



Celebrating our Grand Opening!

Hundreds of donors and community members attended the Center's grand opening celebration on Wednesday, February 13. Joining in the official ribbon cutting ceremony were Tom Lee, Center Board member Wes Toy, Carol Gelsing-Foundation President, Linda Lambourne representing U.S. Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, Center Board member Millie Jones-Field Deputy for LA County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, Michele Luse from State Senator Tom McClintock's office, Center Board member Bill Groves, Liz Seipel-CEO Child & Family Center, Jackie Bick representing Assemblyman George Runner, Steve Stark-Center Board Chair, Ronda Chobanian-Foundation Board Chair, Santa Clarita City Councilmember Cameron Smythe, Patty Kelly from State Senator Pete Knight's office, SCV Chamber of Commerce President Rick Winsman, and City Councilmember Bob Kellar.



A Fountain for Youth

John Hatakyama and James Allen from LA County Department of Mental Health join Millie Jones, field deputy for County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, in front of the fountain adorning the Center's courtyard. The County of Los Angeles was a Visionary donor to the capital campaign.



The capital campaign donor wall graces the main lobby of the new building.

Outpatient Counseling

- Behavior problems
- Improving relationships
- Delinquency prevention
- Child abuse prevention & treatment
- ADHD treatment

Crisis Intervention

- Stabilization
- Hospitalization if needed

School-based counseling

- Therapists on campus
- Help in a familiar setting

Substance Abuse

- Prevention:
 - DAPEC program
- Treatment:
 - Individual counseling
 - Family counseling
 - Support groups

Parenting Classes

- Improve communication
- Parent "Chat Room"

Therapy Groups

- Social skills
- Adolescent "Rap" group

Circle of Care Teen Parenting

- Life skills
- Support group
- Child abuse prevention

Preschool/Daycare

Day Treatment

- School program for students ages 12 and over who have severe emotional problems

CalWorks

- Help for adults entering or returning to work



Touched By an Angel

Children from the Kids Corner Preschool presented guests with flowers shaped like hand prints autographed by a child. Sue and Chris Hoefflin of the Michael Hoefflin Foundation for Children's Cancer were touched when they each received a flower with the name "Michael". The Hoefflin Foundation was a Guardian donor to the capital campaign.

A Message from the Center's CEO

Center

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*"Child & Family Center
helps build healthy communities by providing
mental health and behavioral services
to children, adults and their families."*

Liz Seipel



The last few months have been an exciting time for the Center, with our 25th Year Anniversary and the move into our new facility on Redview. Along with all of the celebrations, we have continued to serve our children in the Santa Clarita Valley. As our mission states, we are dedicated to building a healthy community in the Santa Clarita Valley. We have continued to develop new programs and outreach. This year we have started a Family Preservation program that is a collaborative with other agencies that want to help children who have been abused. Its goal is to work with parents and their children to create a nurturing home environment, in which the children can live, thereby avoiding out of home placement. As part of that program, the Center has bought a new van to provide transportation services for families who need help getting to appointments. Also, we have expanded our School Based Counseling program to include more schools. Our goal is to be able to put a mental health therapist at every school. We continue to seek funding through our fundraisers, in order to achieve this goal. We've already noticed that being at the schools has made us more accessible for children and teens that are going through a crisis. This has been especially true when there have been deaths of children who went to that school. By being on campus to help children and teens at the beginning of emotional problems, we have seen a reduction in the amount of crisis calls that would come to the Center at a later date.

Research indicates that when emotional and behavioral problems are not assessed and treated, they only get worse. They don't go away. The earlier we can assess and treat a mental illness, the less damage, and better prognosis there is for the future mental health of the child. It's hard for parents to decide what is a normal developmental stage of behavior, and what behaviors indicate a "problem" that needs assessment and treatment. The best advice I can give you is to check it out with a child's mental health professional. Getting the problem assessed is the first step in the process. The professional will help you towards the next step.

One of the reasons people avoid getting assessed and treated in our society is that there is a stigma associated with having mental health problems. Hopefully, the stigma will lessen, as education and public service announcements are made available to the public. Also, treatment can be expensive, as insurance policies usually do not offer adequate coverage for mental health therapy sessions. Currently, there is a movement both nationally and in California to lessen the stigma of mental illness, and to push for parity with physical health in insurance policies. Since so much physical health is related to the condition of one's mental health, it would make sense for a more equal coverage to be available.

The most important issue is that a child who is suffering from emotional or behavioral problems needs help in order to become the caring, responsible and productive citizen our society needs. That's why the Center exists, and that's why we continue to grow and develop new programs. We want to continue to be there for Santa Clarita's parents and children.

Center Programs

Kids Corner Preschool

“Our goal is to be the best preschool in the Santa Clarita Valley,” says Sue Neiberger, Director of the Center’s Kids Corner Preschool. Sue has come a long way towards achieving that goal, with the new state of the art facility and the many innovative programs she’s added during her short nine month time as director.

Kids Corner is the only state funded preschool in Santa Clarita that provides both a full daycare and preschool program. A dual emersion preschool, there is a bi-lingual teacher in each classroom. The new facility enables 64 children to be served, an increase from the 47 at the former site. The children’s parents are able to work full time or attend school, affording them the opportunity to better their economic situation. It also gives the children an even start with their peers when entering public education.

The school recently underwent a “self study”, where representatives from local school districts and Center Board members analyzed the program in depth in order to find areas of improvement and ways to grow. One of the goals is to involve the parents in every facet of the school.

“We’re trying to help bridge home and school for our families,” says Neiberger. Many of the parents want to be involved but simply need the tools to do so. “Parents are empowered so that they can be comfortable later when their children enter elementary school. If they have already experienced involvement in their child’s education here, they are more likely to continue during the elementary school years, a time that is vital to the future success of their children.”

Grants from the City of Santa Clarita and Wells Fargo Bank, enabled the school to adopt a literacy program, which helps the children, 82% of whom have Hispanic background, learn to read. Many of the parents are not fluent in English, thus unable to read with their children. At a special “Pancakes for Breakfast Night”, teachers will show the parents how to share a story with their children. The book, “Pancakes for Breakfast” has only pictures, without words, so anyone even the non-English speaking parent can share a story time with their child. At the event, parents and children will play games and dads will cook pancakes.



The school received a grant for fine arts enrichment. Music specialists visit each classroom

weekly for song and dance. Theater Arts for Children, a local non-profit, provides dramatic arts instructors to help the children experience role-playing and story telling. The acting gives them a release, as well as a magical imagination time.

Parent Education nights give parents a wealth of information on other community resources available. Speakers from the Foundation for Children’s Dental Health explained the low cost dental programs available. Case managers from the Center explain the state funded Healthy Families health insurance for children. Since ten of the children in the program are from foster homes, a Foster Family Support Group is being organized. Parents will learn how to parent their foster child, and receive support from other parents. Staff therapists will help the children deal with their special issues of trust and security. Teachers partner with the parents, social workers and therapists to nurture the needs of the foster children.

“We’re trying to help break the cycle of poverty and violence that some of our children are exposed to,” says Neiberger. “Many of the children in the program are at risk, displaying anger through hitting and biting others, or not speaking due to deep rooted problems. We’re here to help.” Every Monday morning the children “write” in their journals, giving them an opportunity to share their inner feelings. Often the child may be unable to verbalize a problem he is having, but can illustrate it and teachers can act appropriately. Each Tuesday social therapists from the Center visit the classroom and help the children learn social skills and how to better deal with their peers.

Observation rooms allow therapists to observe children who show signs of emotional and behavioral problems. Those who do are referred to the outpatient-counseling department of the Center where their needs can be addressed.

Center Board Spotlight

Steve Stark Board Chair

Steve Stark has been chair of the Child & Family Center Governing Board for the past two years of a six-year term on the Board. Steve capably steered the Center through a time of tremendous growth and change. He served on the Site Committee, helping with the monumental task of planning and overseeing the construction of the Center's new building.

Steve is devoted to family – both his own and those in our community. By serving on the board, he “hopes that he can help families live together in nurturing relationships, and in so doing help Santa Clarita continue to be a safe, family-oriented community.”

Steve, wife Lesly, and their two daughters have lived in Santa Clarita for the past nine years. As Director of Administrative Services for the City of Santa Clarita, Steve plans, organizes, directs, and controls the activities within the Finance, Purchasing, Technology Services and Grants Divisions.



A graduate of West Texas State University, Steve has been a municipal government employee since 1978. He began his career as the Internal Auditor for the City of Arlington, Texas. He then became Director of Management Services for the City of Fontana before his relocation to Santa Clarita.

In addition to serving on the Center board, Steve has also been a member of the Chamber Education Foundation. He is an avid runner and supporter of Santa Clarita's annual marathon.

Steve's Southern charm and warm smile is endearing to those who know him. He remains dedicated to the children and families in our community, and to the future growth of the Center. We are grateful for his commitment and support.

Honor Bestowed

Carol Gelsinger, Foundation President, recently received the Women Helping Women honor from Soroptimist International of SCV. The award is presented to those who have consistently and effectively used their resources, talents and influence to help other women achieve their potential.



Chris Blazey, president of Soroptimist, presents award to Carol Gelsinger.

If funding can be found, Sue would like to incorporate an environmental component to the program. She plans to have incubators in each classroom and a garden where the children can learn about plant life, growth and nutrition. “I love what we do here. It is an unbelievable community service for children and families. The parents are so grateful and gracious. It is one big family.” “We are so thrilled with our new school. It is a dream for teachers, children and parents.”

Classrooms feature activity centers such as a puppet theater, sand tray, reading area, computer and science corner.



Children enjoy running, jumping and outdoor play activities such as relay races and obstacles courses on the grassy playground. The state of the art climbing structure helps develop their large motor skills.



Child & Family Center Foundation

Foundation

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Taste of the Town



You don't want to miss Taste of the Town, Sunday, May 5 at the Rio Vista Conservatory Gardens. This year will feature a Mexican theme to coincide with Cinco de Mayo, with mariachis and flamenco dancers entertaining guests. Co-chairs Gail Ortiz and Ethel Nakutin are hoping to surpass last year's phenomenal success.

The auction is expected to be bigger and better than ever. Exciting gifts include Mexican Riviera cruises by Royal Caribbean and Princess Cruises, hotel stays in Ireland and Greece, spa vacations, theater tickets and more.

A special opportunity drawing will be held at the event. Only one hundred tickets at \$100 each will be sold, with the prize roundtrip coach airfare for two to Paris, France on Air France, plus a three-night stay at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris. Guests need not be present to win.

Blue Barrel Disposal is once again the event's title sponsor. Randy and Anna Ott are Master Chef sponsors. Media sponsors to date include Dynamedia and The Signal Newspaper. Sponsor opportunities are available, with amenities including VIP parking and private seating at the event.

Over thirty restaurants and caterers will once again delight the senses with unlimited gourmet specialties. Participating restaurants to date include Indians Wells Brewery, Egg Plantation, Jill's Cake Creations, Rattlers BBQ, The Vines, Clarice's Cake & Candy Supplies, Tandoori Grill, Cooney Foods, RSVP Catering, Salt Creek Grille and Plaza Banquet Facility.

Tickets to the adult event are \$60 per person, (\$65 at the door). Please call the Foundation office at 661-255-6847 to purchase event and opportunity drawing tickets.

Golf Fore The Kids!



Last year's winners from AT&T Media Services.

AutoNation Valencia will once again sponsor the Child & Family Center Golf Invitational, set for August 12. This year the tournament will be held at the beautiful Robinson Ranch Golf Club in Sand Canyon. The committee is excited about the new venue. Sponsorship opportunities and player spots are available. Contact the Foundation at (661) 255-6847 ext. 3072.

Come Join the Fun!

Do you want to help raise funds and awareness for the Child & Family Center? Then you should join the Center's Auxiliary. The group serves as a support group for the Foundation Board of Directors. Members volunteer at fundraising events including Taste of the Town, Golf Tournament and the Harvest Ride.

Elena Voshell, Foundation Board member, is the group's president. Begun in November, the group already has twenty-two members. In addition to helping to raise funds, the women enjoy social activities together such as wine tastings, lunches and more. For more information on upcoming meetings and activities, contact the Foundation office 661-255-6847 x3072.

Foundation Board Spotlight

Ronda Chobanian Board Chair



Passionate and dedicated best describes Ronda Chobanian, the Foundation Board's chair who is stepping down next month. Ronda originally joined the Center's board in 1995, at the urging of husband Naz. She yearned to be involved and give back to her community. She has served on various fundraising committees over the years including M-Car, the golf tournament and Taste of the Town, which she once co-chaired. During her two years as chair of the Foundation board, Ronda was instrumental in leading the board through the Capital Campaign process and construction which culminated in the opening of the building last month.

Throughout her career, Ronda has given the same dedication and commitment to her job as she has to the Center's Board. She was the top real estate agent at Realty Executives in Santa Clarita. Always a social person, who likes to be out and about with people, Ronda worked part-time selling advertising for The Signal newspaper during a short hiatus from real estate. She still maintains her license, and her listing signs can be seen around town for REMAX of Valencia.

Ronda's life the past few years has taken a new turn, devoting herself to her two young children as a full time mom. Married to husband Naz for six years, their son Jacob will be five in April. He has already adopted his mother's community spirit, volunteering for several Center fundraisers. Four-month old daughter Rachel attended the Center's recent grand opening celebration, landing herself on the front page of the Daily News.

During her tenure on the board, Ronda has earned the respect of her peers. She is never afraid to voice her opinion, yet will always listen openly to the opposition. She plans to remain on the board, helping wherever she is needed. Her dedication stems from the heart, and she is proud of the worthy cause she supports. The Foundation Board, the Center and all of the children who use our services are blessed to have Ronda's support and commitment.



Child & Family Center

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