

**Women's Giving Circle
Mid-Year Report - January 19, 2007
(July 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006)**

***Success by 6® Collaboration – Arlandria
SCAN of Northern Virginia, NVFS Healthy Families Alexandria and
Hispanic Committee of Virginia***

The Arlandria Playgroup has met weekly on Friday mornings from July through December at St. Rita's Church, with regular participation from parents and their young children.

A new effort this grant year has been the direct participation of the Women's Giving Circle in providing weekly snacks for the playgroup. This has worked extremely well because the snacks are brought directly to St. Rita's on the day of the playgroup, making it direct and simple. It has been a very positive addition to the group and reminds this partnership of the continuing support of the Women's Giving Circle.

Outreach:

The flyer for the playgroup was modified during this grant period to better convey to parents what the playgroup entails and the benefits to them and their children. The flyers are in English and Spanish (back-to-back). Flyers are used as one of the primary tools to let families and the community know about the playgroup. They are included in packets of information that Healthy Families Family Resource Specialists provide to new parents in the community during assessment interviews. They are provided to numerous outlets in the Arlandria neighborhood. (The locations include: Duncan Library, St. Rita's Catholic Church, Cora Kelly Recreation Center, Cora Kelly Elementary School, Mt. Vernon Recreation Center, Mt. Vernon Elementary School, Alexandria Division of Social Services, Tenants & Workers United, both Chirilagua grocery stores, Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services Inc., Office on Women, Campagna Center, Greenbrier Learning Center at Virginia Gardens Apartments, Alexandria Health Department, Child & Family Network Centers, Alexandria Head Start, and Community Lodgings.)

Healthy Families Family Support Workers also share information about the playgroup during home visits and encourage parents who live in the community to attend with their children. The family support worker frequently accompanies a family initially until they feel comfortable attending on their own.

Additionally, the Arlandria Playgroup Collaboration was represented by a Spanish-speaking facilitator who distributed flyers about the playgroup at two community fairs held in the fall in the Arlandria community. This same facilitator also did community outreach by visiting small retail outlets in Arlandria in the fall, dropping off flyers personally and talking to people in the community about the playgroup.

Once a month, the SCAN Parent Education Coordinator sends out an email to over 500 service providers that includes information about the Arlandria playgroup. Additionally, the playgroup is listed in the SCAN Parent Connection Resource Guide, which is distributed three times a year to over 750 service providers in Northern Virginia. Additional contact was made with Child and Family Network Centers, ALIVE Child Development Center and Alexandria Head Start to provide information about the playgroup so that they may share the information with their clients who are on waiting lists.

Once a month, parenting literature on various topics (that the playgroup facilitator suggests will be helpful to these parents) is brought to the group by SCAN's Parent Education Coordinator.

Participation:

A total of forty-seven parents and fifty-seven children have benefited from attending this playgroup from July 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006. The weekly playgroup helps parents and caregivers learn strategies to interact in developmentally appropriate and stimulating ways with their young children through playgroup activities and modeling. Fifteen parents and 17 children have participated in the playgroup five or more times. An average of seven parents and seven children attend playgroup each week. During this grant period, 16 children were under age 1; 5 children were between 1 and 2 years old; 7 children were between 2 and 3 years old; and 7 children were between 3 and 4 years old. During this grant period, the playgroup met twenty times at St. Rita's Catholic Church Parish Center, located at 3825 Russell Road in Arlandria. All adults attending were Spanish-speaking. (See below for information about additional attendees.)

A staff person from Healthy Families Alexandria runs the weekly playgroup. A staff member from the Hispanic Committee also attends weekly and participates in the playgroup and assists the Healthy Families staff person. Representatives from all 3 agencies met during late summer to plan a series of themes and activities. Monthly topics have included sensory fun, gross motor skills, fine motor fun, holidays, fall, winter, and body parts. Activities have included matching games, craft activities, obstacle courses, and other things designed to encourage growth. When implementing activities surrounding these topics, parents learned about child development and how to increase positive, effective interaction with their child. Circle time continues to be an important gathering routine for both adults and children and frequently includes a "book of the month" in addition to regular song-time. January's book is "The Jacket I Wear in the Snow" and a feltboard presentation of all the articles of clothing mentioned in the book was created to accompany the reading each week. A representative from The Reading Connection (usually Eileen Hanning) continues to attend one playgroup every other month. She reads to the children during circle time and then provides free books to each family. The Healthy Families facilitator works with her to choose books that relate to the topic of the month so that the theme is carried throughout.

Target Audience:

Of the parents who attend regularly, all but one is a Healthy Families participant. Healthy Families staff discuss the playgroup during weekly home visits and encourage isolated parents to

take this opportunity to meet other parents in similar situations. They also carry over some of the activities from the playgroup into home visits so that there is continuity of learning.

One change during this reporting period is that several Spanish-speaking nannies (averaging 6 nannies plus children) have begun attending the playgroup with the children they provide care for. The playgroup facilitators note that there are several challenges created by this: a) The children of the nannies tend to be older (preschool age) than the other children, and so activities need to be planned to account for a wider variety of ages; b) The nannies tend to sit by themselves and socialize as a group, but stay segregated from the mothers who come with their children; c) The nannies have had to be encouraged to participate in activities with their children and, though they are improving, still tend to sit while their children play. This initially created some safety hazards as unsupervised children climbed on tables and threw toys, and required extra monitoring on the part of facilitators; d) Finally, the solid core of moms and children who had attended over the last several months seem somewhat intimidated by the nannies and 2-3 families have stopped attending.

Staffing Needs:

Current funding provides for one Healthy Families facilitator to be present each week. However, it has become clear that greater staffing is required in order for the playgroup to run smoothly. At present, a second Healthy Families staff person attends weekly to ensure that details such as room, snack, and activity setup occur while the primary facilitator is available to encourage parent participation and answer specific questions about child development and behavior. This cost is not covered in this year's grant.

Workshops:

Two of the four workshops that will be offered this grant year were offered during this grant period. The first workshop, held in October, was on discipline. Ana Maria Gomez, a long-time Spanish speaking facilitator with SCAN, conducted the workshop. As is Ana Maria's gift, she engaged the parents in meaningful dialog about discipline and presented ways parents can positively work with their children to impact their behavior. She emphasized that discipline should not be thought of as a negative, but as a consistent way to help children learn what is expected behavior. Ten parents participated and ten children attended. The second workshop was held in November and was on low cost health insurance. The workshop was led by a staff member of the Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services Inc.(ANHSI). He highlighted the various services offered by ANHSI. Seventeen parents participated and twenty-two children attended. Two more workshops are scheduled for the remainder of the grant period. The workshop in February will be information about preschool. Representatives from Child and Family Network Centers and Alexandria Head Start have been invited to talk to the parents about the value of preschool and the process to get their children involved. The workshop in March will be on Children's I.D. Kits. Captain Eddie Reyes from the Alexandria Police Department will provide the Kits and show the parents how to assemble them.

Case Management Services:

The Hispanic Committee of Virginia (HCV) provided weekly case management services to playgroup families. Some referrals were made on-site and others required follow-up. Appointments for case management were made at different dates and times for families sensitive to confidentiality during playgroups. Case management was available and provided to any participant of the playgroup who sought assistance. Through the playgroup, 65 different referrals, references or assistance with services were given to Arlandria Success by 6[®] parents during the grant period. A large portion of these services entailed answering questions and providing information to the parents. Other services included assistance with accessing medical care, childcare, and mental health services; assistance with housing, employment, and immigration services; interpretation services needed to access other resources; and other services that assisted them in learning about and accessing community resources they needed to improve their families' well-being.

Outcome Measures

- The parents responding to the quarterly surveys indicate that they are learning from attending the playgroup. Some of the comments provided on the survey forms include feedback indicating that they have learned how to treat and play with their children. One parent noted that she now practices the good habits she learned in the playgroup.
- Feedback from the parents reinforces that they are learning about community resources and services through participation in the playgroup. Reading Connection, Progreso Hispano, and SCAN's Parent Support Group are three examples.
- Parents indicated that their children seem to get along better with other children and have a better understanding about sharing since attending the playgroup.

Specific comments that parents wrote on their survey forms:

- I like the way the children share with other children and at the same time, I learn how to be a better parent.
- I like the way the parents interact with the kids.
- I like the songs.
- Practiced anything differently in own home? Wash our hands before eating. I have become more patient with my children and have taught them how to pick up their toys. We practice the songs.
- I have learned how to treat my children and how to play with them.
- Now I know how to discipline my child.

Facilitator Observations:

The facilitators note that a core group of 6-7 parents and children have been participating regularly. They are now familiar with the routines and the structure of the playgroup and have started to get more involved in singing and doing activities. They also are now arriving on time!

One child in particular has become more outgoing, has started to explore his surroundings more, and appears more comfortable at the group. He and his mother attend very consistently and his mother even brought a birthday cake for the group on his birthday. And a mother who is extremely shy has begun to socialize with some of the other mothers. They share information about their children's development, offer suggestions, and talk about their own experiences. They not only spend time together during playgroup, but also offer one another rides and see

each other socially outside of group. One facilitator says that the group is no longer so quiet—there is a lot of give-and-take. This is exactly the kind of relationship-building we hoped would happen.