

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Chinayera Black-Hardaman
(559) 661-5155

Quality Early Care and Education

(Madera) First 5 Madera County's investment into a program targeting Early Care and Education providers has demonstrated exciting outcomes in Madera County. The CARES Program (**Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Education Standards**) is a matching-fund initiative uniquely designed by First 5 California to increase the retention of early care and education providers through the provision of monetary stipends, professional trainings and a variety of other services and supports. The overarching goal of the program is to increase quality in early care and education settings through training and retention of providers. Since 2001, First 5 Madera County has invested \$1,360,476 in the CARES Program, and has offered services to 260 Early Care and Education Providers (ECEP). The CARES Program has demonstrated results in four key areas: 1) Quality Education, 2) Quality Environment, 3) Success of Providers, and 4) Systems Change.

- Quality Education: Research demonstrates that education attainment among providers is a significant indicator of a quality program. CARES Program mentors have encouraged participants to further their education by providing support, training, and coordinating services with the community college. Approximately 12% of CARES participants have continued their education to pursue an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development. In 2009 the population gained a total of 294

college units in Early Childhood Education and General Education. The program plans to focus support services to participants that want to obtain a Master's Degree.

- Quality Environment: The CARES Program focuses on ensuring that participant center/homes are measured using a research based assessment tool such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). The ECERS-R ensures that providers are providing care and education that will permit children to experience a high quality of life while helping them develop their abilities, a quality program must provide for the three basic needs all children have:

- Protection of their health and safety
- Building positive relationships
- Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

In 2009, CARES participants score 6.28 on the ECERS-R on a 7-point scale.

- Success of Providers: Although there are many success stories that have flourished from the CARES Program, two individuals have genuinely shined, Patricia Harris and Tina Najarian.
- Patricia Harris has participated in the CARES program for four years. She began her career in Early Childhood Development in 1983 and began her participation in the CARES program in 2001. In 2007, Patricia opened her own private childcare center "Full Circle Preschool." She will complete her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development in May 2011. "The CARES Program was a great motivation for me to

feel good about continued education in Early Childhood Development,” said Patricia Harris.

- Tina Najarian participated in the CARES program for seven years. She began as an in-home child care provider. In 2007 she received a Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood Development and currently provides mentorship to CARES participants. Tina’s knowledge and experience have not gone unrecognized as she works for Early Care and Education at Madera Unified School District and currently serves as the First 5 Preschool Specialist. “The CARES Program encouraged me to get my Bachelor’s Degree,” said Tina Najarian.
- Systems Change: Since 2001, the CARES Program Coordinator has advocated for Early Care and Education systems improvements throughout the community. The program advocated at the local community college to ensure that providers had necessary classes, were available at convenient times, were held at convenient locations and ensured priority registration. The supports provided by the CARES program have assisted participants to navigate through the degree process.

The community impact that the CARES Program has on the quality of early care and education can last a lifetime. First 5 Madera County is committed to improving the lives of children and families and thereby continues to support the CARES Program. For more information about the CARES Program or to learn about First 5 Madera County, please call 559-661-5155 or visit us at www.first5madera.net.

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years of life and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0-5. First 5 Madera County distributes approximately \$2 Million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.