

First 5 Amador helps local children during economic crisis

Tuesday, December 23, 2008

As families struggle to make ends meet amid the current economic downturn, First 5 Amador continues to provide critical services that promote the health and well-being of local children.

First 5 Amador has helped approximately 80 percent of the county's children under age 5 this year through programs that focus on health and dental care, behavioral health assistance and early childhood education.

"When voters approved Proposition 10, they made it clear that they understood the importance of a child's first five years and the value of creating a comprehensive approach that encourages a child's development," said Catherine Bourland, First 5 Amador commissioner. "As a local commission, we are meeting the specific and unique needs in Amador."

First 5 Amador's localized approach has connected hundreds of families to programs and services in 2008. Highlights of funding include:

- Upcountry and Camanche Lake Community Center staff assisted parents and caregivers in filling out Healthy Families health insurance applications for 112 children. Ninety-nine of those children are now enrolled and have vital health coverage.
- Providing essential basic dental care to young children is another one of First 5 Amador's priorities. This year, more than 200 children in the county received oral health screenings and fluoride varnish treatments.
- First 5 Amador funds also ensured 115 toddlers and preschoolers participated in nutrition and physical activity classes. After the classes ended, 90 percent of parents reported that they and their children were more physically active.
- First 5 Amador programs helped 82 families adjust to life with a newborn by providing a Parent Kit with important tips and resources including information regarding health insurance. Ninety-eight percent of families reported they had medical insurance for their baby after a second home visit.
- A pilot program has been launched that will provide consultation services by an experienced behavioral specialist to assist child care programs caring for children with behavioral concerns.

First 5 Amador encourages parents and caregivers to access the multitude of services and programs available to help Amador County's youngest children get a healthy start to life. For more information about First 5 Amador-funded resources, call 257-1092 or visit www.first5amador.com.