

**WGCA Semi-Annual Report**  
**Submitted by Healthy Families Alexandria**  
**Northern Virginia Family Service**  
**January 18, 2008**

**“I can’t imagine the circumstances under which our families parent. Many of our families are doing well against such great odds.”** Quote from Ruth Freeman, a Family Support Worker from Healthy Families Alexandria

**I. Summary of Update on Families Served by the WGCA Grant**

The WGCA grant provides support to ten families enrolled in the Healthy Families Alexandria Program. As of December 31, 2007, the WGCA had provided financial support to the program for 30 months. Of the ten initial families supported through this grant, 5 are still in the program and 5 new families are now receiving services. Families leave the program for various reasons, including: relocation, conflicts with school/job schedule, inability of the Family Support Worker (FSW) to locate the family, target child in school/daycare.

**II. Impact of the WGCA Gift**

The WGCA grant to Healthy Families Alexandria has been significant in many ways:

**Financial Support:** With an annual gift of \$32,000 over three years (for a total gift of \$96,000), the WGCA is supporting home visiting services to 10 families each year. Healthy Families Alexandria is also one of three recipients of the WGCA's second gift to the Success by Six Collaboration to host a Spanish-speaking playgroup in the Arlandria neighborhood. Many of the families who attend the Arlandria playgroup are also enrolled in Healthy Families Alexandria.

**Publicity:** The WGCA gift has provided Healthy Families Alexandria with excellent publicity, raising awareness in the community about the value and importance of the program. The Healthy Families Alexandria program is largely invisible because of the nature of what we do (home visits) and the confidentiality of the families enrolled in the program. Before the WGCA gift, many people in the community had no knowledge of Healthy Families. Publicity has come in many forms:

- Newspaper articles announcing the gift;
- Public announcement of the gift at the Alexandria Business Philanthropy Summit;
- The WGCA newsletters and website;
- WGCA public events;
- Hosting of a friend raiser by a WGCA member (who invited her friends and neighbors to her home to learn about HFA);
- Informal sharing of information about HFA by WGCA members.

**Stamp of Approval:** There are many excellent programs in Alexandria. Being chosen by the WGCA as the recipient of its first gift (and as one of the recipients of the second gift) has been invaluable in terms of acknowledging the quality and importance of the program. It has provided a big "stamp of approval" which carries significant weight in the Alexandria community.

**Volunteers for the Resource Development Council:** Members of the WGCA who are liaison's with Healthy Families Alexandria are also on the program's Resource Development Committee (RDC). Marybeth Emson was the first WGCA liaison who also served on the RDC for one year. Jane Downing Knops and Tracy Nickelsburg are the current WGCA liaisons. Tracy hosted a friendraiser at her home last year that was attended by approximately 20 people including Delegate David Englin. She is also serving as Secretary for the RDC. Jane is currently volunteering one morning a week to address the question of sustainability and growth. Ideas she has brought to the table include: a campaign to raise long-term funding for Healthy Families; development of a strategic plan for the program; identification of new sources of funding; and the development of marketing materials. Marybeth, Jane and Tracy have brought a fresh perspective, many new and good ideas, and vibrant energy to the committee's work and to the program.

The WGCA also recruited Karen Schwarz to draft the FY 2007 annual appeal letter.

**Foundation, Corporate and Individual donations:** HFA has received substantial new donations as well as an increase from one local foundation as a result of the WGCA gift (more than \$20,000 in FY 2007).

### **III. Sustainability**

Healthy Families Alexandria relies on government and foundation grants and private donations for its program revenue. The majority of grants are awarded on a yearly basis. This year, for the first time, the City of Alexandria awarded two-year grants to recipients of The Children's Fund, which is administered by the Early Childhood Commission. Prior to this year, nonprofits were required to submit a proposal each year. Healthy Families Alexandria currently receives \$347,610 annually from the Children's Fund and we can reasonably expect to receive the same amount in FY 2009.

Healthy Families Alexandria is expecting some major funding cuts in FY 2009. The Freddie Mac Foundation has supported Healthy Families Alexandria annually since its inception in 1993 with an annual grant of \$50,000. Freddie Mac recently informed Northern Virginia Family Service that it is shifting its giving focus away from Healthy Families. We expect to receive only a portion of the \$50,000 in FY 2009, and there is the possibility that the program will receive nothing.

Other *possible* cuts include grant funding from the Virginia General Assembly because of the large state deficit. Advocates for Healthy Families programs throughout the State,

including members of the RDC, will be asking the General Assembly to increase its current level of support for Healthy Families programs by 5% (there are currently 38 Healthy Families sites in Virginia). Democrats and Republicans have always been supportive of Healthy Families programs. However, given the current fiscal reality, cuts are possible.

#### **IV. Credentialing**

Healthy Families programs are based upon twelve research-based critical elements. Healthy Families Alexandria is affiliated with Healthy Families America, which is committed to demonstrating consistent service implementation and quality through the Quality Assurance process, known as credentialing. The Alexandria program is due to be re-credentialed in the summer of 2008 and has already begun the Self-Study, which is the program's opportunity to demonstrate implementation of the standards. The second step of the process is the peer review visit. During the visit, the peer review team will review family files and other documentation (including meeting minutes, supervision logs, training logs), and will interview program staff, program participants, and members of the advisory board. Based on the results of the self-study and the visit, the Healthy Families American Credentialing Panel will make a decision on credentialing the program.

The program also receives an annual Quality Assurance Visit from staff of Healthy Families Virginia (Prevent Child Abuse Virginia). This is scheduled for the week of February 11-13, 2008.

#### **V. Holiday Party**

Healthy Families Alexandria has an annual holiday party for all the families enrolled in the program. About 200 families and children attended the event, which was held at the Hilton Alexandria Old Town in December. Mayor Bill Euille welcomed the guests and presented certificates to the six families who were graduating from the program.

Staff from NACHRI (National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions) planned and organized the celebration, bringing with them toys, food, and entertainment that included photos with Santa, face painting and a puppet show. The Hilton Alexandria Old Town donated two ballrooms for the party and Mattel, Inc., Gifts-in Kind and Christ Church Alexandria donated toys. For many of the families in the program, this was the only holiday party they were invited to.

#### **VI. Update on Families**

Most of the families supported by the WGCA grant and who have been in the program for 30 months or more have now been moved to a Level 2, which means they are now receiving a visit from the Family Support Worker every two weeks; or to a Level 3 (monthly home visits). A systematic, yet family-focused, means of determining frequency and duration of home visiting services is a crucial component for successful

Healthy Families home visiting services. A level system is used to document the intensity of service (frequency and duration) for each enrolled family. ***The goal is to help families move from a high level of risk to a low level.*** The decision regarding how many visits are needed is made after having a conversation between the participant and the FSW and a conversation between the FSW and the Program Supervisor.

Some of the families now have a second child; these children receive many of the benefits of the program, including routine screenings for developmental delays. We are also seeing that more fathers are present for home visits when the mother is working and unavailable.

Some families did not receive the allotted number of home visits during this six-month period. In one instance, the FSW was unable to locate the teen mother for 3 months. This family was placed on Creative Outreach, which is the level assigned to a participant who is not actively engaged in services. Families are placed on creative outreach after one month of unsuccessful regular visits. The FSW attempts to contact the participant and re-engage her in the program. Creative Outreach is especially important for families who are at greatest risk. They are the families who are most in need of services, but who are also facing multiple challenges in their lives, making it difficult for them to participate in the program. Healthy Families Alexandria takes extra steps to re-engage teen mothers. In this particular instance, the teen mother called her FSW towards the end of the third month and requested a resumption of home visits.

Previous reports have included information on the different screening tools used by the program: ASQ and ASQ-SE (Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and Ages and Stages Social Emotional), and HOME. .

Healthy Families Alexandria has special arrangements with the Reading Connection (which mails age appropriate books to families once a month); and SIDS, which provides free cribs to families. Referrals are also regularly made to ALIVE, Inc. for emergency food and financial assistance. A number of families benefit from ALIVE's last Saturday of the month food distribution program.