

## MARCH 2010 E-NEWSLETTER

### Happy St. Patrick's Day!

When one door closes, another usually opens. Crises have a way of forcing us to become more creative and look for the new opportunities that may be opening up as former sources of support are shrinking. The current economic recession has drastically reduced public funding for the "safety net" of health and human services but, at the same time, the number of persons in need of these services has increased just as dramatically. Business as usual just won't do.

Fortunately, federal stimulus funds have provided us with a number of rich new opportunities. One of these new fund sources, the TANF "Emergency Contingency Fund" [ECF], has proved to be especially versatile and significant. Congress created the TANF ECF to help states handle the increased costs of providing financial assistance to families as a result of the recession. States could draw down on this fund to cover the additional costs of financial aid and services and would only have to provide 20% in matching funds as opposed to the approximately 50% in match required for most programs. In California, the county social service departments partnered with the state to find creative ways of maximizing our leveraging of this fund. A core element of this strategy was partnering with community based organizations and local employers to launch a "subsidized employment program". ECF funds can be used to subsidize the wages of a CalWORKS participant or other eligible family for up to 6 months. The supervision, training, and other supports the employer provides can count towards meeting the 20% match. We've already been able to place over 200 CalWORKS

participants in subsidized employment slots and have over 400 employers signed up as willing to take more. The new job experiences these CalWORKS participants can gain from these placements will help substantially in their ability to compete for jobs in a shrinking workplace. At the same time, these subsidized placements are also bringing new dollars into our local economy.

The economic stimulus and job creation impact of the TANF ECF fund has exceeded all expectations. Unfortunately, it's scheduled to expire at the end of September. A bill has been introduced in Congress, HR 4564 "The Emergency Jobs Program and Assistance for Families Extension Act", to extend this fund for another year and many national organizations, states, and local governments are urging its passage. We're keeping our fingers crossed that passage will be successful so we can continue working with our local community partners and employers in providing needed employment opportunities to our families during this economically challenging time.

*Joe Valentine, EHSD Director*

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### Visitors from Japanese Ministry of Education Visit West County Head Start Site

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, our Head Start Program was honored to host a three-member delegation from the Japanese Ministry of Education at the Lake School HeadStart site. The visitors are researching the transition from preschool to kindergarten and kindergarten to first grade in California.

Head Start staff gave an overview of the program and transition model, provides

Joe Valentine, Director

classroom tours of both the preschool and the kindergarten, and provided the opportunity for the visitors to interview teachers, the principal and administrative staff.

Everyone wanted a photo to remember the visit by.



Head Start Managers, State of California Education Officials and Delegation from Japan's Ministry of Education pose for a group photo commemorating the visit.

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### **NOW is the Time to Enroll in Head Start**

This year 1,294 children will be exiting our program and continuing on their educational journey to Kindergarten. This means we have 1294 opportunities for children throughout the county to have a quality, early childhood education including Early Head Start for ages 0-3. We have a variety of programs to meet most family needs. We have subsidized care for low income families and a tuition based program offered at below-market-rate for families that are not eligible for subsidized care child care. All services are for children 0-5 years of age and pregnant women. To apply, call:

- In East and Central County: 925-427-8852
- In West County: 510-374-7144

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### **On-Line Access to Forms**

As mentioned in last month's E-Newsletter, EHSD has a designated website ([click here](#)) that contains a self-screening tool for applicants to determine if they are eligible for certain programs and/or

services. The site also allows applicants to fill out forms on-line. We're mentioning the site again this month because there have been some upgrades and additional forms added to the site.

Please feel free to utilize this site yourself to assist your clients in accessing and/or applying for services available through EHSD.

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### **Independent Living Skills Program**

Mark your calendar now for a multi-media concert experience benefiting EHSD's ILS Program, which offers teaching, training, counseling and mentoring to foster youth as they begin and move through their transition to successful adulthood.

The event will be Sunday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 7 p.m. at Hope Center Covenant Church, 2275 Morella Avenue in Pleasant Hill. Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door. Online tickets can be purchased at [ITICKETS.com](http://ITICKETS.com). For more information, call 925-953-8273 or e-mail your request to <mailto:mwitwlo@att>.

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### **Furlough Days**

Just a reminder that EHSD offices are part of the countywide *mandatory closures* and will be closed on Wednesday, March 31.

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This is our second issue, and we received many positive remarks on the inaugural issue. We continue to add names to our distribution list and would be happy to add your name if you received this from a source other than EHSD. We continue to invite your comments; just [click here](#).

If you would like to *unsubscribe*, please click on the "Contact Us" link below, and we will remove your name from the mailing list.



Joe Valentine, Director

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