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President's Message

Dear Friends:

First and foremost, thank you to all who have donated funds to UNICEF through the link on the Early Learning Coalition's website or through other organizations. Please remember that the people of Haiti will need our help for a long time to come. Aid organizations are committed to remain on the ground providing basic needs, medical care and other assistance, but to continue their good work our support must be ongoing. We appreciate all the offers of assistance and those who have responded to the Red Cross' call to action. We continue to coordinate with our state partners, including the

Agency for Workforce Innovation and the Department of Children and Families and will provide updates as they become available.

In terms of legislative activity, we are tracking bills closely and continue to provide information to elected officials so that they are able to make informed decisions. Following are the areas of focus:

State

- o Legislative Budget Request to address statewide VPK deficit and expected growth of more than 15,000 children statewide
- o Maintaining VPK class sizes and the current per student allocation - the suggestion has been to do just the opposite
- o Fully restoring the School Readiness budget so that children do not have to be disenrolled
- o Retaining the intent of the School Readiness Act that allows local control and flexibility

Federal

- o The Early Learning Challenge Fund is included in the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act which passed the House of Representatives on September 17th. The Senate version of the bill has been drafted, but has not yet been introduced in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. If the bill passes, \$8 - \$10 billion may be available in competitive grants to states that improve their early learning systems, build a more effective early childhood workforce and improve the school readiness outcomes for the most at-risk children. While the Challenge Fund may sound like a no-brainer to early education advocates, this is just one section of a more complicated and controversial piece of legislation. As always, you have an opportunity to find out more and to get involved. Please visit our website for additional information and to read a February 9th *Miami Herald* editorial on the plan. Remember, every vote and every voice counts.

I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

Evelio C. Torres
President & CEO
Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

Upcoming Board & Committee Meetings

Finance

Wednesday, February 24; 8:00 a.m.

ELC Board Room

Program & Strategy

Wednesday, February 24; 1:00 p.m.

ELC Board Room

Board of Directors

Monday, March 1; 8:00 a.m.

ELC Board Room

Provider Services

Tuesday, March 9; 1:00 p.m.

ELC Board Room

For a complete list of upcoming Coalition meetings and events, please visit our website at www.elcmdm.org.

Quick Links

[Early Learning Coalition](#)

[VPK](#)

[Agency for Workforce Innovation](#)

Get Connected with ELC!



Important Announcements

Be Your Children's Advocate!

Now is the perfect time to become more informed and actively involved on behalf of children and early care and education! To learn more about relevant State bills and issues affecting our community's children, please visit our Legislative Updates webpage at <http://elcmdm.org/Legislative/legislative.html>.

"Hanging of the Hands" to Celebrate Children's Week

Help us celebrate Children's Week by creating hand artwork with your children! Each year, childcare centers, schools, and individuals throughout the State participate in this time-honored exhibition. This year the hands will be hung in the Miami Children's Museum, reminding our elected officials and advocates of our youngest and most cherished, our children.

Artwork Instructions:

- Children's hand artwork should be stapled onto string or ribbon vertically in lengths of 8 to 10 feet
- Please do not send individual hands without connecting them to string/ribbon



- Please do not send large signs
- You may decorate the hands with colorful artwork, stories and attach small pictures and posters (no larger than 11" x 14")

Please submit your children's artwork to the Coalition no later than **Wednesday, March 10, 2010**. If you have any questions, please contact Leeana Pena at (305) 646-7220 or via email at lpna@elcmdm.org.

Help for Haiti: Volunteer with the Red Cross!

The Red Cross needs child care providers to assist with Haitian children as they arrive to the United States.

The Red Cross is now working with DCF at Miami International Airport and Ft. Lauderdale Airport to provide care for Haitians coming to the U.S. There has been an increase in flights arriving with orphans from Haiti. These are children who had already been in the adoption pipeline and their cases are being expedited urgently. When the children arrive, the Red Cross assists ICE and Customs to move the children off the planes; provide diapers, snacks, and basically take care of the children while ICE and Customs process them. The children are then released to DCF.

Any person interested in volunteering must complete several forms. Additionally, a background check must also be submitted and processed. These forms can be found at <http://www.miamiredcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer/volunteer-in-miami.html>.

Please contact Aida V. Martinelli at Martinella@usa.redcross.org or (305) 728-2571 for assistance and/or questions.

Do you need to hire extra staff but are struggling to find the funds to do so? Your South Florida Workforce is offering a solution of government-funded assistance!

The **FLORIDA BACK TO WORK** program will provide up to a 95% reimbursement to Florida's businesses to cover the costs of employee wages and benefits. All available jobs listed under *the Florida Back to Work* program will be posted on the Employ Florida Marketplace website, www.employflorida.com.

Some program highlights include:

- Private, public, for-profit and non-profit employers who are adding new positions are eligible.
- Employers paying the wage and benefit costs are reimbursed by the program for up to 95% of those payments according to an agreement negotiated in advance.
- The wage/salary level must be based on that paid by the employer for comparable positions doing comparable work. The employer cannot have laid-off employees in the same or similar position.
- Employers will provide a written commitment to provide a funding contribution equal to the project amount not reimbursed by the Florida Back to Work program.
- **Participation is on a first-come, first-served basis.** The life span of the funds is limited and for that purpose, the eligible period *for payroll* ends **September 30, 2010**. Any payroll costs after that date would not be eligible for reimbursement; therefore no subsidized position could extend beyond that date.

For additional information on the Florida Back to Work program, eligibility, and necessary paperwork, please call the South Florida Workforce at 305-594-7615 ext. 407, or visit www.southfloridaworkforce.com and click on the FLORIDA BACK-TO-WORK icon.

Time is of the essence, and we still need your help!

If you would like to participate in reducing child care costs, addressing the needs of early care and education, and supporting a strong workforce in our community, we encourage you to join the Child Care Executive

Partnership (CCEP). This program is designed to ensure that children of employees through age 12 are provided affordable, high-quality, and developmentally appropriate child care.

Through federal and state funding, employers who participate in the program contribute money for child care that is matched dollar-for-dollar with funds from the CCEP. Parents pay a portion based on a sliding fee scale. Similar to the School Readiness grant, employees may qualify for CCEP by earning low to moderate wages. The eligibility requirements are the same, except employees may earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

As an employer you understand that caring for one's family while managing a career is challenging. You also understand that being late and taking time off from work because of child care issues can affect your bottom line. Thus the CCEP is a mutually beneficial solution for you *and* your employees.

If you are not already a member of the CCEP and would like more information, please visit the ELC's website at http://www.elcmdm.org/our_services/ccep.html.

Early Care and Education Conferences

For a listing of upcoming early care and education conferences in 2010, please visit our website at www.elcmdm.org. Plan your attendance today!

Tickets FORE Charity to Benefit the ELC

Purchase tickets for the 2010 World Golf Championships-CA Championship and 75% of the net proceeds will directly benefit the Early Learning Coalition! The remaining 25% will assist The First Tee, a World Golf Foundation initiative that provides learning facilities and education programs to promote character development and life-enhancing values through the game of golf.

The 2010 CA Championship will host the best golfers from around the globe on **March 9 through 14, 2010**, at the TPC Blue Monster at the Doral Golf Resort & Spa. **Any-day grounds passes** are available for \$40 each.

You may purchase tickets directly via the TICKETS Fore CHARITY webpage on Ticketmaster:
<http://www.ticketmaster.com/event/0D00435E8BC13072?artistid=1292654&majorcatid=10004&minorcatid=30>.

To receive the \$40 ticket-price, please log in using the special Ticketmaster code, **CACIDZ**.

If you know of friends or family who may be interested in attending this event, please forward them the link and the special code above. Remember these tickets are flexible any-day event passes. For more information on the Tickets Fore Charity golf event, please visit www.elcmdm.org or www.wgcca.com/tfc.

ELC Board of Directors

As seen in previous news alerts, we have featured our board members to familiarize our community with the dedicated professionals who serve on the Coalition's board of directors. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight Jacqui Colyer.



Jacquetta (Jacqui) B. Colyer is the Regional Director for the Florida Department of Children and Families' Southern Region. Colyer is a skilled and experienced senior executive with a proven record of accelerating growth and producing strong financial results in diverse human services organizations. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated leadership in the social services arena and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position. As Regional Director, she provides leadership, planning and vision for the Southern Region, which encompasses Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. The largest region in the state, it covers a complex culturally diverse community with a population of approximately 2.4 million.

Colyer is charged with the administration of the Region's Community-Based Care (CBC) system, which provides services to the community's foster care children and is comprised of Our Kids, the lead management agency, and eight foster care service providers. She supervises the delivery of an array of Child Welfare services to about 3,600 children and young adults, including foster care, adoptions, support services, prevention initiatives, child protective investigations, and young adults on the road to independence. Also included in her realm of responsibilities is the oversight of ACCESS programs, which include Food Stamps, Medicaid and Temporary Cash Assistance to Needy Families. Additionally, she directs Adult Protective Services and Child Care Licensing. Colyer will also oversee the Department's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program, which is dedicated to the development of a comprehensive system of prevention, emergency/detoxification, and treatment services. Other services within the Department's portfolio include funding of programs for refugees and the homeless. The Southern Region includes a workforce of approximately 1,300 employees with an annual budget of \$248 million (nearly \$700 million when taking into account benefit distribution.)

A social services veteran with more than 25 years of industry experience, Colyer has established a reputation for combining creativity and innovation with responsible goal oriented leadership that delivers results. Prior to joining the Department, Colyer dedicated herself to enhancing outcomes and opportunities for Foster Care children by improving adoptions and permanency initiatives for Our Kids, Inc. She helped the agency develop innovative programs and strategies to reduce the number of children removed from their homes by implementing intensive diversion and prevention programs.

Prior to this, she managed The Colyer Group, where her work included developing the not-for-profit sector for foundations support and literacy programs at The Miami Times. In addition, she worked with Work America in Miami to help create a strategic growth plan, as well as assisting in diversifying the portfolio of services to include education, workforce and prevention services.

Other experience includes serving the Regional Director for Policy Studies Inc, where she managed programs for four regional workforce boards and eight three-year contracts ensuring the achievement of contract performance goals and new business development. As the Project Director for the Esther Project she provided strategic direction for and managed their multi-million dollar faith based welfare to work initiative, achieving 100 percents of their recruitment, training and job placement goals. She also served in senior level positions with Lockheed Martin IMS, and the Miami-Dade Housing Agency.

Additionally, Colyer has dedicated numerous years to developing the next generation of young minds and social services professionals, teaching college level courses at Barry University, Miami-Dade College and the University of Miami.

Colyer is a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Miami, and holds a Masters in Social Work and Social Work Education from Barry University. She earned her bachelor's in Social Science Education and Social Work from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. In addition, her philanthropic and volunteerism includes serving on numerous boards in our community. Her memberships and accolades are as follows:

BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

Human Services Coalition - 1994 - Present

Founding member, Past President and Board Member
Overtown Advisory Board - 1990-1999
Past Secretary and Board Member
Women's Chamber of Commerce - 2002-2006
Hands on Miami 1995 - 2005
Member of Board Finance, Procedures and Human
Resources Committees,
Our Kids of Miami Dade County - 2003-2008
Peace Education Foundation - 2000 - Present
League of Women Voters - 1999 - 2004
Children's Museum 1996 - 2006
Past Vice President & Board Member

AWARDS

Belen Preparatory School - Founded the AGAPE
Program to provide scholarships for very bright disadvantaged teenagers
Miami-Dade College- Outstanding Faculty Member
Human Services Coalition - 2004, 'Truth and Hope Award'
League of Women Voters - 2002, Community Services and Leadership Award
Women Chamber of Commerce - 2002, Leadership Award

Former Florida State Representative Rene Garcia, a Devoted Advocate on Behalf of Children

Former Florida State Representative Rene Garcia (District 110) received a plaque from the Early Learning Coalition in recognition and appreciation for his support of the organization, and his advocacy on behalf of children and the early care and education community.

Pictured from left to right are Florida State Representative Rene Garcia; Evelio Torres, ELC President and CEO; and Octavio A. Verdeja, Jr., ELC Board Chairman.



Team Member Spotlight

This month, the spotlight shines on another valued team member and the important work she accomplishes in bringing quality early childhood education to our community. In this issue, it is our pleasure to highlight **Elizabeth Machado**, Receptionist.

For a little over a year, Elizabeth Machado has been the Early Learning Coalition's receptionist; the welcoming face and voice to the Coalition's guests and incoming callers, including parents, providers, community partners, and staff. In her role, Elizabeth has many responsibilities; she answers the ELC's busy phone lines and quickly transfers callers to appropriate staff members, provides general information to the public regarding Coalition programs, and greets and directs visitors to the Miami-Dade office.



Elizabeth has over four years of administrative/customer service experience. Previously she worked in CPA firms and financial institutions. Regardless of her prior professional experience she says working for a non-profit organization has been one of the most rewarding jobs she has ever had.

"Being part of a company that advocates the importance of early childhood education for the benefit of our growing community is what makes me proud. As a parent and an employee of the ELC I see firsthand the important strides and results we make in our community; it gives me a sense of pride and respect for the hard work and dedication of our staff. I've had the opportunity to visit a few centers with the RIF book distribution as well as with other coworkers to see the direct impact of the work we do. Needless to say it was an amazing experience for me," Elizabeth says.

Beyond work, Elizabeth is a mother to a beautiful 6-year-old little boy who means the world to her. She enjoys reading and is a big fan of the *Twilight* series of books by Stephanie Meyer. Additionally she loves spending time with her family and friends. Together they enjoy going to the park, dining out, watching movies, and traveling.

Miami-Dade County News Briefs

School Readiness (SR)

Providers: Please Complete and Submit Your ASQ Forms Promptly!

We are requesting your assistance in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screening-process implemented by Miami-Dade County. Please complete, review and return your ASQ forms promptly, following the instructions included in your ASQ packet.

To learn more about Miami-Dade County's workshops on how to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, please contact 305-270-2905 (South) or 305-953-6007 (North) for more information.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)

Preliminary 2008-09 VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate

The preliminary 2008-09 VPK Provider Kindergarten Readiness Rate was recently posted on the readiness rate web site at <https://vpk.fl DOE.org>. A provider's readiness rate is calculated based on the number of children (with a minimum of four children) who:

1) attended your VPK program 70% or more of the program hours (540 school year = 378 hours in classroom; 300 summer = 210 hours in classroom) and 2) participated in the 2009-10 kindergarten screening.

For additional details on how to successfully log onto the website and/or how to issue a dispute, please visit our website at:

<http://elcndm.org/downloads/VPK/2008-09%20PreliminaryRatesDisputeProcessProviders.pdf>.

How to Register for VPK Trainings

Please visit our VPK website at <http://www.vpkhelp.org/resources/trainings.html> to learn the 13 steps to successfully register for VPK trainings. Courses include VPK Educational Standards, Integrating the Standards, and Emergent Literacy for the VPK Classroom. Instructions on how to cancel your registration or obtain your certificate, transcript, and/or CEUs are also available.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute

Who should participate? Adults raising children--mothers, fathers, grandparents, stepparents, and anyone who cares about improving care-systems for children.

Parents learn group communication, project-design skills, leadership, public speaking, and local and state government policies.

The 3-hour weekly sessions (22-week commitment) is limited to 25 adults. Training is FREE, and dinner and child care are provided. Application and interviews are **mandatory**. For more information or to request an application, please contact Gina Ha, PLTI Coordinator at GinaH@hscdade.org or 305-576-5001, ext. 41. You may also visit www.hscdade.org.

Monroe County News Briefs

Save the Date

Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

Friday, February 19th; 1:00 p.m.

Monroe County School District Board Room, 241 Trumbo Road, Key West

Please join ELC Monroe board members, ELC staff, and our community partners as we discuss important information of interest and concern to our early education and care community. Provider participation is strongly encouraged.

*Note: Participation via school district videoconferencing is available at Marathon High School, Room 2106; and Coral Shores High School, Library Media Center Conference Room, Tavernier.

To participate via conference call, the call-in number is 1-888-813-8477, passcode 143130.

Transitioning to Kindergarten Workshop

Saturday, February 20th; 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

San Pablo Church, 550 122nd Street Ocean, Marathon

The ELC is sponsoring a free Transitioning to Kindergarten training provided by the Alliance for Early Care & Education. This training targets VPK instructors, directors and other early education providers who serve 4-year-olds. Participants will complete one 6-hour instructional component and one 4-hour independent assignment. All materials will be provided. Upon completion participants will be awarded 1 Continuing Education Unit/10 in-service hours from Miami-Dade College.

The workshop will demonstrate the use of the Transitioning to Kindergarten toolkit, which was developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities in cooperation with the American Federation of Teachers. The toolkit includes easy-to-use materials and strategies to help children achieve developmental milestones with support from their teachers and parents. Among the materials are Skill-Building Activity Cards for use in the classroom and at home. The toolkit also features a section on creating an "Early Learning Passport" (a.k.a. "student portfolio") which includes the results of the Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Checklist, anecdotal observations from both the prekindergarten teacher and the parent(s), and a drawing/writing sample. The Transitioning to Kindergarten toolkit also includes Get Ready to Read!--a reliable, research-based series of questions used to determine whether the student has the early literacy skills needed to become a reader. The instrument focuses on print knowledge, emergent writing and linguistic awareness.

Register early as this training is capped at 25 participants. Please RSVP to Mary Williams at 296-5557 by February 12th.

Quality Counts

This month the spotlight shines on the Quality Counts (QC) team at the Early Learning Coalition. The QC team is charged with the implementation and oversight of Miami-Dade County's quality rating improvement system. Pictured from left to right in the top row are Nicole Lopez-Bardin, Pamela Hollingsworth, Fiorella Altare, Litana Somoano, and in the bottom row, Maria Kuhn-Brotton and Sandra Gonzalez. These dynamic and dedicated ladies of Quality Counts possess a combined 87 years of early childhood and child welfare experience.



Quality Counts is a voluntary rating system that reviews early learning programs according to clearly defined, high-quality standards using a five-star method of evaluation, and offers supports and incentives to help providers reach their goals. The program's mission is to improve the quality of early care and education programs in Miami-Dade County. Services that are available are support services and financial incentives such as grants for materials and equipment, educational scholarships for staff, wage supplements for staff and technical assistance financial awards. There are currently 459 programs participating in Quality Counts.



2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd. Suite 500; Coral Gables, FL 33134