



Letter from the President

Welcome to the first SAzAEYC newsletter of 2008! On behalf of the Governing Board, I want to thank you for your dedication to serving young children and being an important member of NAEYC and SAzAEYC.

Recently, I sat in my office in Vail and could not help from peering out my window, marveling at the snow falling. I kept thinking to myself how rare it is to see the desert floor blanketed with winter white. What an exceptional expression of nature, especially when rain is rare, let alone snow. Watching the snow falling outside my window, I came to think about the rare yet similar moment we are experiencing in early childhood education.

The Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board

(AZECDH) has been diligently working on First Things First (FTF), devising an effective and connected system for young children. What does this mean for professionals like us who work for young children? FTF envisions providing a strong foundation for young children in several important capacities including preventative health measures and screening, increasing the quality of care and conveying to the community why quality care, education and health are crucial to a child's early learning development. Additionally, FTF has agreed to increase the educational standards of professionals working with young children, incorporating a comprehensive professional development system that reflects higher education and less turnover.

FTF is a true investment in young children. Not only do professionals such as you and I understand the importance of high quality early childhood experiences and healthy development, but the voters of Arizona in November 2006 shared this value with us as well. Now, it is time to translate the need and will into action. It is up to advocates such as us to carry the voice and ensure children are continually taken care of in Arizona. You can be an advocate in so many ways:

—Get involved and keep informed. FTF is currently accepting applications to apply on the Regional Councils. Log onto the FTF website at www.azecdh.gov for more details.

—Please join SAzAEYC in sending the message that children are

one of the most valuable resources to the Southern Arizona community. Many advocacy events are soon approaching, including April as Month of the Young Children, the Annual Awards Brunch and Stand For Children.

—Talk to your legislators and elected officials.

—Exercise your rights and vote-- 2008 is shaping up to be a monumental voting year.

—One of the simplest yet most important things we can do is thank a teacher or another professional who is dedicated to serving and improving the lives of young children.

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Comunicacion del Presidente

¡Bienvenidos al primer boletín de SAzAEYC del 2008! En nombre de la mesa directiva, quisiera darles las gracias por su dedicación al servicio de los niños y por ser un miembro importante de NAEYC y SAzAEYC.

Recientemente, me encontré mirando fuera de la ventana de mi oficina en Vail con maravilla a la nieve que caía. Me puse a pensar en que tan raro es ver nuestro desierto cubierto en lo blanco del invierno. ¡Que expresión tan excepcional de la madre naturaleza! Mirando como caía la nieve, pensé en el raro pero similar momento por cual estamos pasando en la educación temprana.

First Things First (FTF) y el Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board (AZECDH) han estado trabajando para crear un sistema conectado y eficaz para los niños de nuestro estado. ¿Que quiere decir esto para los profesionales, como nosotros, quienes trabajamos con niños pequeños? FTF

espera poder proveer para los niños una base firme en varias capacidades importantes. Estas incluyen el cuidado medico preventivo, la calidad del cuidado infantil y educar a la comunidad acerca de la importancia de los dos. FTF también se enfocara en la educación temprana, la salud y que estos aspectos son cruciales al desarrollo del aprendizaje de los niños. Adicionalmente, FTF se ha comprometido a aumentar los niveles educacionales de los profesionales que trabajan con niños, incorporando un sistema de desarrollo profesional comprensivo que refleja la educación avanzada y la estabilidad para profesionales en la educación temprana.

FTF es una verdadera inversión en los niños no solo porque, como profesionales, usted y yo entendemos que tan importante es que las experiencias durante los primeros años de vida sean de alta calidad sino que, en Noviembre del 2006, los votantes de Arizona compartieron este valor con nosotros. Ahora es

tiempo de traducir esa necesidad y cambiarla a acción. Es nuestra responsabilidad abogar por los niños y asegurar que el estado de Arizona continuamente cuide de los niños y sus necesidades. Durante la junta anual de membresía de SAzAEYC en Enero, celebramos el tema, "¡Sea una voz!" Esta es la afirmación que el comité de póliza publica y abogacía de SAzAEYC vive con pasión. Usted puede ser una voz en muchas maneras:

—Tome parte y manténgase informada. FTF esta aceptando aplicaciones para tomar parte en los concilios regionales. El condado de Pima tiene tres concilios regionales que representan las áreas del norte, centro y sur del condado. Los condados de Cochise y Santa Cruz tendrán un concilio cada uno y los condados Graham y Greenlee serán representados por un concilio unido. Visite la página cibernética de FTF en www.azecdh.gov para más información.

—SAzAEYC esta orgulloso de ser parte de muchos iniciativas

de abogacía. Por favor acompañenos en mandar el mensaje que los niños son uno de los mas valiosos recursos en nuestra comunidad. Muchos eventos importantes se nos enfrentan como: el Mes del Niño, el Desayuno Anual de Premios de SAzAEYC y Stand For Children.

—Hable con sus legisladores y oficiales electos. Es importante que comunique sus necesidades personales y profesionales a todos los oficiales electos empezando con los oficiales locales y terminando con los oficiales del gobierno federal.

—Ejercite su derecho de votar. El 2008 esta convirtiéndose en un año monumental.

—Una de las cosas mas sencillas pero sumamente importantes que podemos hacer es darle las gracias a una maestra o a otro profesional que se ha dedicado a servir a los niños para mejorar sus vidas.

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SAzAEYC Annual Membership Meeting Held Jan. 28

On January 28, the SAzAEYC Annual Membership Meeting took place at Lulu Walker Elementary School in the Amphitheater School District. It was a great opportunity for our members to gather, share a meal, and visit the Community Education Program (CEP) classrooms at the school. The multipurpose room was adorned with child-made vases and flowers from several of the CEP pre-schools in the district. The classrooms are Reggio Emilia inspired and show a deep commitment to the authentic, child-centered learning that is at the heart of this educational tradition. Thanks go to our hosts Principal John Eichelberger and Kirsten Rasmussen as well as to CEP staff Maureen Hazlett and Mimi Gray for providing the opportunity to our members to share in such a wonderful learning environment.

We also had the opportunity to listen to our SAzAEYC produced CD, "One for the Children." It is always a joy to hear the local artists give the gift of music to our children. If you would like to purchase this CD for \$10, contact SAzAEYC Association Manager Kate Bessey at (520) 903-9000, ext. 410 or at sazzymanager@gmail.com.

Penelope Jacks, from Children's Action Alliance, spoke on why and how we can **be a voice** for those who do not have a voice in our community- the children. She spoke of the special opportunities each of us has to be that voice in our own way and to advocate for early childhood issues.



A special thanks to the event committee: Ann Clifford, chairperson, Kate Bessey, Allison Comport, Connie Espinoza, Michelle Saint Hilaire, and Jessica Brisson for providing us with delicious barbecue, salads, desserts, and celebration of Early Childhood Education for the first membership meeting of 2008. The second membership meeting will be held in April in Safford.

—Submitted by Ann Clifford, SAzAEYC Board member

LEFT: Penelope Jacks of Children's Action Alliance presents at the SAzAEYC Membership Meeting at Lulu Walker Elementary School on January 28, 2008.

Public Policy & Advocacy (PPA) Committee

In the field of child care this is an exciting and yet nerve racking time. For the 2008 fiscal year, the state of Arizona has a billion dollar deficit. We need to urge our state legislators not to cut children's services in order to balance Arizona's budget. This past month the President, George Bush, submitted a Federal budget request for 2009 with 200,000 fewer children receiving child care assistance. This would leave behind thousands of young children who would benefit from high quality early childhood education programs.

NAEYC is urging Congress to reject this budget request and to make high quality early childhood education programs a priority. Now is the time to contact your members of Congress and Use Your Voice! Yet there is growth and empowerment in the field as the First Things First regional councils are being developed and moving into action. First Things First will go a long way to change the landscape for young children and parents.

The Public Policy and Advocacy Committee is happy to announce that Jillynn Stevens, from Children's Action Alliance has joined the committee. Jillynn Stevens has broad experience in both direct social services as well as agency management. We would also like to thank her colleague, Penelope Jacks for delivering a wonderful presentation on advocacy at January's Membership Meeting.

The committee would like to thank all of you who completed the Public Policy and Advocacy survey. We have tallied the results and will use members input in planning and orienting our focus for the legislative year. We value the feedback of our members and would like to remind members that you are always welcome to attend committee meetings. If interested please contact the Vice President of Public Policy, Allison Comport at (510) 320-4027 or acomport@cfrac.org.

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