



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Recognition of FTF's Communications Strategies

First Things First has been invited to present on our Strategic Communications Plan as part of the national Smart Start Conference in North Carolina, May 2-5. Liz Barker Alvarez, Vice President for Communications, and Diane Umstead, Senior Director for Community Awareness & Outreach, will represent FTF.

In February, FTF Chief Executive Officer Rhian Evans Allvin met with the leaders of early childhood systems nationwide and shared with them Arizona's communications strategies to build public awareness of the importance of early childhood. Various documents – including our three-year plan, the creative concepts from our paid advertising and our communications toolkit – were shared with those leaders after the meeting at their request. Arizona received many compliments regarding the comprehensiveness of its plan and the quality of our materials.

Electronic Newsletter

The premiere edition of FTF's first electronic newsletter was distributed the week of March 21. Like young children, the work of FTF and the field of early childhood are rapidly evolving. This e-newsletter was designed to keep stakeholders up to date with the latest news from FTF and our collective work in a format that is engaging and user-friendly. The newsletter was distributed to all Board members, regional council members, employees, grantees, Quality First participating providers and almost 2,000 Arizonans who have signed up to receive news alerts from FTF.

Parent Videos

On March 16, FTF launched a series of three videos on its YouTube site to give parents tips for making the most out of reading time with infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community Regional Council Chair Toni Harvier's husband and grandson participated in the infant video; FTF Vice President for Communications Liz Barker Alvarez and her daughter, Gabriela, participated in the toddler video and FTF CEO Rhian Evans Allvin and her sons, Austin and Eli, participated in the preschooler video. All three videos were shot and edited by FTF staff writer Mike Grady, and were narrated by FTF Senior Program Specialist K Vilay. To view the videos: Visit www.azftf.gov, the First Things First Home Page. At the bottom of our web Home Page, click on the YouTube link.

Communications & Government Affairs Committee

The Communications & Government Affairs Committee met for the first time on February 24. The meeting was chaired by FTF Board member Vivian Saunders and included several representatives from

the regional councils and from the community. This initial meeting focused on providing the committee members with background and progress to date on our Strategic Communications Plan, as well as obtaining feedback from committee members on information they would like to see in future meetings.

Paid Advertising

FTF's paid advertising spring flight began in mid-February and will continue in some areas through mid-April. A post-campaign awareness study will be implemented in April. That study will demonstrate the extent to which FTF's Year One communications strategies – including community awareness activities, community outreach, earned media and paid advertising – have impacted the public's awareness of early childhood and First Things First's role in helping young kids arrive at kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. This information will also help us to refine our communications strategies for FY 2012. The results of the study will be shared with the Board at its June meeting.

Earned Media

On March 22, FTF issued a statewide press release regarding the importance of early literacy. The release included information about videos FTF produced to help parents read more effectively to children at various developmental stages (see item above) as well as a profile of one successful early literacy program funded in part by FTF – Reach Out and Read. The effect of the release was not known at the time that this update was compiled.

Additional earned media efforts by FTF regional councils and grantees have resulted in more than a dozen articles or stories appearing in print or broadcast media.

FTF plans a statewide and several local media releases in April that are linked to the national Week of the Young Child.

Community Outreach

FTF continues to focus on getting the message on the importance of early childhood out to parents and communities. Since September, community outreach staff have arranged for 1,341 presentations, networking meetings or to be present at community events. Combined, those opportunities have included approximately 227,302 people. Almost 4,000 of those individuals have signed up to become Champions for Children, meaning that they have committed to a specific action to further build awareness of early childhood in their communities. Throughout this process, our staff have documented success stories of 60 success stories of families who have benefited from FTF programs or the programs themselves.

In addition, we have continued to reach out to state policymakers to build their awareness of the importance of early childhood and keep them up-to-date on the impact FTF has on young children and families in their communities. Since our last report, meetings have been held with Rep. Lela Alston (D-15), Rep. Kate Brophy McGee(R-11), Sen. Rich Crandall (R-19), Rep. Katie Hobbs (D-15), Rep. Justin Olson (R-19), Rep. Steve Urie (R-22), Rep. Ruben Gallegos (D-16), Rep. Anna Tovar (D-13), Rep. Catherine Miranda (D-16), and Rep. Bruce Wheeler(D-28).

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