



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

*The right system for bright futures*

## **Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board Graham/Greenlee Regional Partnership Council**

### **Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the First Things First – Graham/Greenlee Regional Partnership Council was held on March 8, 2010 at the Safford Public Library, 808 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Safford, AZ 85546.

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at approximately 1:09 p.m.

### Members Present:

David Alford, Cindi Alva, Jan Elliott, Ryan Henry (telephonically), Ann Johnson, Donna McGaughey, Pam Patt, and Laurie Smith

### Members Absent:

Stacy Kramer, Retha Russell

### First Things First Staff Present:

Shari Elkins, Regional Coordinator; Edith Lee, Administrative Assistant; Marla Chamberlain, Central East Regional Manager; Michelle Katona, Assistant Director Regional Partnership Councils

### **Call to the Public**

William (Bill) Leckliter shared a story about a local family who has benefited from First Things First and the positive effects that the Emergency Child Care Scholarships has had in Graham County.

### **Consent Agenda**

A motion to approve minutes from the February 16, 2010 meeting made by Member McGaughey, seconded by Vice Chair Alva. Motion carried.

### **Presentations by Grantees**

Giane Powell from the Safford City Library updated the Regional Council on the status of the early literacy grant. The Every Child Ready to Read class, for two and three year olds, was held in December at the Duncan Library. There was a class for newborn to two year olds at the Safford Library in January and for the two to three year olds in February. There will be a class for the four and five year olds at the Safford Library on Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. There will be a class in Duncan on March 30<sup>th</sup> as well. A presentation was given on brain development and brain boxes to Head Start parents in Duncan in December. The brain development workshop and brain box training was held on Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at the Safford Library; there were 14 participants. The attendance at the toddler story time and brain box time is increasing and parents are expressing appreciation for the classes. Outreach is being done to local day cares, preschools and Head Start, and more parents are being reached through the WIC classes. At least 455 parents, teachers and caregivers have been contacted through story times and the WIC program.

The Health Fair booth was successful; seeing at least 252 adults and 54 children. Thirty-two (32) additional kids were signed up for the Imagination Library at that event. Presently, there are 1,577 children enrolled in the Imagination Library. Ninety (90) children have graduated or aged out of the Imagination Library program.

Sherry Brady from Graham County Interfaith Alliance updated the Regional Council on the status of the food assistance grant. Ms. Brady reviewed the items included in the food boxes, and expressed that the diapers are a big need for families. The food pantry receives referrals from WIC, and is distributing an average of 10 boxes per week. Families are receiving approximately 15-20 diapers once a month. Families are also given a First Things First survey to complete when they pick up their food boxes. The food pantry is also reaching families in Greenlee County.

Angie Richins from Child and Family Resources updated the Regional Council on the status of the home visitation grant. There are currently 30 families receiving home visitation services, and 44 children receiving individualized services. The scope of reach is even larger, however, because these families share information with other families and this creates a ripple effect in service. Services are being provided in Greenlee County and outreach continues in that area. Families are engaging in the program, and benefiting from the services, and as a result they are not graduating as quickly as expected. Ms. Richins also shared a success story of a family currently receiving home visitation services.

#### **Discussion of RFGA Review Committees**

Chair Smith requested volunteers to serve on the two RFGA Review Committees; Home Visitation and Food Assistance. Council members, without a conflict of interest who are interested in serving on the committees, can let Shari Elkins know via email. A reviewer training will be held on April 22, 2010 at the Safford First Things First Office. Two (2) community members, without conflict of interest, are also needed for each review committee. Contact Shari Elkins if you have a community member suggestion.

#### **Legislative Update – Council Q & A**

Michelle Katona, Assistant Director Regional Partnership Councils, provided a legislative update to the Regional Council. The Education Committee had an HCR-2050 (House Concurrent Resolution) that focused specifically on First Things First. It was going to make some significant changes to First Things First, specifically, changing the ages of the children from birth to five from birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, as well as changes to the funding allocation to include more funding to the statewide strategies and less funding to the regions. HCR-2050 did not pass.

The First Things First Board also approached the governor's office, offering a loan to the state in the amount of \$250 million dollars, with interest, to be paid back in 2012 or 2013. When First Things First did not hear back from the governor's office, they increased the offer to \$300 million dollars with pay back starting in 2017. The governor's office was in favor of the loan, but the legislature only agreed if there were no time limit restraints to when the loan had to be repaid. First Things First did not agree to this, therefore there is no loan.

The JLBC (Joint Legislative Budget Committee) presented their budget to the legislature last week, and it included a proposal that will directly affect First Things First, placing a referendum on the ballot in November. First Things First anticipates that something will be on the November ballot, but do not know if it will just affect First Things First or all voter initiatives. The worst case scenario is if they put us in the position where we are pitted against other voter initiatives like K-12.

The Arizona Republic is doing an extensive review of First Things First and an article will come out in the paper on Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. It is anticipated that the article will be written in response to the negative view of First Things First, with First Things First defending its position. There will be a conference call on Monday morning with the Regional Council Chairs and Vice Chairs to get their feedback about the article.

The Regional Council expressed their concerns and the need to share the region's First Things First success stories in the local media. The Regional Council will work on gathering these stories and submit them to either Ms. Elkins or Chair Smith, who will submit them to the local media. The Regional Council also discussed the need to contact legislators directly to express concerns.

### **Regional Coordinator Report**

#### **Strategy Update**

Regional Coordinator Shari Elkins provided an update on some of the strategies within the region. Quality First has had a center opening and two home slots for some time. Applications have been received for all of those openings. Enrollment is presently on hold, but the slots should be completely filled in the near future.

The Parent Kits are still generating positive feedback from providers and parents in the community.

The Child Care Stipends have not rolled out yet because we are just at the end of using our Emergency Child Care Scholarships. There has been a slight change in the stipends. They were originally titled stipends, but after conversations with Chair Smith and Vice Chair Alva, they will title partial scholarships due to administrative language in an effort to keep the same administrative home, Valley of the Sun United Way. These partial scholarships will begin when the emergency scholarships run out, which is anticipated to be the middle of May.

The Therapist Incentives loan repayment plan is in place. ADHS (Arizona Department of Health Services) will be meeting this week to discuss the actual stipend. Calls are already coming in from therapists who are excited about this opportunity.

#### **Communications Update**

Ms. Elkins discussed the short term communications plan with the Regional Council. The Regional Council did not allocate funding towards communications in the 2010 or 2011 budget. There is, however, a little over \$19,000 in carry forward from the 2010 budget that is available until the end of June. The Regional Council does have the option of using this carry forward to develop a short term communications plan. Ms. Elkins shared the communications notebook with the Regional Council that outlined the options they had in moving forward. The options included give-aways, billboards, radio spots, and education awareness materials. The Regional Council discussed moving a portion of the carry forward into the short term communications effort. Ms. Elkins shared the costs associated with the communications options (Attachment 2). Ms. Elkins contacted both local radio stations, and they are willing to do free public service announcements if we are willing to be flexible about the times they are aired. The Regional Council will need to find an individual to do the voice on the commercials though. Ms. Elkins is attempting to reach Mark Heinz with Jones Outdoor regarding the use of their billboards. The Regional Council discussed how much money they would like to allocate towards the short term communications plan. The Regional Council discussed which effort would work best for this region, and felt that billboards and radio spots would both be beneficial. The Regional Council also discussed contacting Sapphire Cineplex, the local movie theatre, to see if they would air commercials during the

movie previews, and the local library can do early childhood Twitters as well. The Regional Council discussed moving \$15,000 into a short term communications strategy, and plan to discuss the specifics of this strategy at the Regional Council meeting in April.

Member Elliott motioned to allocate \$15,000 in carry forward money into the short term communications plan. Member Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Needs & Assets Update

Ms. Elkins updated the Regional Council on the status of the Needs & Assets Report (Attachment 3). LeCroy & Milligan have been great to work with. They created a community survey which was used during the hospital health fair over the weekend. Twenty-eight (28) surveys were received. A sample of the survey was provided to the Regional Council (Attachment 4).

Regional Council Membership Selection Process

Ms. Elkins updated the Regional Council on the Regional Council Membership Selection Process. The website has been updated and is up and running. Regional Council members whose term will be up at the end of June will be receiving a letter with instructions on how to reapply if they are interested.

Council Member Updates/Comments

Vice Chair Alva shared that the Child Abuse Prevention Blue Ribbon Luncheon will be held on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at Eastern Arizona College.

Member Elliott shared that the surveys for the Imagination Library are available for distribution.

Next Meeting Date, Time and Location

The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. at the Safford Library.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Member McGaughey, and seconded by Member Johnson. Motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:50 p.m.

**SUBMITTED BY:**

---

**Shari Elkins, Regional Coordinator**

**Approved:**

---

**Laurie Smith, Chair**