



Supporting Quality Child Care Since 1976

## In Appreciation of their Love, Commitment and Dedication

*"It is our job as Child Care Providers to help guide children to become kind, caring human beings – children that will grow up to make a difference and change society."*

*Ginny Zywojt, Los Angeles Universal 2011 Preschool Teacher of the Year*

Almost every parent at one time or another has had to make the often challenging decision to seek care outside of their home for their children. Every family's needs are unique and everyone has different things they look for in a Child Care Provider – but the need for quality early care and education is universal. Quality child care is the foundation that will help all of our children grow up healthy and smart. It is the wonderful women and men who care for children that we honor this month and all year round!

Child Care Providers care for children of varying ages in their own home or in a structured child care facility. They ensure that children in their care are safe and healthy, and they learn to interact with other children. Child Care Providers help children gain the important social, emotional, language, and learning skills they will need to be successful for years to come.

Connections For Children thanks all of the amazing Child Care Providers that we work with and the wonderful donors and volunteers who support their work. It is because of you that each year we are able to:

- Assist more than 4,500 parents find quality, licensed child care to meet each family's individual and personal needs.
- Provide more than 1,000 families, mainly single parents trying to become self-sufficient, with child care expense assistance.
- Empower more than 250 Child Care Providers with professional development training at no cost to the Provider, helping to improve the quality of the care they provide.
- Deliver educational and enriching activities to more than 2,500 children at local child care sites and community parks.

National Child Care Provider Appreciation Day – May 6th



## Our Mission:

to help all children reach their full potential by supporting families' access to high quality child care and education.

CONNECTIONS FOR CHILDREN

A Child Care Resource & Referral Agency

[www.connectionsforchildren.org](http://www.connectionsforchildren.org)

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### Newsletter

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# From the Executive Director

This glorious spring as I've watched the trees bud and new green leaves appear, I've thought a lot about how we all work together to support children and families as they grow! Spring is such an inspiring time of transformation and great potential. During these times of adversity and uncertainty for programs that assist families with child care and early education, it seems especially important to recognize the contributions of everyone who plays a part in helping children thrive.



Early childhood teachers and providers are certainly at the top of that list. What dedicated and caring people they are! We recognize their important work every day throughout the year, and are so pleased to join hands across the country during May to celebrate National Child Care Provider Appreciation Day. We would like to thank all of the providers that we have had the honor to work with here at Connections For Children. Your commitment to quality child care and your never-ending love of children is truly remarkable. It takes a special person to make a difference in the life of a child.

The colorful spring blossoms also bring to mind all those whose contributions have helped Connections For Children flourish and succeed during a year of challenges. This issue of our newsletter highlights some of the many ways that your contributions nurture children, their families, and the providers and teachers who care for them.

Our holiday angels - Mattel, the Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, Northridge Hospital Medical Center, Fox Entertainment, and more than a dozen child care centers - ensured that our "Holiday Gift Store" was stocked with wonderful treats this past December. Over fifty terrific volunteers spent three rainy days wrapping gifts to bring cheer to our families despite the wet weather.

Those who responded to our annual fund campaign have helped sustain our programs, despite cuts to public funding. Together, your contributions made possible the purchase of new library books, the continuation of our Toy Loan program, and visits by our resource van. Your gifts have sponsored music, movement, and literacy enrichment programs at child care sites throughout our community, making a difference for hundreds of children.

On behalf of all of us at Connections For Children, please know that we are so grateful for the role you play in our survival and success in helping families access quality child care for their little ones. If you don't yet know about our work, we hope you will soon visit and see all that is blooming here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patti Oblath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small star-like mark above the first 'i' in "Patti".

Patti Oblath  
Executive Director

# Giving from the Heart — *The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation*

**R**eading aloud to young children is thought to be the number one intervention in developing their literacy skills. The latest research reminds us that reading aloud to a child early in life stimulates brain activity, promotes the ability to learn to read, and helps children start school ready to learn and succeed.

The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation began partnering with Connections For Children (CFC) several years ago, when Executive Director, Fran Morris Rosman learned of our mission and commitment to early childhood education and early literacy. The Foundation supports CFC through its “A Book Just For Me” Program. Thanks to the Foundation and Fran Morris Rosman, CFC has brand new books in the Resource Library to share with families and Child Care providers. During the holidays, children participating in the CFC child care assistance programs receive age-appropriate books – in some cases these are the first new books they have ever owned. CFC staff members read the books to children during CFC’s “Fun Visits” to child care sites, and in turn leave the books for the providers to help supplement programming and for the children to take home and share with their families. When asked why The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation supports Connections For Children, Fran said, “Connections For Children encompasses Ella’s desire to share the world with kids by inspiring them towards a love of reading.”

The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation was created and funded in 1993 by Ms. Ella Fitzgerald, the beloved “First Lady of Song,” in order to fulfill her desire to use the fruits of her success to help people of all races, cultures and beliefs. Ella wanted to help improve the quality of life for the most disadvantaged members of the community as well as foster a love of reading, a love of music and assistance

with basic needs including food, clothing, shelter and basic healthcare for those needing support.

Fran Morris Rosman is the Executive Director of this amazing Foundation that serves as a living legacy to the philanthropic beliefs that were so important to Ella. “I became involved with the Foundation at its start. My husband was Ella’s Legal Counsel and upon Ella’s death, he needed an Archivist, and before the birth of our son, I was the Assistant Archivist at the L.A. Music Center. I have truly enjoyed the opportunity to keep Ella’s dreams and hopes alive through her Foundation, and every day I am reminded of how she cared for others.” Connections For Children would like to thank The Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation for its continued generosity and support of early learning. To learn more about the work that they do, please visit their website – [ellafitzgeraldfoundation.org](http://ellafitzgeraldfoundation.org).

**“It isn’t where you came from, its where you’re going that counts.”**

— Ella Fitzgerald



# In Appreciation of Child Care Providers

"Our families and teachers believe strongly in giving back to the community. We began collecting new toys, books and games for Connections For Children's Holiday Gift Program about four years ago and everyone loves it!"

— Judi O'Donnell, Director – Covenant Presbyterian Church Preschool



"When I arrived in Santa Monica, I didn't know anyone. I was a single mom in need of child care for a toddler and a four-year old. Connections For Children helped me find a Family Day Care that accepted both of my kids, and also served as a wonderful pre-school, helping my four-year old get ready for kindergarten."

— Carol F.



"After working with children with special needs at the Elementary School level for 13 years, I decided to realize a dream and open my own Family Child Care. Running a Family Child Care that is also part of the Los Angeles Universal Preschool Program has allowed me to combine all of my past skills and love of children and make a difference when they are very young."

—Celia Fisher – Beach Moms  
FDC

"I love helping the children learn to believe in themselves. Children who are capable of believing that they can accomplish anything they set their mind to will become that type of adult."

— **Ginny Zywot, FCC - Smart Start  
Preschool Child Care**



"I love my job as a Family Child Care Provider! I am able to see the children that we care for grow and develop in a healthy way. I am able to make a difference every day."

— **Ana Gomez Garcia,  
Ana Gomez Garcia  
Family Daycare**



"I don't know what I would have done without our Child Care Provider last year. I was going through so much transition personally and with my career and I am so very grateful for the daily consistency and stability that the kids got from their Child Care Provider."

— **Sandra B.**

"My two kids benefit every single day from an amazing Family Child Care Provider that I found with the help of Connections For Children. Connections taught me what to look for during the search process, which was very helpful when it came down to making the final decision that would best meet the needs of my kids, as well as meet my needs as a working mom." — **Maria R.**

# It is Our Honor — *Recognizing Board Member Betsy Hiteshew*

When recently asked to participate in the Santa Monica Bay Area Human Relations Council's annual recognition program, "Community Heroes: Ordinary People Who Do Extraordinary Things", it was our pleasure and good fortune to nominate Ms. Betsy Hiteshew, a Connections For Children Board Member, as a 2011 Community Hero.

The primary goal of the Community Heroes Program is to recognize individuals whose involvement with community-based non-profit organizations contributes to building a respectful, inclusive, community. Community Heroes promote understanding within the diverse community of Santa Monica; they make a difference in the community and are able to demonstrate compassion for others. It was these qualifications that prompted our nomination of Betsy.

Betsy has always been a visionary leader and pioneer in the early child care and education movement. During the mid 1970's, as women began to re-enter the workforce in greater numbers, there was a growing



*Mayor Richard Blom; Ms. Betty Hiteshew; Mayor Pro Tempore Gleam Davis; and Jody Priselac, Chair, Human Relations Council – Santa Monica Bay Region.*

"I was greatly touched by the nomination, especially since it came from Patti Oblath, who has always been one of my heroes. We have been blessed at Connections with dedicated leaders who are passionate about supporting parents and caregivers in their quest for quality child care. Connections means a great deal to me, not only because of what it does, but because of the caring, humane way in which it interacts with each other, parents and the child care community. To be a hero to this group of committed people is as good as it gets!" - Ms. Betsy Hiteshew

need for child care services. In response, a few child care resource and referral agencies sprang up in San Francisco and in Pasadena. Betsy, who was the Director of Early Childhood Education at Santa Monica College at the time, along with several other forward-thinking women, identified the need for a similar program to support families in the Santa Monica and surrounding areas. Together, these pioneering women founded the Child Care Information Service, which a few years later was renamed Connections For Children.

Today Betsy remains a tireless advocate for the care and early educational needs of children in Santa Monica and surrounding areas. She is a champion for all children, working to ensure they have the benefit of the high quality early care and education experiences that can make such a difference in their social, emotional, language, and cognitive development as well as their success in school and in life! Not only has Betsy been nominated as a "Community Hero," but she is and will always be a "Hero" to all of us at Connections For Children. Congratulations, Betsy!

## New Board Members Help us Grow

*Welcome to Mary Norvell and Irene Valverde*

This spring, everything is growing, including the Connections For Children Board of Directors. We would like to welcome our two most recent additions to the Board – Mary Norvell and Irene Valverde.

Mary Norvell resides in Santa Monica and is the Human Resources Officer of the American Red Cross, Los Angeles Region, which is one of the largest Regions in the country. Mary brings a tremendous background in Human Resources to the CFC table including Strategic Planning, Employee Relations, Benefits Administration and Volunteer Administration and Management.

Mary, whose daughter is a preschool teacher, is well acquainted with the challenges of ensuring that all children have access to safe and high-quality early childhood education. She enjoys Board membership as a chance to give back to the community, particularly when focused on young children, who are so very important to our future. When asked why she joined the CFC Board of Directors, her response was, "I believe in the mission and the leadership of CFC. I am well acquainted with the importance of good child care for the community and will enjoy helping in any way that I can."

Irene Valverde is the Marketing Director at Gumbiner Savett, Inc. – a Southern California Accounting Firm based in Santa Monica – and leads their marketing efforts. Irene is responsible for all external and internal marketing activities for the firm including branding, advertising,

communications and public relations. Irene works in partnership with the shareholders and staff to ensure the effectiveness of marketing strategies and their implementation.

As a working mother of three small children, Irene understands first-hand the need for quality child care and educational resources for children, which is what motivated her to join CFC's Board of Directors. Irene looks forward to, "Working with the board and staff at CFC to help raise awareness about the wonderful services offered."

CFC would like to give a very warm welcome to Mary and Irene!

# Give the Gift that Lasts Forever

As we honor the wonderful people who take care of children each and every day, we're reminded of just how committed Child Care Providers are to the needs of the children in their care. Child Care Providers are running a business, and just like other business owners, they are challenged during these times to do more with fewer resources. Yet they persist in striving to meet the care and educational needs of a very precious audience!

By making a gift to Connections For Children, you can help Child Care Providers improve the quality of the early learning experiences provided to children. Your gift can provide training, coaching and mentoring services at no cost to the child care provider and supplemental resources such as art, music, and books and toys on loan.

Your donation to Connections For Children has never been more critical – as state and federal funding for child care continues to shrink your gift of care and support will help to ensure that families can continue to access quality child care, and the providers who care for them will have the resources they need.

This spring, consider a donation to Connections For Children in honor of a Child Care Provider that has made a difference in your life. We will send a card to your honoree and acknowledge you and your honoree in the next edition of our newsletter "Child Care Today." Here is what your donation can do:

**A gift of \$25 can provide books and other materials for a preschool classroom.**

**\$50 can provide a curriculum kit to a Family Care Provider, helping to improve early learning for young children.**

**\$75 can provide activities such as science, cooking, math, crafts, art and music, to early child care facilities throughout our community.**

**\$100 can build a safe, inviting "discovery area" for infants and toddlers as they begin to explore their surroundings.**

**Please make a donation in support of child care today! You can use the enclosed envelope; make your donation online at [www.connectionsforchildren.org](http://www.connectionsforchildren.org); or call Lisa Daggett in the Development Department at 310-452-3325 x211. There has never been a better time to help children grow!**

**Connections For Children would like to welcome Lisa Daggett, Director of Fund and Business Development to its team! With more than 25 years of experience raising money for children's charities we are glad to have her here at CFC. If you have any questions about your donations, past, present or future – please don't hesitate to call Lisa.**



**Did you know that each time you search or shop online, you can raise money for Connections For Children?**

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**With spring comes both spring-cleaning and spring shopping! In addition to donations of cash, Connections For Children is delighted to accept donations in-kind, of items that we can use in our Child Development Resource Library, Toy Loan Program, and to share with our Child Care Providers. We accept items that are brand new, as well as gently used items in good condition. If you have something you wish to donate that isn't on our wish list, please feel free to call us at 310-452-3325 x211**

**MATERIALS FOR ART PROJECTS**

**SUCH AS:**

Paint – all colors  
Construction Paper – any size  
Markers  
Crayons  
Children's Scissors  
Glue  
Wiggly Eyes  
Feathers  
Collage Flowers  
Pipe Cleaners

**SCIENCE DISCOVERY TOYS SUCH AS:**

Magnets  
Thermometer  
Discovery Boards  
Measuring Cups  
Science Specimens

**OUTDOOR TOYS:**

Tunnel  
Tricycles

**BOOKS AND DVD'S**

Children's Books  
Child Development Training Books and  
DVD's

**MUSIC CD'S INCLUDING:**

Multicultural  
Classroom Favorites  
Lullabies

**MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS**

Gift Cards for Gas for our Toy Loan Vans  
Gift Cards in any amount to Target,  
Staples, Office Depot, Lakeshore

**CFC is continuing our efforts to "Go Green," but we can't do it without your help. Our greatest wish is e-mail addresses so that we can stay in touch with you electronically. Please send your name and e-mail address to Patti Oblath – [patricia@cfc-ca.org](mailto:patricia@cfc-ca.org) or Lisa Daggett – [lisad@cfc-ca.org](mailto:lisad@cfc-ca.org). Thank you!**