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Collaboration Yields Baby Steps Infant & Toddler Center

Dreams have come true at Shepherd of the Sierra Presbyterian Church in Loomis, California. Low-income families in south Placer County, adjacent to metropolitan Sacramento, will be served by a new Early Head Start Infant and Toddler childcare center at the church.

The vision began during Lent in March of 1997 when church leaders held a series of Christian Education classes on the impact of federal welfare reform. The class energized a number of key people in the congregation, which led to a multi-church forum on welfare reform co-sponsored by Shepherd of the Sierra and California Council of Churches. County officials attended the event, which started the process of linking county welfare reform implementation plans with the resources of local churches.

Shepherd of the Sierra was invited to be a faith community member of the Greater Collaborative of Placer County. The Collaborative consists of 100 organizations and agencies in Placer County that are working to meet



the needs of all children in the county. Through the Collaborative, the church partnered with PCAC (Placer Community Action Council). PCAC administers the State Pre-school program, Head Start and Early Head Start in the Placer County area.

Federal expansion grant funding was available to support the additional child care needs associated with Mom's

returning to work in the back to work program of CalWORKS, California's implementation of Welfare Reform. PCAC submitted, and was approved for, an expansion request for an Early Head Start program.

Dedication services, a grand opening celebration and open house were held at the site on Sunday, August 6th. The Center was licensed August 10, 2000 with the first children arriving the following week. There were 15 infants on site by August 28, 2000.

The center has a capacity of 28. PCAC will support 20 children from income challenged families funded by Early Head Start. Eight slots will be available for growth or other tuition programs.

The center will also serve as a learning laboratory for eight early childhood education students at Sierra College each semester.

The church will provide "grandparent-types" to serve as "foster" grandparents whose job will be to hold and rock the babies augmenting the very important role of nurturing. The long-term plan is to offer this program ecumenically and invite neighboring congregations to participate.

Another collaboration occurred when a congregation member applied for, and received, a grant from the California Highway Patrol Fishing Derby for a headset intercom system allowing hands free communication.



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Reclaiming Our Faith - Overcoming An Old Heresy: A Statewide Ecumenical Response to the Hate Movement

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The California Council of Churches is co-sponsoring a major statewide ecumenical educational initiative March 9-11, 2001 to focus on the heretical underpinnings of the hate movement within our state and to equip congregations to articulate a more faithful vision of human dignity and community.

Hate groups such as Christian Identity Movement and World Church of the Creator have been in the news in California. The suspect in the Jewish Community Center shooting in a Los Angeles suburb was involved in Aryan Nations, the Christian Identity Church in Hayden Lake, Idaho. The Williams brothers, who have been accused of murdering a gay couple in Redding, California and the three synagogue fires in mid-June in Sacramento have been connected to The World Church of the Creator, an anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, White supremacist religion.

The *Reclaiming Our Faith* initiative is calling on all California congregations to focus their attention in worship and in adult education

classes on the hate movement during the weekend of March 9-11, 2001 (the second Sunday in Lent).

A *Reclaiming Our Faith* educational packet for congregations will be available later this fall. If sufficient funds are raised, it will be mailed to every congregation in the state. The packet will include a theological statement, a sample sermon from Episcopal Bishop Frederick Borsch, a video and discussion guide along with sample hate literature. Participating congregations will also be encouraged to become involved in public policy efforts at the state and federal levels concerning hate crimes.

To complement the congregational resource packet, local and regional councils of churches and interfaith organizations will be encouraged to stage events around March 9-11, which could include ecumenical and interfaith worship opportunities, press conferences, and regional workshops.

For more information, connect to the Council's web site at www.calchurches.org

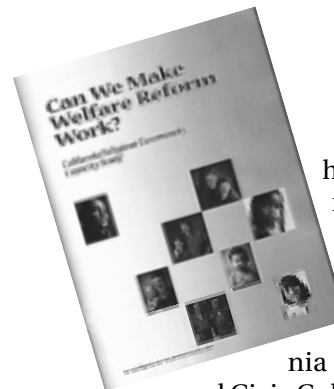
How is California's Religious Community Helping Welfare Families?

Groundbreaking Study Has Answers

With state and federal legislators promoting the expansion of faith-based, government-funded social services within the nation's new welfare system, the California Council of Churches has just released an unprecedented statewide study about the willingness and capacity of California's religious community to respond to these expectations.

Government interest in expanding faith-based social service programs began with the passage of the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation. Policymakers in Washington wrote provisions in the law, known as Charitable Choice, which make it easier for faith-based organizations to compete for welfare-to-work contracts.

Can We Make Welfare Reform Work? The California Religious Community Capacity Study is the culmination of two years of research spear-



headed by the California Council of Churches in partnership with the University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture and the University of San Francisco Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management.

This is the largest statewide study of its kind and will have a significant impact on the national welfare reform reauthorization debate that begins early next year in Washington.

A copy of the final report is available for \$5 from the California Council of Churches by calling (916) 442-5447, or can be downloaded directly from the Council's website at www.calchurches.org JS

Making an Informed Decision on Quality Child Care

Raising your child is the most important job you, as a parent, will ever have. Selecting a qualified child care provider is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. The following is a helpful checklist for interviewing potential providers and evaluating your options.

Child Care Checklist - Please reproduce and distribute

- The provider/staff is open and welcoming to me and to my child. She/he smiles and looks directly at me and my child.
- The caregiver's environment is safe and stimulating.
- The caregiver speaks to children in a positive, cheerful tone.
- The caregiver seems to enjoy working with children.
- I can visit the caregiver/program anytime during hours of operation.
- I feel my child will thrive both mentally and physically with this care giving situation.
- The caregiver has training and experience working with children who are my child's age.
- Meals provided are age-appropriate, nutritious, and attractive to the child.
- My philosophy, values, and discipline techniques closely resemble those of the caregiver.
- There is enough space indoors and out so that the children can move about freely.
- The program offers activities that my child will enjoy and that are right for his/her age.
- Children are encouraged to be creative and to explore new things.
- The rooms are comfortable, interesting, and cheerful.
- There is adequate lighting, heating, and ventilation.
- I can communicate easily and openly with the caregiver.
- Information about my child's progress and behavior will be shared with me.
- I have been introduced to all the adults who will be providing care for my child.
- The caregiver has offered to give me parent references.
- All equipment is safe and in good working condition.
- Medicines, poisons, firearms, knives, cleaning chemicals are stored away out of the children's reach. Wall outlets are covered. Stairways have non-pressure safety gates. Window-blind cords are up high, away from any sleeping or play areas.
- There is a working fire extinguisher and recently tested smoke alarms.
- The caregiver is certified in CPR and first aid.
- I understand the policies of the caregiver. There is something in writing that explains the business side of the child care arrangement.
- I have a back-up plan in case my child or caregiver is ill or an emergency arises.
- I have emergency numbers and a medical release on hand with the caregiver.
- I understand all the costs involved with the caregiver. I have asked about extra expenses, such as late fees, supplies, field trips, food, formula, and diapers. I know how much I should pay each month.
- I feel comfortable that I can leave my child with this caregiver and that my child will be safe, happy, and loved.
- I have contacted Community Care Licensing and/or TrustLine to check on the previous history of the caregiver. Call 1-800-KIDS-793 for your local Community Care Licensing or 1-916-229-4269. TrustLine may be reached at 1-800-822-8420.

Characteristics of Quality

The following list shows what to look for in a quality child care environment:

- Settings that are safe, provide small group sizes, and have adult-to-child ratios that encourage the best opportunities for development
- Caregivers or teachers who have experience and are trained in early childhood development
- Settings that offer opportunities for meaningful parent involvement
- Learning materials and teaching styles that are age-appropriate and respectful of children's cultural and ethnic heritages
- Learning opportunities that promote children's success in school.

Adapted from *What Are the Benefits of High Quality Programs?* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996.

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This information was excerpted from the "Care About Quality" campaign's book *Your Guide To Child Care*. For more information, see the Care About Quality Campaign's web site at <http://www.careaboutquality.org> or write the California Department of Education, Child Development Division, 560 J Street, Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Playground Safety Regulations Now in Effect

Each year, more than 200,000 children go to U.S. hospital emergency rooms with injuries associated with playground equipment. Most injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment onto the ground (U.S. Consumer Project Safety Commission).

October 1, 2000 was the deadline for the inspection of all licensed child care center playgrounds to be inspected by a "certified" safety inspector. For your information, a list of companies currently performing playground safety inspections is on the California Park and Recreation Society web site www.cprs.org, or you can contact Leslie Fritz, the Society's Director of Education at 916-665-2777. Most companies will charge a time and materials rate which can be \$75 to \$150 per hour.

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) playground safety regulations became effective January 1, 2000. These regulations apply to child care centers only, not family child care homes. The deadline for child care center licensees to comply with the new CDHS regulations is January 1, 2003. The inspection deadline is so much earlier than the compliance deadline because the inspection report is intended to be a reference tool. Centers should use the inspection report to plan the changes they need to make in order to comply with the new regulations by the January 2003 deadline.

NOTE: The law does not require the CDHS or any other entity to enforce the CDHS playground safety regulations. Compliance will be driven by the desire to protect children and reduce liability. **JS**

KaBOOM! is a national nonprofit organization committed to building safe playgrounds for America's children through the KaBOOM! LET US PLAY campaign. For more information, call toll-free 1-888-789-PLAY or visit the KAPOOM! Web site at www.kaboom.org

Collaborative continued from page 1

The final collaboration of support from Caregivers, Family Advocates and Male Advocates will create the highest level of partnership with the mothers and fathers or any male role model in the household. Consistent, quality childcare is a source of strength and support for families and a positive experience for children. When a family selects a child care program, they are not simply choosing a service that allows them to work. They are selecting an environment that determines in large part the development of their children.

The Center will operate Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a daily basis year around. For information, contact Claudia Dondero, Baby Steps Early Head Start Director 916-652-3284, or the church at 916-652-4851. **JS**

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To: **Inside:** Collaboration Yields New
Child Care Center. (see page 1)

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