

CFT ECE Committee Calls Special Meeting

The CFT ECE Committee held a special meeting on Saturday, November 19 at the Oakland CFT office to discuss the best ways to engage in and be able to have influence over Pre-school for All (PFA) efforts in California next year.

The PFA Act has undergone CFT scrutiny and been twice voted upon by CFT governance bodies.

On Sept. 24, delegates to the CFT State Council voted to rescind the union's endorsement of Preschool for All and to take no position at this time. The CFT will review its position once the initiative qualifies for the June 2006 ballot.

Delegates took the action because the final language in the initiative allows public funding of for-profit preschool providers, and it is not appropriate for scarce dollars to provide profit rather than care.

Delegates also voiced concerns about the adequacy of funding for the program and proposed staffing levels. The initiative proposes two adults per 20 students, rather than one per 8 stu-



Early Childhood Education Committee members: Arlene Rivera, Susheela Narayanan, Betty Robinson-Harris, Melissa Petersen, Elaine Merriweather, Julie Olsen Edwards

dents, as is the current law.

The CFT is committed to early childhood education and has actively promoted preschool for all, but determined it was premature to endorse the Reiner Initiative until the Federation could consider its full impact and its relationship to other initiatives which may qualify for the June 2006 ballot.

Taking all these into consideration the committee recommended hosting two PFA Forums to educate ECE

Educators and Community College professors on the impact and requirements of the PFA Act and to gather their input on how to solve some of the challenges the initiative might create. The forums would tentatively be held at community colleges in San Diego in March and in Sacramento in April.

A subcommittee was also created to explore and develop recommendations for a workshop proposal that would help participants understand how labor unions, particularly the California Federation of Teachers, play a role in influencing policy, legislation, working conditions and other factors that support quality preschool programs.

The committee will meet again at a regularly scheduled committee on January 28, 2005 and report back and develop these projects further.

Francisco, Betty Robinson-Harris, Elaine Merriweather, Melissa Petersen and Arleen Rivera.

We are also proud to report that Julie Olsen Edwards, an NAEYC Board Member, recently joined our CFT ECE-Committee.

NAEYC Conference

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movement in California, particularly to those participants from California, and they also explained what the AFT was to those who came by the booth.

Thanks to those committee members who proudly represented the AFT and CFT at the NAEYC: Elaine

The 'Know Your Rights' Series

DID YOU KNOW
Workers in day care centers have special rights.

California Labor law states:

■ You are protected by a special whistle blowing rule if you work at a child day care facility.

■ You are protected against retaliation if you report a violation (or possible violation) of the day care licensing laws or regulations. (You must notify your employer of the violations before you refuse to do work.)

■ You are also protected if you report violations of other laws, including those concerning staff-child ratios, transportation of children, and child abuse.

■ You are protected if you testify or are about to testify at hearings, or assist others in complaining, or provide information to enforcement agencies.

■ Your employer cannot discharge, demote, or suspend you. You cannot be threatened, disciplined, or discriminated against in any way for engaging in these activities.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



California Federation of Teachers Early Educator

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Working Parents Need Quality Childcare, Kids Need Preschool: "Now Is The Time"

By Cheryl Brown, Labor Project for Working Families

Even while under attack from the Governor and employers intent on taking away healthcare benefits and pensions, labor unions and labor councils across California are declaring their support for a working parents agenda that will make it easier, not harder, for families to raise their

children in the state.

Efforts by the Labor Project for Working Families and the California Federation of Teachers Early Childhood Education Organizing Project to educate union members on the benefits of universal preschool and quality childcare have brought enthusiastic and overwhelming support for the "Resolution for Working Parents: Quality Childcare

and Preschool for All."

Pam Aguilar, Executive Director of the Contra Costa Central Labor Council, which passed the Working Parents Resolution in September, said "I raised four children as a working mother, and I know first hand how big a difference quality childcare, preschool education and time off to be involved in my kids'

schooling made. I also know how off-the-charts expensive child care and preschool can be."

Statewide, only one out of five children has access to preschool, but teachers see the benefits of preschool every day in their classrooms. Pre-K educator Elaine Francisco of the Jefferson Elementary Federation of Teachers hosted

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CFT ECE Members Attend NAEYC Conference in Washington, DC

On December 7 - 10 early childhood educators, program directors, administrators, advocates and others involved in ECE around the country converged in Washington, D.C. to attend the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference.

CFT ECE Committee members were among those who participated in NAEYC and they also helped staff the American

Federation of Teachers (AFT) booth in the exhibitors' hall at the conference. This year marked the first time that the AFT had a booth at the NAEYC and it was well received and had a lot of visitors. Our own California folks helped distribute important early childhood publications and information, including literature regarding the Preschool for All (PFA)

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During their visit to Washington, D.C. to attend the annual NAEYC Conference, AFT Early Childhood Educators from California, New York and Washington State rally with the AFL-CIO in front of the White House to support workers' rights.

Spotlight on ECE Leadership Milagros Padayhag, Local 6361

Milagros Padayhag's theme song for her work with young children is "The Greatest Love of All" which she began singing for this interview in perfect pitch, not skipping a word or note: "I believe the children are our FUTURE . . ." Padayhag is the Head Teacher in the toddler classroom at Yerba Buena Gardens Child Development Center right in the heart of downtown San Francisco, and the first elected Vice-President of AFT Local 6361, United Child Care Educators of San Francisco.

Noushin Mofakham is the Executive Director of South of Market Child Care, Inc., the non-profit that operates both the Yerba Buena Gardens and the Clementina CDCs. She is thrilled to share that Milagros's toddler room scored a 5.4 on the ITERS-R from the Marian Wright Edelman Institute "Gateway to Quality" program. Mofakham is quick to add that all of the South of Market Child Care staff are dedicated and professional and that she is



proud to work with them.

This 5.4 rating is uncommonly high, but Milagros is humble when the score is discussed. She says she does this work because it is her passion, a passion she brought to California after ten years of teaching High School English Literature at San Jose High School in Mindanao Province in her native Philippines after earning her B.A. in Education.

"Little children are my passion," Padayhag says. "I believe this passion is rooted in my happy childhood."

Milagros was 59 when she started her Early Childhood/Child Development course work a short six years ago. Now 65, she remembers "running" to the bus to get to her classes at City College of San Francisco because she was so excited about her new career. Having earned an overall 3.75 GPA with 42 ECE units gives a great sense of accomplishment to this AFT Chapter Vice-President.

It is with this same pride that Milagros leads her coworkers in union activism. When asked why she

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is a strong unionist, she replies: "I was a college student during the time of Marcos, a Philippine dictator, and I learned then the importance of being united! The union brings us together and makes us strong!"

Local 1475 Takes on New Employer

In Nov. 2005 members of CFT Head Start Local 1475 experienced a change of agency when Latin American Civic Association was removed as the administrator for 26 Head Start sites. Community Development Institute (CDI) was assigned as the new administrator, and because of strong successorship language in the

contract all of the 1475 folks kept their jobs. The leadership of the Chapter along with the officers and active union membership started educating their co-workers about the new agency and began a membership drive that resulted in 55 re-signed cards as of Dec. 5, 2005. They are continuing their efforts to sign up

all eligible members and spreading the message that unity = strength. "By sticking together and organizing we have been able to keep the schools open and continue to provide a quality experience for our students. CDI has demonstrated that they want to work with the Union so we have an opportunity

to make this a better place for all" said Chapter Chair, Blanca Trejo. As a result of all of these efforts, the new agency has recognized Local 1475 as the official representative of the workers and a first round of contract negotiations began Dec. 19, 2005, with members focusing on healthcare, retirement, and wages.

S.F. Preschool Programs Chosen as PFA Providers

Three San Francisco Child Development Centers have been selected to receive Preschool for All (PFA) enhancement funds. Bryant, Excelsior at Guadalupe and Mission CDCs are very excited to have been chosen as PFA providers.

San Francisco passed Proposition H which raises money specifically dedicated to provide PFA and the community has targeted four priority neighborhoods

with the most need to focus development of PFA programs in the Mission, the Excelsior/OMI, Bayview and Visitacion Valley.

United Educators of San Francisco, AFT Local 61, represents the ECE educators at the three programs and is very proud of the fact that these three centers stood out among all of the other programs that applied for PFA status.

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a house party for K-8 teachers to talk about preschool. "One kindergarten teacher told me she could easily identify kids without a preschool background on the first day of school."

Support for preschool by educators is overwhelming. "Praise for Preschool," a study by Preschool California, found that 96% of teachers believe it is important for children to go to preschool before they start kindergarten, 95% say children who attend preschool are better prepared to start kindergarten ready to learn and do their best, and 88% say they spend extra time working on basic skills with children who have not had the benefit of preschool, resulting in less time spent with more advanced students.

Recent research also indicates that qualified educators struggle to stay in important preschool jobs. A joint study authored by the Economic

Policy Institute, the Keystone Research Center and the Foundation for Childhood Development found that, in part because of low wages and benefits offered by the industry in California, there has been a decline in the qualifications of early childhood educators since the 1980s. Educators with advanced degrees are simply turning to other employment opportunities. The report states, "California and the nation need a new approach to preparing early childhood educators who can help children succeed. The new approach must establish high standards for all teaching staff and increase compensation to attract and retain teachers who can meet high standards."

On Nov. 17, children's advocate Rob Reiner announced that one million signatures had been gathered by the Preschool for All Initiative. "One million Californians have said they



JANUARY

January 28 CFT Early Childhood Committee meeting, Hilton Oakland Airport.

January 31 2006 Child Care and Development State Budget Policy Workshops Series. For more info go to www.cdpi.org.

FEBRUARY

February 6, 7, 10, 11 A Place of Our Own/Los Ninos en Su Casa outreach Trainer Training. For more info contact your local CARES or First 5.

February 10 Linking Child Care and Livable Communities. Registration materials available at www.lincc-childcare.com.

February 25 An Early Care and Education Conference. A day for parents, educators & child/family advocates. Mills College 5000 Mac Arthur Blvd. Oakland. For more info call Trevor Valentino at 510-499-7237.

February 25 Breaking Barriers-Building Pathways, broadening our perspectives of diversity to include LGBT families and their children. San Francisco LGBT Community Center, 1800 Market Street, San Francisco. For more info email eceproject@ourfamily.org.

MARCH

March 8-10 Planning for Change: Promising Pathways to Implementation First 5 CARES Conference, Westin San Francisco Airport, One Old Bayshore Highway, Millbrae. For more info go to www.childdevelopment.org.

March 24-26 CFT Convention, Sheraton Grand Sacramento. For more info go to www.cft.org.

want to vote on a comprehensive proposal to provide quality preschool to all four-year olds," Reiner said.

According to Netsy Fireshtein, Executive Director of the Labor Project for Working Families, "Preschool typically lasts only a few hours a day, so wrap-around childcare is of particular importance to parents working full time or afternoon and evening shifts."

The Working Parents Resolution also calls for childcare, paid family leave, and flexibility on the part of employers so that employees may be involved in

their children's and elderly parent's lives.

To find out more about the Resolution and get involved in efforts to advance the working parents' agenda, visit www.laborproject.org/updates.html or contact the Labor Project for Working Families by emailing lpwf@berkeley.edu or calling 510.642.5498. You can also contact the CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project by emailing earlychildhood@cft.org or calling 510.832.8812. You can visit the CFT website at www.cft.org.