



exceptional parents unlimited

4440 North First Street
Fresno, California 93726

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ORGANIZATION
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Fall-Winter
2003

Exceptional Times

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Excellence in Business Award
- Fiesta Update
- Tori's Story
- LAP Impact
- Child Development Services
- EPU Family News
- SOAR! Teen News
- Board Member News
- Donor Opportunities
- Holiday Open House

Mission Statement

To strengthen and empower children and families facing extraordinary medical, developmental, and parenting challenges.

Learn more about EPU by visiting www.exceptionalparents.org

EXCEPTIONAL PARENTS HONORED WITH AWARD IN EXCELLENCE

This past June, EPU was honored with the Central Valley Excellence in Business Award in the charitable/nonprofit category! Each year The Fresno Bee, Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce in the Central Valley recognize nine companies and one individual for demonstrating high ethical standards, financial success and growth, employee and customer service, and concern for our environment. This is a very prestigious award and we are honored to display our winning plaque at our Center for Children and Families in Fresno.

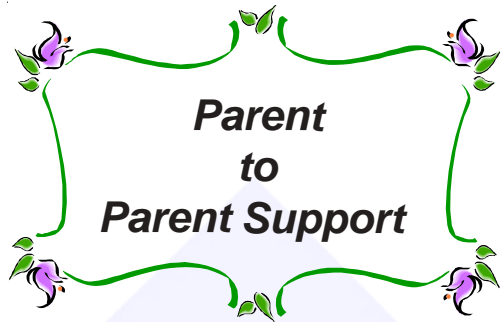
FIESTA UPDATE

We are pleased to report that the 13th annual Fiesta was a great success! More than 900 guests were in attendance and approximately 275 volunteers were present with their support. Over \$56,000 was raised for EPU programs and services. New this year was the Fiesta Wheel of Fortune; a chance to win a \$1,000 gift certificate, compliments of Orloff Jewelers. Special recognition was given to Fire Chief, Charles Tobias along with the volunteer firefighters from the City Firefighters Association Local 753, for ten years of barbecuing the tri-tip for Fiesta guests. Our heartfelt thanks to our major event sponsors for lending their support: Comcast; ABC 30; JSA Advertising; Dumont Printing; Wal*Mart Clovis; Abbey Party Rental; and Bobby Salazar's Mexican Foods. Many thanks to our EPU friends who bought tables and tickets. Fiesta could not happen without your support! Mark your calendars for the 14th annual Fiesta de los Niños!



SAVE THE DATE.
Saturday, July 17, 2004

We look forward to seeing you there!



**Parent
to
Parent Support**

EPU has an office located in the Medical Library at Children’s Hospital Central California providing Parent Partner services. Parent Partners are volunteer parents with children who have had personal experience at Children’s Hospital. From lending an understanding ear to offering resource information, Parent Partners provide support and compassion to the families of children with disabilities or other illnesses as they begin their journey through the healing process. Services are provided in English and Spanish. If you are a parent interested in becoming a Parent Partner, contact **Pauline Marshall**, Hospital Services Coordinator at **353-5922**, CHCC or **229-2000**, EPU.

EPU HELPS YOUNG ADULTS SOAR!

EPU together with the Center for Independent Living have been organizing vocational and educational outings. **SOAR!** is a program developed for teens and young adults to engage them in activities that help to promote and increase their independent living skills. This past summer, over 80 young adults participating in the **SOAR!** program at EPU gained valuable experience in the culinary arts by assisting in food preparations and helping to feed the homeless at The Poverello House. Other ventures took them to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, a train ride to Hanford, day trips to the Northern California Jelly Belly factory and Mrs. Grossmans sticker factory. Our teens also received an educational adventure while seeing the sights of Fresno using the public transportation system.



Sponsorship Opportunities Available!

Throughout the year, the EPU staff plan creative, fun safe activities for our children and parents. Sponsorship Opportunities are available for the following activities:

- **Harvest Festival Pumpkin Patch**, *October*, pumpkins; hay; straw; costumes; healthy goodies for our tricks or treaters.
- **Dads “Cooking Turkey 101”** , *November*, turkeys; trimmings for a thanksgiving meal; kitchen accessories.
- **Holiday Open House**, *December*; cookies and other holiday treats; holiday decorations; gifts for the children; film for Santa pictures.
- **Teddy Bear Picnic**, *February*; New teddy bears; supplies for arts and craft projects; teddy bear snacks.
- **Family Olympics**, *Spring and Summer*; games; refreshments; arts and crafts supplies.

Any gift you give is well received and very much appreciated.
EPU is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) agency and donations are tax deductible

DONOR FORM

Yes! I am pleased to support EPU 's mission with a gift of:

\$ _____ Enclosed is my check, or

Please charge my credit card: MasterCard Visa Expiration Date ____-____-____

Card # - -

Name / Organization (as you wish to appear in donor listing)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Signature _____

Please mail tax-deductible contributions to:

**Exceptional Parents Unlimited
4440 N. First Street
Fresno, CA 93726**

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

This past September at EPU's annual meeting, the board and staff welcomed three new board members:

- ◆ Edward Moreno, M.D.
- ◆ Kelly Fourchy
- ◆ Phyllis Bell



We welcome their expertise and support as parents and professionals working together for the benefit of the children and families we serve.

EPU BOARD MEMBERS ARE AWESOME!

Fellow board members and staff congratulate the following board members for their latest accomplishments and commitment to community:

- ❖ **Dr. Edward Moreno** has been appointed Health Officer for Fresno County. Dr. Moreno has a special interest in clinical research among Latino children. He is currently studying cultural competency of investigational research methodologies involving Latino populations. He hopes to develop community-based cultural diversity training for residents. Over 50 percent of the families served by EPU are Latino and we welcome his support and expertise as we continue our mission to support *all* families in the community.
- ❖ **Mary Ann Orloff** has received the Civic Leadership/Community Involvement award. This prestigious award features outstanding business owners who exemplify genuine interest and enthusiasm for their community, as well as giving selfless contributions of their time and energy. At EPU Mary Ann has proven her commitment in countless ways. Her level of dedication and support are priceless.
- ❖ **Karen vonFelten** for receiving Fresno County Teacher of the Year award. Karen is a veteran Special Education teacher. She works in the Fresno County Office of Education's Adult Transition Program, which helps prepare students with disabilities, ages 18 to 22, for adult life. She helped pioneer the plan and serves as a student advocate, family advisor, and teachers' mentor. Karen's expertise within the field of special education is a valued asset to the EPU board.

Congratulations to all of you, we're proud to have you as our leaders.



Adriana Gastelum Corina Frias Barbara Swan Geri Alexander Mary Seneker, CPNP David Snyder, MD Desiree Rodgers, MD

EPU OFFERS NEW CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Thanks to the support of First 5 Fresno County, EPU now offers developmental and behavioral pediatric services to children and families with children birth to five years of age living in Fresno County. Child Development Services(CDS) is an essential resource for families who may be concerned about their child's growth and development. Since opening the doors to patients on July 15, CDS has seen over 150 patients in need of comprehensive developmental assessments. Barbara Swan, CDS Program Manager says, "We are diligently working with First 5 Commissions in surrounding counties so that we can broaden our scope of service to include children living in outlying areas in the Central Valley." CDS welcomes referrals for children for whom there are concerns about behavior or development. Staff is available to assist parents and providers through the referral process. For more information on the Child Development Services available at EPU, contact: **Barbara Swan at (559) 221-2174.**



PLAY AND GROW GOES TO THE DOGS

In June the Play and Grow Program hosted a literacy "fun" day at EPU. Families were treated to a visit from *Clifford the Dog* in collaboration with Barnes and Noble book store. The parents attended a workshop provided by Valley Public Television on how to integrate literacy into everyday activities. The children decorated dog bone cookies and *Clifford the Dog* brought books for all the children to take home. A great time was had by all!



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE!

There are many situations in life that alter the course of direction, but none quite as significant as the birth of a child. When Christi tested positive for drugs after the birth of her son, Christopher, she knew at that moment that she and the baby's father needed to get help for their drug addiction. A referral from Child Protective Services brought Christi and Larry into the Learning About Parenting Program at EPU. With a new commitment to staying "clean" to keep their family together, Christi and Larry attended Parenting and Anger Management classes. They were matched with an EPU Home Visitor, Gretchen Williams, for support and resource information about the comprehensive services available to help them to reach their newfound goals. It's been a little over a year and both Christi and Larry are drug free, Christopher is the light of their life. Larry is back in school and should be ready for employment in under a year. Soon they will be moving from a one bedroom apartment into a three bedroom house where Christi's mother will join them as well as her four year old son, Tyler, who because of Christi's drug use, has been living with his grandmother. Christi is already committed to another Parenting class and Self Esteem class at EPU because she wants to be a better mother for her four year old. When asked how EPU has helped them, Larry replies, "Tremendously! When you're doing right, it's all good. EPU was there for us."

Congratulations to the EPU LAP program for another success story!

For more information about the LAP program at EPU, call **(559) 229-2000**.

Albertsons Community Partners Program Benefits EPU

One simple way to lend your support to EPU is by shopping at Albertsons. When you acquire a Preferred Savings Card at Albertsons grocery stores and sign up for the Albertsons Community Partners program, a percentage of your purchases are contributed to EPU. You may sign up at any Albertsons customer service counter, or online at www.albertsons.com, or by contacting Barbara Devinney at **(559) 229-2000**.

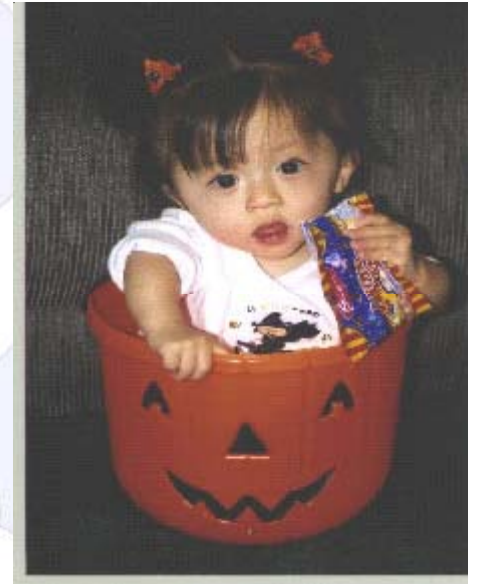
EPU's Community Partners ID # is 49001000643.



EPU'S Little Pumpkin

Tori Thatch

EPU Early Childhood Specialist, Stacy Ritchey, has worked with hundreds of children in need of specialized care and activities to assist in the early stages of growth and development, but none quite as unique as this little pumpkin, Tori Thatch. Tori first came to EPU when she was 12 months old; lying on her back not able to sit up on her own and feeding from a tube. Tori was born with a genetic condition called Osteogenesis Imperfecta; a condition characterized by bones that break easily. She is as fragile as a china doll. Tori once broke her leg by trying to put her foot in her mouth – like babies do. Working together with Tori's parents, Stacy devised a plan of action that would help to give Tori a sense of independence through personal strength and by learning to feed herself. Although Tori could not speak, Stacy and Tori formed a special bond of trust and admiration that helped to ease the pain of therapeutic "play" time. Stacy and Tori met for one day, every week, for over a year and a half. Now, Tori is over two years old and weighing in at 14 pounds. She is sitting up on her own, able to feed herself, and because she is not able to bear any of her weight on her feet or legs, she is gaining her independence by "inch worm" crawling. Tori's mother, Allison, says "The care she's received at EPU is wonderful. Stacy found a way to put us in touch with what Tori needed. She's sitting up on her own, she's eating, and she is thriving."



Stacy says, "I'm just the coach for the team. I make recommendations for resources and empower the parents with the knowledge they need to get Tori the best care available. Tori is unbelievable, she doesn't even know that she's special!"



Now THAT'S the mission of Exceptional Parents Unlimited.



Dine Out with EPU

A delicious way to lend support to EPU is by dining out at Rubio's Fresh Mexican Grill in RiverPark on Thursday, November 6th, between 5pm and 8pm. Take the enclosed flyer with you when you dine. EPU will receive a percentage of the proceeds for that evening; even if you order takeout! It's simple, yet satisfying because you're treating yourself to some great food while supporting all we do here at EPU!



EPU Family News

Congratulations to the following EPU staff for their latest achievements:

- **Bobbie Coulbourne** was chosen to serve as a Parent Fellow through the Kennedy Foundation. This is a very prestigious honor granted to only ten recipients throughout the United States. Bobbie is the only one to receive this honor in the State of California this year.
- **Alicia Carney** graduated from the University of Phoenix with her BA degree in Social Work.
- Congratulations to **Kim Wright** on a new addition to her family, a baby girl named Paige Emily.
- **Maria Cerda** is a new mother of baby girl Savannah, congratulations!
- **Stacey Thacker's** name will be added to the Wall of Tolerance at the new Civil Rights Memorial Building in Montgomery, Alabama.
- **Elliott Stevenson** received his Child Safety Passenger Technician Certification.



FROM DADS TO NURTURING FATHERS

The Fatherhood Program at EPU is gaining momentum for dads working to build a strong, healthy relationship with their children. Over 27 fathers have recently completed the Nurturing Fathers Journal class at EPU. In addition, a group of fathers had the opportunity to meet with a lawyer to receive free legal consultation regarding child custody, child support, child visitation rights and other issues regarding a father's rights during divorce. Fatherhood Coordinator Richard Gutierrez is gearing up for the second annual "Cooking Turkey 101." This culinary class is offered to fathers participating in the Nurturing Fathers Program at EPU for the purpose of educating fathers on the importance of "team work" when preparing the holiday meals for their family.



For more information on the Nurturing Fathers Program at EPU; Contact **Richard Gutierrez** at (559) 229-2000



Our Heartfelt Thanks to North Fresno Rotary



When the North Fresno Rotary asked what they could do to help us at EPU, we suggested some sort of cover for our playground. During the hot summer months, our children are limited to outdoor play due to the heat and harmful rays of the sun. It took no time at all for this group of Rotarians to lend their support by underwriting the costs of a special order tent awning to help protect our kids. Thanks to the North Fresno Rotary, our children can play outside practically all year round.

Thank you!

Family Resource is Making an Impact with ADHD Trainings

The increased awareness of **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** as a viable learning disability has parents and educators searching for a greater understanding. The Family Resource Center at EPU offers trainings for both parents and professionals; providing an overview of signs, assessments, appropriate educational support, and practical day to day parenting techniques. Trainings are given from a parent prospective with an emphasis on how to achieve home and educational success. These trainings offer positive approaches and techniques for parents and educators to use together for the success of the child living with ADHD.



For more information on ADHD trainings, Contact Vicki Benson at (559) 229-2000



Fiesta Informativa

The Family Resource Center at EPU is offering a Spanish Symposium or "Fiesta Informativa." A day of training and information for Spanish speaking families with special needs children, beginning at 8am on Saturday, October 25, 2003. This one day event features guest speaker Guillermo Gomez, successful entertainer, from Mexico, living with cerebral palsy. Other topics include:

- The Legal Rights your child has in Special Education
- Disciplining your child with special needs
- Services of the Central Valley Regional Center
- Domestic Violence within Hispanic families
- Dental care for your special needs child

and discussion on, "What happens when your child is an adult?"

For more information about other trainings offered in Spanish at EPU,

Winter Wonderland

An enchanted evening for young adults this holiday season

Teens and young adult participants in the **SOAR!** program at EPU will be celebrating this holiday season together in a Winter Wonderland. This formal event is sure to bring out the Cinderella in our young ladies and the Prince Charming in our fine, young men! This enchanted evening is scheduled for Friday, December 19 from 7pm until 10pm and includes light refreshments, dancing, and picture portraits. The Winter Wonderland committee is seeking volunteers to help with decorations or donations to help with underwriting costs. Our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals who have stepped up to lend their support: LaRyan Event Center, Lou Gentiles Flowers, Luftenbergs Bridal, and the musical talents of DJTJ. Contact Jaime Ortiz or Bobbie Coulbourne at **(559) 229-2000** for tickets, volunteering, or underwriting information.



**EPU
Holiday
Open House
Monday, December 22**

2 Sessions: 9:30-11:30am and 1:30-3:30pm
Arts & Crafts, Games, Pictures with Santa Claus,
and light refreshments will be served.

Hope
to
see
YOU
there