



Supporting Quality Child Care Since 1974

## Kindergarten is just around the corner

With a smile on her lips, a 4-year old “graduate” of Smart Start Family Child Care in Redondo Beach had this to say about her move to kindergarten in the fall, “I am much smarter now than when I first came to Smart Start last September. I am ready for kindergarten.” Just a year ago, this child barely knew the names of letters. Today, her teacher Ginny Zywort says she is on the verge of reading and has developed a strong sense of herself.

**A**ngela Motano is the mother of a 2 ½ year old boy and she is so grateful to have her son in an exceptional family child care with the help of Connections For Children. At just 2 ½ he is learning how to share, take turns and follow directions. He’s also learning his colors, letters and numbers. Early learning in a child’s out-of-the-home setting can be instrumental to successful transition to kindergarten. However, if children have longer breaks during the summer months, summer learning loss (a well-documented loss of academic skills and knowledge gained during the school year) can occur.

Summer is a great time to use “off-time” from a more formal setting to continue the wonderful school preparation that occurs at school. While unstructured

play time is critical, young children should have lots of opportunities to continue academic skill and knowledge development. What can you do to help your child this summer? Talk to your child’s preschool teacher or child care provider before a break for suggestions. Reinforce what your child has learned during the year with interactive books and activities, by reading to your child, through local library story time and by taking advantage of many free and low-cost children’s activities in your area. Remember that balance is the key and an involved child will be a successful one. A child’s readiness to begin kindergarten relies on a partnership between you, your child and your children’s child care providers and educators.



### Our Mission:

Connections For Children offers the promise of a stronger future for children, families and communities through quality child care resources, education and guidance.

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# From the Executive Director



I love the long summer days – when you get home and the daylight lingers late into the evening. The summer reminds me of childhood anticipation of days spent outdoors in unstructured play, the library reading club, and going to the park. And that the new school year is right around the corner. Summer signifies transitions – children are “graduating” to a new grade, or perhaps even a new school – and these next few months can truly support a great start to the new school year.

As summer turns to fall, many children will be entering kindergarten – a time that can be both exciting and challenging for parents and children. More and more studies show the direct impact that success in kindergarten will have on a child's future school years and in his/her success in life.

Quality early child care and education makes a tremendous impact on a child's successful transition into kindergarten. Connections For Children continues to offer parents and early childhood educators resources and tools to help in this critical transition. These focus not only on children gaining skills that will help them academically, but also the “softer” skills that are so important socially, such as getting along with others, learning to follow directions and learning to share.

Unfortunately, the California State budget cuts will once again mean that many, many children will no longer have access to quality early child care and education programs. Reductions in financial assistance to low-income working parents and those in job and career training programs will impact thousands of families, just as the summertime is leading up to school time. Against this backdrop, it is even more imperative that we find ways to ensure that our most vulnerable children are able to enter kindergarten with the same vital resources and preparation as all their classmates.

You too can help children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Your contributions to Connections For Children help provide new books and other educational materials to parents and child care providers throughout our service area. Your donations provide invaluable training to early educators on early literacy, math and science, nutrition, and how to support children who present behavioral challenges.

In the pages that follow, we share lots of ideas for the next few months that will help children prepare for kindergarten, whether it's this fall or in the next few years. We are so grateful for your support. It is because of you that more children will enter kindergarten this year – healthy, happy and ready to learn and succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patti Oblath". The signature is fluid and cursive.

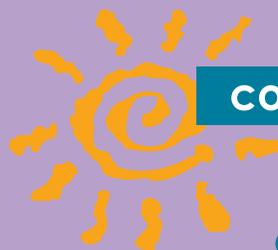
Patti Oblath  
Executive Director

### **NEWSLETTER**

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# With Great Appreciation to *Betsy Hiteshew*



Photo by Penny Jennings

**“Your role as a leader is even more important than you might imagine. You have the power to help people become winners.” — Ken Blanchard**

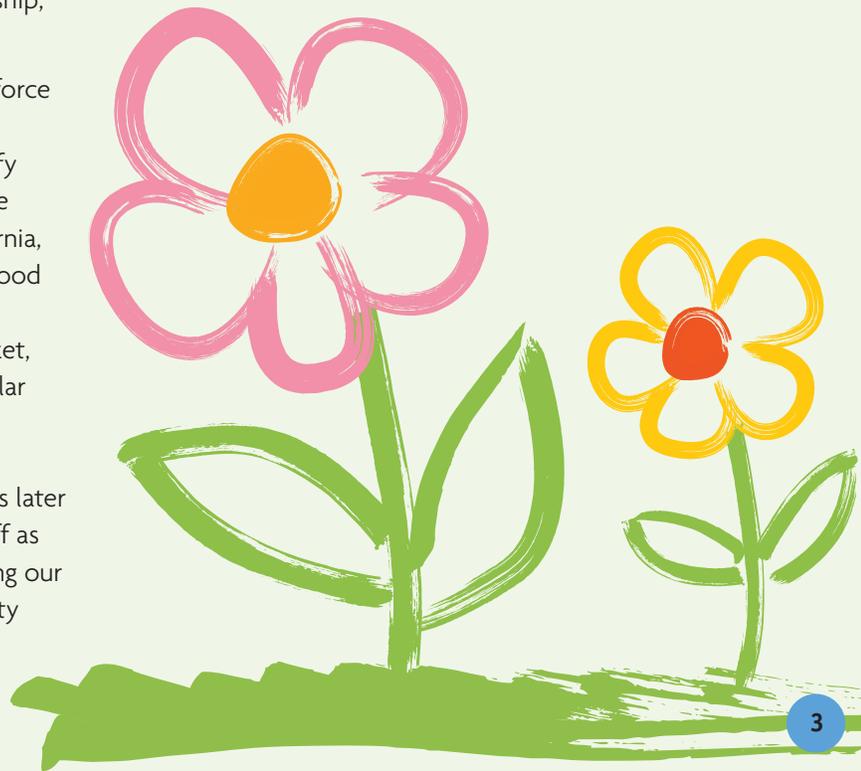
**I**t is with sincere thanks for many, many years of service, that Connections For Children bids adieu to one of our founders and long-time Board members, Betsy Hiteshew. Throughout her extensive career, Betsy has modeled the world of leadership, early education and child care for all of us.

During the mid 1970's, as women began to re-enter the workforce in greater numbers, there was an increased need for quality child care services and little knowledge about how to identify available resources. In response, a small number of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies sprang up in Northern California, and in Pasadena. Betsy, who was the Director of Early Childhood Education at Santa Monica College at the time, along with several other early childhood advocates including Laurie Rozet, Ida Bucher and June Sale, identified the need to provide similar services to families in Santa Monica and surrounding areas. Together, these women founded the Child Care Information Service as part of Family Service in Santa Monica. A few years later the project, now renamed Connections For Children, took off as an independent organization. Many of the programs, including our mobile Toy Loan Program, lunchtime discussions about quality

child care, support for centers and family child care homes and expansion into the South Bay, that Betsy and her co-founders launched, are still part of Connections For Children today.

As a tireless advocate, Betsy returned about 15 years ago to again serve on the CFC Board of Directors. Betsy continued to help all of us understand the needs of young children, particularly the effect that quality early child care and education has on a child's social, emotional, language and cognitive development, as well as on their success in school and in life. Her support of CFC motivated and inspired continuous growth – both in programs and the funding necessary to sustain them. With Betsy's help, new collaborations were also established with UCLA, Santa Monica College and other community agencies interested in supporting quality child care and early education.

Earlier this year Betsy shared that she has decided to take some long deserved time to enjoy her family, love of travel, cooking and, of course, music. While Betsy is no longer on our Board of Directors, she will continue to provide insight and wisdom on child care and early education through our Advisory Board and remains active in the Santa Monica community. Thank you, Betsy for many years of tireless service and for working with us to help prepare thousands of children for success in school and in life. You are forever our teacher!



The options for kindergarten have become seemingly endless: half day kindergarten, morning or afternoon session, traditional kindergarten with uniforms, desks and a head master, full day progressive kindergarten, or a “green” environmentally conscious kindergarten. Too much to process? Of course not, because the truth is a child can be successful in any of these kindergarten settings. However, success largely depends on the dynamic partnership between parents, child care providers and teachers.



Here are some helpful tips to get your preschooler ready for kindergarten:

# Preparing for Kind

- 1. Set aside as much time as possible to spend in open dialogue with your preschooler about the events of their day. Express enthusiasm and a shared interest in the wonders and details of the events which took place while you were apart.**

In the long run, this habit will pay off. If your child feels that you are genuinely interested in the details of their day in preschool/child care they will share the details of their day with you throughout their academic career. Additionally, your sincere interest serves as an investment or a “deposit” into their self esteem. Successful students have a sound sense of self which begins early. Be sure to commit your undivided attention to them during this time.

- 2. Read with your child everyday. No exceptions.**

In order for your child to be successful, they must become readers. The public libraries have awesome workshops, programs and activities year round that are even more extensive during the summer months. Check for summer event schedules online or in local newspapers – most of these are family activities and great ways to provide free entertainment for your child(ren). Children who can read can “lead”. Additionally, statistics show that children who begin to read early develop greater vocabularies and are much more proficient writers.

#### THE POWER OF “SIGHT WORDS”

What are sight words? A simple definition would be common words that a reader should recognize on sight. These are “high frequency” or “instant” words that commonly cannot be sounded out, are used to connect/join sentences, and are required for appropriate sentence structure.

Parents can use the Internet or local library to become familiar with “sight words”. A wonderful activity would be to use simple flashcards. Write each “sight word” legibly on a card and begin to create a “word wall” in your home where your child can see these high frequency words daily. This simple activity has so many benefits: developing sound study habits, creating family time and building positive self esteem.

- 3. Begin chatting with your preschooler about his/her new school.**

While some children readily adjust to a new environment and embrace change, others do not. Either way, it is always important to discuss any coming changes with your child. Typically, kindergarten orientation is scheduled for new students and their parents and many schools schedule a “play date” so that the children may come and visit with other prospective classmates before school begins in the fall. Take full advantage of any social events the new school offers so that your child can have an idea of what to expect. Additionally, consider scheduling play dates throughout the summer with other families who will be attending the new school. Many budding friendships begin long before the school bell rings for the first time in September. When faced with a new change, having an established alliance with someone else can make the transition so much easier.

- 4. DO NOT overextend or overbook your child’s calendar. Set aside time to relax each day.**

Child psychologists during the past decade have maintained that stress among children is growing in epidemic proportions. Stress can make it increasingly difficult for students to achieve and succeed. The core of stress in most children, is overbooking. Children need time to decompress.



# Kindergarten

by Andrea Andrews

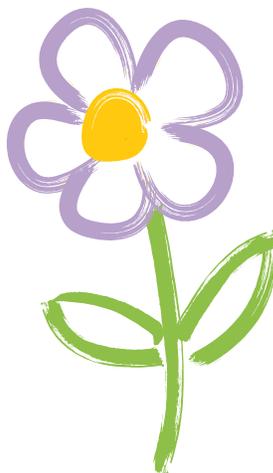
Evaluate your child's schedule from September through June. If the days are terribly busy during these months, simply take a couple of activities away for balance. If the child attends summer day camp, they may experience physical activities (dance, yoga, swimming), cultural activities (folk art, fieldtrips, museums, theme parks) and social activities (barbecues, picnics, beach days). Take full advantage of these benefits.

Set aside time to relax with your children. Incorporating relaxation as a part of your child's daily activity will also contribute to their overall ability to use relaxation techniques to prepare for academic projects, study for exams and produce excellent homework completion.

## THE OBJECTIVE

Preparing your child for kindergarten should be a gradual process that is achieved over time. However, it's never too late to start. Remember that the overall objective is to produce a happy, healthy, well adjusted, accountable, reliable and responsible human being who is full of compassion, consideration and commitment. Preschool is a springboard for building such skills. Kindergarten through graduate school will merely scaffold on everything a child has learned during the early years. Whether their initial exposure to academia and socialization begins at home with a nanny, a grandparent, neighbor, family child care, child care center or preschool, each day serves as a single step toward the ultimate goal...producing a sound, well rounded adult.

Have an awesome summer and remember... parenting should be fun!



All photos on pg 4-5 by Mathieu Young Photography

*Entering kindergarten can be a big and, often, overwhelming stage in kids' and their families' lives. Learning new academic concepts, being able to follow complicated kindergarten classroom rules, building friendships, being able to pay attention to a teacher when he or she is tired or not feeling well, becoming more independent and taking on new responsibilities requires a high level of social and emotional maturity. Here, at St Joseph Early Learning Center, one of our main goals for preschool children is to prepare them socially and emotionally for kindergarten, while introducing them to academic concepts through play, and fun, hands-on, activities.*

—Dina Dubinskiy, MSW, Program Director,  
Early Learning Center, St. Joseph Center



## Andrea Andrews

Andrea Andrews has served as CEO/Executive Director for PBS 4 Kids, Inc. [Pretty Basic Shuttle] & Colorful Start Network - organizations originally designed to prepare preschool children for kindergarten. She is also part of the legacy of a group of pioneers who established the Head Start State Preschool Program in 1965. Andrea has served as an advocate and consultant for the education of young children and is currently an author, speaker and educational administrator.

# Why I Serve

Irene Valverde



I consider myself very fortunate to be a part of the Connections For Children Board. I found CFC through my company when my first son was in need of daycare. With their help, I was able to interview several places and found a loving, caring at-home daycare provider. When it was time for my son to go to preschool, I contacted CFC again and was able to interview several preschools, ultimately choosing an excellent educational facility that all my kids have now attended (my youngest son currently has one year left at this wonderful place).

Little did I know that a few years after contacting Connections For Children the very first time, a friend of mine would ask me to consider board membership. Being a working mother of three small children, I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to devote

the extra time, but I knew I had to do it because I wanted to be part of an organization that is so important to so many parents of young children. I have now been on the Board for almost one year and I have learned so much more about CFC and all of the great programs that give parents of all socioeconomic levels piece of mind about early childhood development. I had received excellent referrals while many families receive subsidies that allow them to work while their kids are well taken care of. There is also great training and year-round child development support.

Recently I have been able to work with the heart and soul of CFC, their staff. Their collective dedication to kids' development, especially in the past few years as they have faced state budget cuts, makes me even more passionate about their mission.

## Family Dance Jam

Ilaan Mazzini had an amazing career as a professional modern dancer and choreographer. She was well educated, well travelled, and taught at the University level.

In her late 30's, Ilaan started a family, stopped traveling and began a wonderful job working as the head of Family Programming at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles – but she desperately missed dancing.

When Ilaan's son was just one year old, she turned to Connections For Children to help find quality child care for him. "As a working new mother I turned to Connections For Children for help locating my first daycare. It was stressful going back to work and through the CFC referral program I quickly found a kind, gentle, safe and nurturing home daycare for my son. I was grateful for the guidance."

Watching her young son motivated Ilaan to look for a way to teach again – with the focus on instructing entire families to learn to move. Her commitment to helping families use their own unique dynamic to communicate through movement and dance became the inspiration for Family Dance Jam – the company that she began in 2008. Through Family Dance Jam, families can play, move, create and connect in a risk-averse, safe and sometimes very unsuspecting way.

Ilaan also works with teachers of young children to inspire creative movement within the school environment. Whether a child is 3 or 10, teachers can learn to instill a sense of confidence in children by helping them become aware of their bodies and their own unique body language. Ilaan believes strongly that there is no wrong way to move and that children just need a little bit of freedom and guidance.

This summer, when you're looking for wonderful activities – don't forget to check out Family Dance Jam at [www.familydancejam.com](http://www.familydancejam.com).



# Give the Gift of Kindergarten Readiness

Your support of early education and child care is crucial to helping prepare children to enter school ready to learn and succeed – now and in the future. We continue to look for opportunities to support children’s learning and development that go beyond traditional gifts of cash and products, and that help make giving fun! Please know that however you choose to support our organization, we are grateful for your commitment and your contributions. Here are just some of the ways that you can support Connections For Children.

“Early Education starts as early as a child comes into the world. As a child care provider, I encourage and inspire learning with a variety of materials and activities. It is important to prepare children for kindergarten as well as for their future.”

— Rocio Diaz, *Early Childhood Learning*



Mathieu Young Photography



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shopping online through GoodSearch and GoodShop at [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com). You can also earn donations through the new GoodDining Program at GoodSearch. There is no cost to join.

Please like us on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/connectionsforchildren](http://www.facebook.com/connectionsforchildren)



## MACY'S SHOP FOR A CAUSE DAY

Macy's Shop For A Cause gives you the opportunity to give back to your community and to help Connections For Children. 100% of the proceeds from purchasing \$5 shopping passes from Connections For Children will support CFC's programs and services. The pass entitles you to a 25% discount on all items purchased at any Macys nationwide on 8/25. Only the proceeds from the sale of the passes benefits CFC.

Please call Lisa Daggett at 310-452-3325 x211 or e-mail her at [lisad@cfc-ca.org](mailto:lisad@cfc-ca.org) if you would like passes for yourself and for others. August 25 is the perfect time for Back-to-School shopping and your \$5.00 donation will help children learn and early educators teach!



## RALPHS AND FOOD4LESS COMMUNITY SHOPPING PROGRAM

You can help us raise money as you shop for wonderful summer fruit and other healthy treats.

Committed to supporting education and the community, the Ralphs and Food4Less Rewards programs help customers to save money while donating to the non-profit organization of their choice.

SIGNING UP IS EASY, JUST FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

For Ralphs - sign up for a Ralphs Rewards Card at a store near you (not to be mistaken as the former, Ralphs Club Card). Visit the Ralphs Community Contribution page at [www.ralphs.com](http://www.ralphs.com) and click on the "Participant" sign up. You will have the option of selecting "Connections For Children" as your educational organization to receive Ralphs Rewards earnings. Our NPO number is 90569. If you signed up last year, please note that Ralph's requires re-registration on or after every September 1.



For Food4Less - request a Food4Less Rewards Card by calling or visiting the Connections For Children Office at (310) 452-3325. Or, you can email Lisa Daggett at [lisad@cfc-ca.org](mailto:lisad@cfc-ca.org). Once you receive your card, you must register the card online at [www.food4less.com/community\\_rewards](http://www.food4less.com/community_rewards).



In order to save paper, in addition to our two hard copy editions of our newsletter each year, we will continue to send regular e-newsletters. If you haven't done so already, please join our e-mailing list through Facebook or our website at [www.connectionsforchildren.org](http://www.connectionsforchildren.org).



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# Special Thanks to all of the Contributors to our Mother's Day Campaign.

Your gifts in honor of so many moms made a true impact in our ability to assist in the provision of quality early child care and education this year. Special thanks to:

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Kay Chatowski

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