what needed to be taught for the age group they were working with and to develop activities and learn strategies to help the children learn at their own pace and level."

Ana also noted that, "Over the semester I saw a shift in their thinking about teaching. They began to see that children are learning all the time - during play and in groups, and that teachers can be facilitators and guides to help children throughout the day, not just during direct instruction."

By the end of the year Maribel, Gladys and Alicia had become part of our teaching team. They came to special events, used our library to plan activities, and of course became our friends. We were excited about the opportunity to be a part of this innovative teacher training program. It was wonderful to see our teachers and the student teachers interacting and learning from one other.

Overall it was a rewarding experience for Mothers' Club to help prepare our community's newest teachers to enter the workforce ready and capable of teaching our youngest learners.

*Julie Espinoza,
Family Literacy Coordinator*



Student teacher Maribel Sanchez working closely with a prekindergartner.

Our Doors are Open!

Join us for a tour of our two-generation learning model.

Tuesday, September 14 - 9:00 am
Thursday, September 16 - 11:30 am

To provide a courtesy RSVP or for more information call (626) 792-2687 ext. 122

Tours are conducted monthly. View a schedule on-line at www.mothersclub.org



Our Continued Thanks to our Guardians

The Mothers' Club *Guardians* is a group of individuals who provide cornerstone support for our programs by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.

Grant Awards & Partners

Thank you to the following funders for their recent grants:

Roy Disney Family Foundation

Los Angeles Times Family Fund,
a fund of the
McCormick Tribune Foundation

Mountain View Foundation
The Patron Saints Foundation
Ann Peppers Foundation
The Schow Foundation

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

California Department of Education,
Even Start Family Literacy Grant

Center for Community and Family Services, Early Head Start

First 5 LA Family Literacy Initiative

Los Angeles Universal Preschool

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

Maye Albanez & Tim Marty

Judy Smith Asbury &

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Gwen & Guilford Babcock

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Have You Considered a Legacy Gift to Mothers' Club?

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 us at (626) 792-2687, ext. 122. Thank you for partnering with us to meet the needs of future children and parents.



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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. 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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The Power of Two

August 2010

Editor: Sarah Orth

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Tax ID 23-7275324