

THE REPORTER

First 5 Solano to mark 15 years of service

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Recognizing the importance of the first five years of any child's life when they come to brain development, the statewide program First 5 was created.

It was 15 years ago that voters approved Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Act.

To mark the anniversary, First 5 Solano will launch a year-long celebration with its "First 5 is 15" from 10 a.m. to noon on Nov. 15 in the chamber of the Solano County Board of Supervisors in the County Government Center, 675 Texas St., Fairfield. Guest speaker Maureen McSweeney, founding First 5 Commissioner and professor of Early Childhood Development at Solano Community College will discuss that changes that have been made through the years and a segment will be shown of the documentary "The Raising of America," titled "Are We Crazy About Our Kids?"

Tuesday, the Solano County Board of Supervisors will recognize First 5 during a presentation at its regular meeting.

"As First 5 and the early childhood field evolved there has been lots of research," said First 5 Executive Director Christina Arrostuto. "It put the importance of the first 5 years in people's consciousness."

"Approving Prop 10 lets us work as hard as we can for children to be born healthy and thrive so that they enter kindergarten ready to learn," she continued.

Arrostuto said she's been working with First 5 for nearly 11 years and before that she said she was working in social work.

"I was wishing something like First 5 would come along and give us a little bit of money to prevent some of the problems we were faced with," she said.

She added that parents are the first and best teachers.

"Talking and reading to children everyday makes a difference," she said.

In fiscal year 2012-13, First 5 Solano and its grantees served 14,569 expectant parents, children aged birth to 5, their families and their providers of services; the First 5 Solano Commission increased its leveraging capacity yet again, rising to 59 cents brought into Solano County for every 41 cents of First 5 Solano funds; and First 5 Solano's more than 37 community grantees achieved 93 percent of their comprehensive performance measures.

In a report to the board of supervisors, staff noted that the First 5 Solano Commission is in the process of carrying out a five-year plan, "First 5 Futures" to seek federal and foundation funds, engage the business sector and seek policy changes that will benefit young children in the long term.

The Solano County Board of Supervisors meets at 9 a.m. in the County Events Center, 675 Texas St., Fairfield.

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