



Family Connections

Parents and Children Growing Together

REPORT CARD

Spring
2009



Teacher Lorena (pictured center) with Sequoia Adult School teachers; Elia, Lisa, Yolanda and Juanita (pictured left to right)



Everyone is excited to have a site serving Redwood City families

Family Connections Partners with Sequoia Adult School to Bring Program to Redwood City

For nearly 10 years everyone at Family Connections has dreamed of bringing the parent participation preschool experience to parents and kids in Redwood City. Because so many of our families came from Redwood City to the classrooms in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto, it seemed like a natural fit.

Finally, in fall of 2008, that dream came true for Family Connections and 40 parents, who can now learn and grow with their children at the new classroom just off Middlefield Road in North Fair Oaks.

The new facility was made possible by a partnership with the Sequoia Adult School and a Capacity Building grant from SV2, a partnership that gives money to educational nonprofits and other organizations.

The Sequoia Union High School District, which has provided money for teachers' salaries through the Sequoia Adult School for Family Connections' other two sites, purchased an old church building in North Fair Oaks, along with the church's parsonage, two years ago. Family Connections has moved into the old pastor's house and created a classroom for the children who attend the preschool with their parents.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the new building site is the proximity to English as a Second Language classes for the parents at the nearby Sequoia Adult School. About 20 parents in the morning preschool program are also enrolled in ESL classes. With support from the other parents in the program and the teachers, they drop their children off at Family Connections during the mornings and go to the Adult School for classes. As a part of the cooperative program the ESL parents take turns working in the classroom where they gain valuable parenting skills.

"The Sequoia Adult School is very excited about the partnership with Family Connections," said Adult School director Patricia Torres Cocconi. "We were able to merge the childcare program that was at the main campus with the Family Connections program on 4th Ave., so now the ESL students are also able to access parent education. It is a win/win relationship!"

Parents can now learn new skills during their days in the classroom with their children, including child development and positive discipline, and improve their English skills during their weekly class at the adult school. They

can put their child development skills to work immediately during their co-op rotations in their children's classroom and improve their ability to be part of the Redwood City community by learning English.

Opening the new classroom in Redwood City has made life much easier for Julia San Bartolome, who no longer has to commute from her Redwood City home to a classroom in Menlo Park or East Palo Alto. "Having a site in Redwood City has made it so convenient for my family and has brought this great program even closer to home," said San Bartolome, who has been a student at Family Connections for three years and joined the Family Connections Board of Directors last year. "My husband and I are so grateful to have found such an effective and quality program to be part of. Preschool is a priority to our family, and Family Connections has been a perfect fit," she said.

Our newest location improves our program by leaps and bounds for our students who live in Redwood City, and also heightens the ability of our Redwood City-based staff to support the parents and children, because the new site on 4th Avenue provides space for Family Connections' administration. For the first time, the Family Connections executive director and staff have a public, visible office and a place for monthly staff and board meetings, all possible because of this new Redwood City facility.



Kathy Schrenk & Renee Zimmerman of Family Connections receive \$8,000 grant check from Cassandra Smith (left) and Office Manager, Ralph Armenio from Intero Real Estate Services San Mateo office

Intero Foundation Comes Through In Time of Need

Our friend Cassandra Smith at Intero Real Estate Services presented Family Connections with a check for \$8,000 to support our newest location in Redwood City. The Intero Foundation has supported our programs for several years and continues to be one of our strongest corporate connections. For more information on the Intero Foundation visit www.interofoundation.org.

Upcoming Events at Family Connections

Family Carnival
Saturday May 2nd, 10am-1pm
at 1070 Beech St.,
East Palo Alto
All proceeds from the carnival support our Annual Campaign.

Year End Graduation Celebration
Saturday June 6th, 10am-12pm
at 1070 Beech St.,
East Palo Alto
All are welcomed to come and be inspired by this year's accomplishments.

Rotary Car Raffle Drawing
Saturday July 4th, 4pm
at the Redwood City
4th of July Parade
Will you be the lucky winner of a new Toyota Prius?

Woodside Elementary School Celebrates Día de los Reyes with Family Connections

It has been a long standing tradition for the first and fourth grade students at Woodside Elementary School to support our children during the holidays. The students are learning to help their communities by first performing a household chore and then using their “earnings” to purchase a gift for one of the Family Connections children. The fourth grade students meet with their first grade “buddies” to make very colorful wrapping paper and greeting cards. Then they wrap the gift.

This year, these gifts were used to help celebrate a traditional holiday in some Latin America countries called “Día de los Reyes”. The tradition involves children leaving out their shoes on the “twelfth night”, in anticipation of receiving a gift from the “Three Kings”. At Family Connections the children welcomed the gifts excitedly and it was a wonderful way to welcome our families back to school after the long holiday break. We thank teachers Jennifer Lighty, Pat Kimball, Hiroko Reams and all of the first and fourth grade teachers and students for their support in continuing this special celebration with our school.



Family Connections families, including Martin Cardenas, are touched by the students' generosity



Family Connections alumni speak at our annual fundraiser

Our Alumni Reconnect to Offer Their Testimony and Support

Maria Moreno attended Family Connections in 1994, just a year after we began, when her child was just a year old. Recently Maria and her son, Alex, spoke in front of an audience of 250 people at our 2008 Evening With Children's Authors event. Alex Moreno is now a 15-year-old teenager who was willing to come to one of our annual fundraisers and speak on behalf of our program. That on its own is very impressive!

Alex has been attending a private school since kindergarten excelling in math. He currently attends Junipero Serra High School in San Mateo. Having an early childhood education, says Maria, helped him socialize and be ready for kindergarten. Most importantly, his experience at Family Connections helped him make a smooth transition to elementary school.

We had a conversation with Maria and we asked her what main parenting skills she remembers learning at Family Connections that stayed with her all these years. She shared that she learned to recognize her children's needs and also to understand her children, acknowledging that each of them is unique.

When Alex spoke at Author's Night he fondly recalled that when he was at Family Connections, he loved to play with sand and water and that he still does to this day! Thank you both Alex and Maria for this important look back, we wish you the best of luck in the years ahead.

Note from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Though the holidays are long past I wanted to be sure to share with you the overwhelming sense of gratitude I felt last December as I signed letter after letter in response to our annual campaign appeal. During these toughest of times, you, our generous donors, some who have given year after year and some making first time donations, gave with your hearts to help us continue the work that we are doing in the local community.

Each year our Board of Directors has sought to increase the amount of funding coming from individuals. We have stretched ourselves and have made great strides. Little did we know the economy would take quite the dive that it did as we were setting our goal of \$75,000 for the 2008/09 program year! As of this writing we have received \$42,000 in donations and pledges. While it is a positive sign that we have raised this much so far, I am asking that you consider a mid-year donation to help us reach our goal by June 30, 2009. You may use the enclosed envelope or our website to make a secure online donation at www.familyconnections.org.

Speaking of support, we have a lot of exciting programs and services going on at Family Connections that would not be possible without you. There were so many inspiring stories to choose from as we were putting together this newsletter that it served as a wonderful reminder to myself that although times may be tough, we are making a positive difference in the lives of hundreds of individuals everyday and that in itself serves as a bright beacon for the future of Family Connections.

Have a Happy Spring!

Cooperatively Yours,



Renée Zimmerman
Executive Director

Welcome New Staff

Last fall our wonderful Outreach Coordinator, Missy Bechtel, resigned from Family Connections after several years of building corporate and community relationships for the organization. We began to realize that this job was growing every year and taking on many different facets. What emerged after much consideration was a separation of some of the job functions previously held by one person. As a result, we are pleased to welcome **Aimee Swanson** as our new Preschool Outreach Coordinator and **Kathy Schrenk** as our new Outreach Coordinator focusing on corporate and community relations. Both women bring co-op preschool experience (Trinity & Open Gate) as well as a wealth of specific skills related to marketing, promotions, fundraising and more.

To round out our new Outreach team we are also very pleased to welcome a familiar face, **Betsy Carter**, to our staff. Betsy has been working along side of Debbie Denton for a couple of months absorbing Debbie's years of

wisdom in preparation for, gasp & sigh, Debbie's impending "retirement" from Family Connections. While Debbie will continue on as a member of our Board of Directors, she is going to hand off the enormous task of Volunteer Coordinator to Betsy. Betsy's familiarity with our organization comes from her years as Chair of our Author's Night event and her many years of volunteering herself in our classroom with her Creative Memories scrapbook projects.

On the teaching staff we are very excited to bring on board **Margarita Ventura** who replaced Julieta Vilchez this past January at our Beech St. site in East Palo Alto. Margarita is a veteran early childhood educator with experience at Creative Montessori and as a Family Services Specialist for the County of Santa Clara. Margarita also holds an Adult Education credential allowing part of her salary to be supported by the Sequoia Adult School.

Quote from a Parent

Translated from Spanish

Every mother has asked herself, why children do not come with an instructional manual to know how to raise them. Some of us ask for advice from friends, family members and of course our parents; but at the end we remain with the same doubts. Because not all children are the same and based on that they might have different needs, this sometimes gets us even more confused.

Family Connections is a place where parents help other parents, sharing experiences with the main goal of helping each other to raise successful children. At Family Connections not only do they think about the well being and development of our children, but also about us, the adults. With the tools that they offer us, we can develop our own instructional manual!

The development of our children depends 100% on us, but we can count on Family Connections to help us to do the best we can.



Verónica and her daughter, Alejandra, receive loving support from the Family Connections program

Developing a Love for Books

The Bring Me a Book Foundation has been helping Family Connections provide quality early literacy experiences to our families for many years by donating classroom bookshelves and the books to go with them in English and Spanish. During the last three years our partnership has grown to a different level. Our parents, at each location, have been receiving a two part training offered by the Foundation in partnership with a project called First Teachers, offered by the Junior League of Palo Alto–Mid Peninsula. This training provides important information about brain development, as well as creative and practical ways for parents to provide daily exposure to books and to develop the love for reading in their young children.

We are very thankful to both organizations for the important message they are bringing to our families. For more information about the Bring Me A Book Foundation visit www.bringmeabook.org.



Parents and children share the gift of reading with the support of the Bring Me a Book Foundation



Family Connections

Mailing Address:

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Site Locations:

Belle Haven School
Menlo Park
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Redwood City
1070 Beech Street
East Palo Alto

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If you know of someone who would be interested in receiving the Report Card, please let us know. Or, if you received this newsletter and would like your name removed from our mailing list, contact us at 650.369.6467 or director@familyconnections.org. Thank you to LOOK Design for our newsletter design and layout.

Win a brand new 2009 Toyota Prius (or \$18,000)!



Get your 2009 Toyota Prius Raffle Tickets. On Sale Now!

Tickets are \$5. Every cent of the ticket price goes to Family Connections. To purchase tickets, use the enclosed ticket order form and send it to: Family Connections or go online at www.familyconnections.org to download an order form.

Our Mission

At Family Connections, a parent participation preschool for low-income families, parents learn positive parenting skills while their children develop the skills necessary to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond.

Our vision is that involved parents and well-prepared children will be able to participate successfully in their families, communities, and schools.

Board of Directors:

Cris Adair, President	
Curtis S. Chen	Amy Sahn
George Jaquette	Julia San Bartolome
Alisa Greene MacAvoy	Genaro Solorio
April Pardini	Lynette York

Executive Director:

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