

Women's Giving Circle
Mid-Year Report – January 15, 2008
(July 1, 2007 – December 31, 2007)

Success by 6® Collaboration – Arlandria

SCAN of Northern Virginia, NVFS Healthy Families Alexandria and Hispanic Committee of Virginia

The Arlandria Playgroup, Chiquitos, has taken place 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 involved the promotion of active participation among attending parents to enhance their overall ownership of the group. The collaboration has enlisted the help of Roxana Chaves, who is affiliated with SCAN, to connect with parents attending the group each week and to model for/encourage them each to participate more fully in the activities of the playgroup.

Participation

A total of thirty-nine parents and fifty-six children have benefited from attending this playgroup from July 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007. 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 twenty children have participated in the playgroup five or more times. An average of eight parents and eleven children attend playgroup each week. Thirteen participating families are also enrolled in the Healthy Families program. Nine children were under the age of 1; thirteen children were between 1 and 2 years old; thirteen children were between 2 and 3 years old; nine children were between 3 and 4 years old; and twelve children are above the age of 4. During this grant period, the playgroup met twenty-two times at St. Rita's Catholic Church Parish Center, located at 3825 Russell Road in Arlandria. Although this playgroup is geared towards Spanish-speaking parents, it remains open to any parent who wishes to attend. Currently, 87% (all but two) of the attendees are Spanish-speaking parents.

SCAN was the lead agency responsible for coordinating collaboration members and managing administrative tasks. Attendance was monitored weekly. Healthy Families Alexandria and the Hispanic Committee planned and staffed the playgroups for 1½ hours each week.

Each month, the playgroup focused on different topics including body parts, arts, music, crafts, social-emotional development, and gross and fine motor skills. Activities included: matching games, craft activities, make-believe activities and other activities designed to encourage growth. While engaged in activities surrounding these topics, parents learn about child development and how to increase positive, effective interaction with their child. Healthy Families provided child development handouts for parents to take home.

Circle time continues to be an important group activity for both adults and children and frequently includes a book-of-the-week in addition to regular song time. When implementing

activities surrounding these topics, parents learned about child development and how to increase positive, effective interaction with their child. Developmentally appropriate activities were taught so that they could be practiced at home to reinforce what is learned. 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 each month. The new playgroup assistant, Roxana, has taken on the responsibility of selecting and reading one or two books that relate to the theme or topic of the week to the parents and children. For example, Roxana brought in a book called "The Gingerbread Boy" to read to the group along with homemade gingerbread cookies. The children were able to use their senses to learn about different shapes and forms in this engaging activity.

Healthy Families Alexandria has arranged for a representative from the Reading Connection to attend the playgroup on a regular basis to model for the parents the process of reading out loud to their children in order to emphasize the importance of doing so with young children. Children and parents receive a developmentally appropriate book to take home with them to practice what was learned.

Outreach

The flyer for the playgroup is in English and Spanish (back-to-back). Flyers are used as the primary tool to outreach to families and the community in general about the playgroup. They are included in packets of information that Healthy Families Alexandria Family Resource Specialists provide to new parents in the community during assessment interviews. The flyers are also 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.) A Spanish-speaking facilitator (affiliated with SCAN) conducted monthly community outreach by: visiting small retail outlets, dropping off flyers personally and talking to people in the community about the playgroup. This same Spanish-speaking facilitator provided outreach to families in Arlandria at the Tenants and Workers United Health Fair held on September 15th. SCAN outreached to parents and coordinated a children's activity at the Alexandria City Public Schools Family Involvement Rally on Saturday, November 3rd.

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 annually to over 1000 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.

SCAN's Parent Education Coordinator, Shannon May, is the point of contact in the community for the playgroup and receives inquiries and calls each month. Healthy Families Family Support Workers share information about the playgroup during home visits and encourage isolated

parents who live in the community to attend with their families so they can meet other parents in similar situations. The Family Support Worker frequently accompanies a family initially until they feel comfortable attending on their own. Family Support Workers also bring the playgroup activities to home visits to reinforce and ensure continuity of learning.

Workshops

Two of the four workshops offered during this grant year took place during this reporting period. SCAN's Parent Education Coordinator is responsible for coordinating quarterly workshops as a way of linking participating families to available resources and agencies providing services throughout the community. Anonymous workshop evaluations help to inform the collaboration of the overall effectiveness/helpfulness of the workshop as well as inform collaborators of future growth areas and workshop topics. Evaluations ask for feedback on the following: the presenter's ability to communicate the information in a clear fashion that is easily understood; if and how well the presenter was able to answer questions; whether or not the information presented will be helpful to the participant in his/her role as parent; if the time of the workshop was convenient. Evaluations are scored and maintained by SCAN's Parent Education Coordinator.

The first workshop occurred in September wherein a representative from Community Lodgings, Inc. attended the playgroup and presented on the services offered by their organization such as: contacting pediatricians; translating documents; enrolling in ESL classes; finding after school programs etc. Seven parents participated and ten children attended. 100% of the anonymous evaluations conveyed positive remarks (reporting/ranking at least 4 out of 5 on each question asked in the survey).

The second workshop took place in December on the topic of finding high-quality childcare and its importance. This workshop was led by the Infant & Toddler Connection – Child Care Resource & Referral. Eight parents participated and nine children attended. 100% of the anonymous evaluations conveyed positive remarks (reporting/ranking at least 4 out of 5 on each question asked in the survey).

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, 90 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 responses provided on the quarterly surveys indicate that the playgroup is providing an essential beginning social environment for children, as well as an educational forum for the parents. Parent feedback from the surveys indicates that they have become more aware of their child developmentally and have learned to accommodate their stages of development. Many parents commented on implementing the interactive play and education suggestions introduced by the playgroup within their home setting.
- Parent comments indicate an increased awareness of various community resources and services through their participation in the playgroup. Healthy Families, Reading Connection, Hispanic Committee of Virginia (HCV), Child Protective Services (CPS), Alexandria City Police Department, local libraries are six self-reported examples offered by parents who filled out workshop evaluations.
- Parents indicate an improvement in their children's ability to interact with others and have a better understanding about sharing since attending the playgroup.

Specific comments that parents wrote on their evaluation forms:

- In group, I get to see what activities really interest my child.
- Playgroup has made me a better parent because I do activities with my child and have the opportunity to learn how to help them with everything.
- My child learns how to socialize.
- The group has given me creative ideas for games and activities to do with my children.
- My child communicates more and is more creative since attending the group.
- Before my child was timid in groups but now he/she plays with all the children.
- Since attending group, I give my child more attention helping him/her do things.

As a part of Roxana's weekly involvement in the group, she completes an evaluation at the end of each month to assess the progress of participating parents with respect to the following areas: participation in group activities; the level of comfort and engagement with facilitators, other group members, and their child(ren); and the level of responsibility and ownership of the group. Preliminary evaluations indicated that parents displayed engaged behaviors such as consistently sitting with their child(ren) on the floor during circle time and actively helping their child(ren) with activities. In addition, the parents appeared to have a higher level of overall comfort within the group.